

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BY BULLETIN INTELLIGENCE WWW.BULLETININTELLIGENCE.COM/DHS

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF
DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2016 7:00 AM EDT

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LEADING DHS NEWS

AP Exclusive: Color Index For US Border Security Is Rejected

By Elliot Spagat

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

Five years ago, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security dropped its color-coded terror threat index developed after the 9/11 attacks amid widespread confusion and ridicule. So what did it do when tasked by Secretary Jeh Johnson in 2014 with measuring security along the country's borders?

Agency staff proposed another system of reds, yellows and greens.

The Institute for Defense Analyses, a consulting firm, was hired by DHS to review the idea and found the index simplistic and misleading, noting that colors were a "disaster" for communicating terror threats.

"DHS should learn from its own history and avoid repeating this error," the consultants said in its 53-page report.

The DHS proposal was never made public, nor was the consulting firm's \$90,000 review. A copy of the report was obtained by The Associated Press and when AP this week asked the agency whether it would move ahead with the index, spokeswoman Gillian Christensen said: "Currently, there are no color-coded border security indexes or metrics being considered by the Department of Homeland Security."

It was one of the latest attempts by the government to come up with a way to measure border security and help the

public understand whether the billions of dollars devoted to it each year are being spent wisely.

In 2010, Homeland Security ended a five-year experiment measuring miles under "operational control," where the Border Patrol was likely to capture illegal crossers. It reported only about 40 percent controlled in 2010, providing ammunition to those who argue the border is porous.

Then in 2013, Johnson's predecessor, Janet Napolitano, abandoned plans for what was called the Border Conditions Index, which would have relied on various economic, crime and enforcement data.

John Sandweg, who was senior counselor to Napolitano, said there was internal consensus about what made up the index but not about how much weight to give each factor.

Sandweg, who advised the secretary when the color terror alert system was dropped, said he doesn't see the value of a similar color-coded approach to the border.

"It seems to me like an oversimplification of a very complex problem," he said.

The consultants hired by Johnson agreed.

"The red/yellow/green formulation, while intuitively attractive and easy to understand, will open the Department to charges that it is manipulating a complex problem in an effort to be seen as responding to public concerns," the report said.

When the report was completed in June, California and New Mexico/West Texas were green (low risk) during the previous quarter, Arizona was yellow (medium risk), and South Texas was red (high risk). The consultants said that reality was more nuanced.

“A new set of metrics should work against this simplistic perception rather than reinforcing it. Instead, the new index does the opposite, by reporting the level of border security in just three large baskets, two of which (red and yellow) are likely to be seen by the public as evidence of a border ‘not controlled,’” the report said.

The consultants identified other problems. A color index might lead reporters with an appetite for eye-catching headlines to produce misleading stories of an out-of-control border. And DHS relations with Congress could be further strained, with administration officials constantly having to defend their color choices.

For example, a West Texas congressman would demand to know why his district is rated low risk when voters tell him the opposite. A South Texas congressman would want lots more money if the administration acknowledges his district is high risk, the report said.

Now, the most closely-watched public indicator is Border Patrol apprehensions, released annually. The number fell to a 44-year low last year, a figure cited by those who argue the border is relatively secure. But there is broad agreement that the apprehension tally gives an incomplete picture, just as a police department’s arrest count doesn’t fully reflect how safe a city is.

The color-coded index would have relied on 12 indicators for land borders and seven for maritime borders, each one weighted under a formula that produces reds, yellows and greens. Those indicators ranged from the number of border crossers with known or suspected terrorist ties to marijuana seizures.

The consultants’ report speaks favorably about developing a “dashboard” of key numbers, as many police departments do. Homeland Security recently began publishing the percent of illegal border crossers it says are caught or turned back – 80 percent in the 2015 fiscal year – and has developed other measures, including the percent caught who are repeat offenders.

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Obama Plunges Into Heated Debate Over Britain’s Future In The E.U.

By Greg Jaffe And Karla Adam
[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama weighed in on one of the United Kingdom’s most contentious political issues Friday, urging Britain to remain part of the European Union and warning that a withdrawal would diminish British influence on the world stage.

The president made his case at a press conference with Prime Minister David Cameron at his side and in a surprisingly frank editorial in London’s Daily Telegraph.

“The European Union doesn’t moderate British influence – it magnifies it,” Obama wrote. “A strong Europe is not a threat to Britain’s global leadership; it enhances Britain’s global leadership.”

The editorial and press conference appearance with Cameron plunge Obama into the middle of an emotional debate inside Britain only two months before the country’s June 23 referendum on E.U. membership.

It’s highly unusual for an American president to weigh in on the internal affairs of an ally so close to voters going to the polls, a fact that Obama acknowledged in his editorial. “I realize that there’s been considerable speculation – and some controversy – about the timing of my visit,” he wrote. But, Obama argued that the “special relationship” between the United States and Britain demanded unusual honesty.

Obama sounded dire warnings about the consequences of a British exit from the E.U. that to many may have sounded like threats.

If the U.K. severed ties with the E.U., Obama said, it would be at the “back of the queue” for a trade deal with America. “There might be a U.K.-U.S. trade agreement, but it’s not going to happen anytime soon because our focus is in negotiating with a big block, the European Union,” Obama said.

In other moments the president tried appeals to Britons’ better angels, saying he understood the instinct at a time of worries about terrorism and massive refu-gee flows to want to “pull up the drawbridge” on the rest of the world’s problems.

But, he expressed confidence that in Great Britain and America citizens would rise above those baser fears. “The ties that bind Europe together are ultimately much stronger than the forces that are trying to pull them apart,” Obama said.

Even before Obama arrived in the U.K., Boris Johnson, the London mayor, accused the president of hypocrisy on the issue. Johnson, who is in favor of leaving the European Union, told the BBC that the United States “wouldn’t dream of sharing [their] sovereignty.”

Obama, who came to London from Saudi Arabia, marked the beginning a three-day visit to Europe at an especially difficult moment for the continent, which faces a slow economy, refugees poring across its borders and a growing terror threat.

He is expected on Monday to deliver a major speech in Germany on the problems facing Europe, its critical role on the world stage and its path forward.

Obama has been critical of America’s European allies, suggesting recently in an interview with the Atlantic that Cameron and his European partners became “distracted” after the NATO-led intervention in Libya and didn’t do enough

to bring stability to the country. He's suggested that some European countries are "free riders" for depending too heavily on the United States to provide for their defense.

Despite those criticisms, Obama remains very popular among the British people and throughout Europe. His decision to visit London so close to the referendum came at the request of Cameron, who has been a forceful and, of late, more embattled advocate for remaining in the 28-nation bloc.

Cameron spoke repeatedly of his respect for Obama and emphasized that the president was acting on his own accord to preserve American interests and strengthen the special relationship that the U.S. and U.K. share.

"I don't have some special power over the president of the United States," said Cameron said. "To me it is simple: stronger Britain; stronger special relationship," he said. "That is in our interests and that is in the interest of the U.S. as well."

Even though Obama has been outspoken in his support for Britain staying in the European Union, analysts urged him to tread lightly on his visit. "This is an emotionally charged discussion and it really does not respond to calm, rational logic," said Heather Conley, a senior European analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Conley said the president should "weigh in" but avoid being part of the story. "Do not exacerbate the tensions surrounding the referendum," she warned.

Prior to Obama's arrival in London, senior administration officials suggested that Obama would heed that advice.

"His approach will be that if he's asked his view as a friend, he will offer it, but he'll make very clear that this is a matter that the British people themselves will decide," Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser told reporters prior to the trip.

With his editorial in the Daily Telegraph, Obama seems to have decided that the stakes were too high for him to take a lower-profile approach.

Obama chose the Conservative-supporting newspaper, which hasn't taken a stand on the E.U. referendum, to appeal to Conservatives and others seen as crucial swing voters in the referendum.

Obama praised Britain's leadership in helping to secure a major global agreement to address climate change last year and its efforts to reach a deal with Iran to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Such international efforts, with the European Union playing a leading role, are essential to peace, prosperity, and international order, Obama wrote.

"Today, we face tests to this order — terrorism and aggression; migration and economic headwinds — challenges that can only be met if the United States and the United Kingdom can rely on one another, on our special

relationship, and on the partnerships that lead to progress," Obama wrote in the Telegraph.

The terrorist attacks on Paris and Brussels, in particular, have exposed big gaps in intelligence sharing among European countries. Obama argued that a unified counterterrorism partnership that spanned Europe is essential to keeping the continent safe.

"Now is a time for friends and allies to stick together," he added.

Obama will meet with Cameron later Friday and take part in a press conference with the prime minister in which the E.U. referendum is likely to be a major topic of discussion. Before those events, the president will have lunch with Queen Elizabeth II to celebrate her 90th birthday at Windsor Castle, which Obama jokingly suggested was his real reason for his visit.

"I confess: I do want to wish Her Majesty a happy birthday in person," he wrote.

Barack Obama Crashes Into EU Debate As He Warns Britain Will Be 'At The Back Of The Queue'

By Dan Bloom

[Daily Mirror \(UK\)](#), April 22, 2016

Barack Obama has crashed headlong into the Brexit debate tonight at a crunch press conference with David Cameron.

The US President made a passionate plea for unity as he quoted English poet John Donne's famous words: "No man is an island".

In a major blow to the Leave campaign, he warned Britain will be left "at the back of the queue" with no US-UK trade deal "any time soon" if voters choose to leave the EU on June 23.

And he echoed the PM's warnings over national security, saying: "You start seeing divisions in Europe, that weakens Nato. That will have an impact on our collective security."

Standing with "my good friend David Cameron" by his side, he declared: "I think it's fair to say that maybe some point down the line there might be a UK-US trade agreement," the President said.

Getty On trade the President warned: "It's not going to happen any time soon"

"But it's not going to happen any time soon. Because our focus is in negotiating with a big bloc, the European Union, to get a trade agreement done.

"The UK is going to be in the back of the queue."

He added: "All of us cherish our sovereignty. My country's pretty vocal about that.

“But the US also recognises we strengthen our security though Nato, we strengthen our prosperity through the G7, the G8.

“The nations that make it on the world stage aren’t the nations that go it alone, they’re the nations that team up to magnify their influence.

“For centuries Europe was marked by war and by violence. The architecture our two countries helped build in the EU has provided for decades of relative peace and prosperity on the continent.”

He added: “I think it was a British poet who said no man is an island. Not even an island as beautiful as this. We’re stronger together.”

The speeches followed bilateral talks at Downing Street after the President and First Lady Michelle had a 90th birthday lunch with the Queen at Windsor Castle.

But even before his first public words on today’s visit to Britain, the US President provoked a storm by backing the UK’s place in the EU.

Pro-Brexit Tories vented their spleens at the interventionist American leader as Nigel Farage told him to “butt out”.

The Ukip leader claimed the US President, who has Kenyan heritage, had a “grudge” against Britain for its colonial heritage.

And London mayor Boris Johnson was branded “nasty” for referring to the “part-Kenyan President’s ancestral dislike of the British Empire” in an article today.

But during the press conference Mr Obama said it was his democratic right to express an opinion.

“I am not coming here to fix any votes,” he said.

He added: “Ultimately this is something the British voters have to decide for themselves but as part of our Special Relationship, part of being friends, is to be honest and let you know what I think.

“And speaking honestly the outcome of that decision is a matter of deep interest to the US because it affects us as well.

“It leverages UK power to be part of the EU.

“I don’t believe the EU moderates British interest in the world, it magnifies it.

“The EU helps spread British practices and values across the continent.”

Mr Johnson blasted the President as ‘downright hypocritical’ for giving his view on something the US would not want for itself.

He claimed a bust of Winston Churchill in the Oval Office had been removed around the time Mr Obama moved in.

Writing in The Sun, he added: “Some said it was a snub to Britain. Some said it was a symbol of the part-Kenyan President’s ancestral dislike of the British Empire, of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender.”

Rivals poured scorn on Mr Johnson for using colonial nudges and winks – wrongly – to drive home his point about the EU.

David Cameron’s official spokeswoman pointed out the bust was going to be removed before Mr Obama even took office.

Winston Churchill’s grandson, Tory MP Nicholas Soames, tweeted: “Appalling article by @BorisJohnson in Sun totally wrong on almost everything. Inconceivable [Churchill] wld not have welcomed President’s views.”

Britain Stronger in Europe spokesman James McGroarty said it was “nasty, desperate stuff”.

Referring to Leave campaigners, Labour’s Shadow Culture Secretary Maria Eagle tweeted: “Outrageous behaviour from them – and desperate”.

And MP Chuka Umunna, whose dad was Nigerian, wrote: “These Tory Mayoral types are beyond the pale. Zac plays on Sadiq Khan’s Muslim heritage, while Boris plays on Barack Obama’s Kenyan ancestry.”

Former Liberal Democrat leader Lord Ming Campbell said: “Many people will find Boris Johnson’s loaded attack on President Obama’s sincerity deeply offensive.

“If this is an illustration of the kind of diplomacy that we might expect from a Johnson leadership of the Tory Party then heaven help us.

“In truth this attack constitutes an unacceptable smear.”

Obama, Cameron Meet As Britain Debates European Union Exit

By Kathleen Hennessey

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON (AP) – Lending political backup to a struggling friend, President Barack Obama made an impassioned plea to Britons to heed Prime Minister David Cameron’s call to stay in the European Union and dismissed critics who accused the U.S. president of meddling in British affairs.

Speaking at a press conference at 10 Downing Street, Obama told reporters that Britain’s power is amplified by its membership in the 28-nation union, not diminished. He made an almost sentimental appeal to the “special relationship” between the two countries. And he said cast a grim picture of the economic stakes – saying flatly the U.S. would not rush to write a free trade deal with a newly independent Great Britain.

“Let me be clear, ultimately this is something that the British voters have to decide for themselves but ... part of being friends is to be honest and to let you know what I think,” he said. “It affects our prospect as well. The United States wants a strong United Kingdom as a partner.”

Obama spoke on the first day of a three-day visit to London, likely the last of this presidency. The visit comes two months before a June referendum on leaving the union. Polls

suggest it will be a close-fought race, with most phone polls indicating a lead for the Remain campaign while some online polls put the Leave camp ahead.

Obama described the votes as potentially damaging to the British economy. He said the U.S. is focused on writing a massive trade agreement with the European Union and would not prioritize a bilateral agreement with the UK. Britain would have to get “in the back of the queue,” he said.

As he landed Thursday night, the president laid out his arguments in an op-ed in a London newspaper, harkening back to the “special relationship” forged by wartime allies President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. With that special status comes with leeway to interfere, Obama argued, writing that he was offering his thoughts with the “candor of a friend.”

Obama’s candor wasn’t universally appreciated. In increasingly heated language, critics accused Obama of meddling in British business. Former London Mayor Boris Johnson, the head of the Leave campaign called Obama’s advice “paradoxical, inconsistent, incoherent” and suggested Obama’s background played a role.

Writing in The Sun newspaper, Johnson recounted a claim that a bust of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was removed from the Oval Office after Obama was elected and returned to the British Embassy. The White House has said that the Churchill bust is still in a prominent place in the presidential residence.

Johnson wrote that some said removing the bust “was a symbol of the part-Kenyan president’s ancestral dislike of the British Empire, of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender.”

Obama’s late father was from Kenya, a former British colony that gained independence in the 1960s.

Obama has remained a broadly popular figure in Britain, although reliable surveys are scarce. In June 2015, three-quarters of Britons told pollsters they had confidence in his judgment on world affairs, according to a Pew Research survey.

That goodwill hasn’t kept Britons in breaking from U.S. at key moments. In 2013, as Obama leaned on Cameron to join in threatened airstrikes in Syria, the House of Commons rejected the idea.

There have been other recent signs of stress on the relationship. British officials bristle over Obama’s recent comments in the Atlantic magazine, in which he said he regretted trusting Europeans to stabilize Libya after the 2011 death of strongman Moammar Gadhafi. He specifically said Cameron had become “distracted by a range of other things” while Libya devolved into chaos.

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Obama Exhorts Britain To Stay In EU, Warns On Trade If It Leaves

By Roberta Rampton And Kylie Maclellan
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Obama Gives U.K. ‘Friendly’ Advice: Stay In The European Union

By Jane Onyanga-Omara And Gregory Korte
[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON — President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron showed Friday that the “special relationship” between the two countries means that they can tell each other things you can only say to friends.

After meeting at 10 Downing Street in London Friday, the two leaders gave a joint press conference in which they pledged to remain united on major world problems — while also dabbling in each others’ internal politics.

Tops on the agenda: The June 23 referendum on whether Great Britain should remain in the European Union. That question, known as the “Brexit,” led Obama to make his strongest argument to date that the world is better off with the United Kingdom leading a united Europe.

“The United Kingdom is at its best when it’s helping to lead a strong Europe. It leverages UK power to be part of the European Union,” Obama said. “I don’t believe the EU moderates British influence in the world. It magnifies it.”

Obama has provoked ire among backers of the campaign to leave the EU for expressing his desire for Britain to remain within the 28-member bloc. The question is so contentious that Obama was asked by a British journalist whether he was meddling. “Let me be clear, ultimately this is something that the British voters have to decide for themselves,” Obama said. “But as part of our special relationship, part of being friends is to be honest and to let you know what I think. And speaking honestly, the outcome of that decision is a matter of deep interest to the United States because it affects our prospects as well.”

London Mayor Boris Johnson, who is campaigning for Brexit, attacked Obama’s comments.

“As much as I admire the United States, and as much as I respect the president, I believe he must admit that his country would not dream of embroiling itself in anything of the kind,” he said, writing in The Sun, a tabloid newspaper. Johnson was referring to Britain’s membership of the EU. He called Obama “part Kenyan” and suggested his African

heritage was responsible for his “ancestral dislike of the British empire.”

Obama was later forced to defend North Carolina and Mississippi against a recent travel advisory from the British Foreign Office warning British subjects about their recently passed laws restricting gay rights. Cameron, a member of the British Conservative Party, said laws throughout the world should aim to “end discrimination, rather than embed it or enhance it.”

Former Prime Minister Winston Churchill coined the term “special relationship” to describe U.S.-U.K. cooperation after World War II, and it’s been a sacrosanct tenet of each nation’s foreign policy ever since. Cameron described it Friday as “not merely an enduring expression of friendship, it was a way of working together.” He called the two nations “kindred spirits who share the same values and so often the same approaches to the many issues we face.”

Indeed, Obama and Cameron said they discussed a common approach to a wide range of international issues: Russia’s incursion into Ukraine, battling the Ebola and Zika viruses, the war with the Islamic State and the migration crisis facing Europe.

“We consider it a major national security issue that you have uncontrolled migration into Europe — not because these folks are coming to the United States, but because if it destabilizes Europe, our largest trading bloc, trading partner, it’s going to be bad for our economy,” Obama said. “If you start seeing divisions in Europe, that weakens NATO. That will have an impact on our collective security.”

Obama arrived in London from Saudi Arabia late Thursday as part of a six-day tour of three nations. He and First Lady Michelle Obama had a private lunch with Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip at Windsor Castle on Friday, before flying by helicopter to central London to meet with Prime Minister David Cameron at Downing Street. The Obamas will dine with Prince William, Duchess Kate and Prince Harry at Kensington Palace on Friday evening.

The meeting with the queen came the day after her 90th birthday. Obama called the longest-reigning British monarch “truly one of my favorite people” and presented her with the gift of a photo album.

“If we are fortunate enough to reach 90, may we be as vibrant as she is,” Obama said.

Obama is scheduled to hold a town hall with London youth on Saturday before heading to Germany the following day.

Gregory Korte reported from Washington.

President Obama Pushes Against ‘Brexit’ In U.K. Visit

By Maya Rhodan
[TIME](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama has weighed in on the debate over “Brexit,” shorthand for an upcoming referendum on whether or not the United Kingdom should stay in the European Union.

During a press conference on his trip to London on Friday, President Obama said the U.S. and the U.K. are both strengthened by the Kingdom’s existence in the European Union and that what happens in Europe impacts both countries. The president spoke alongside British Prime Minister David Cameron following a meeting the two had at 10 Downing Street.

“I think there’s a British poet who once said no man’s an island. Even an island as beautiful as this,” the president said. “We’re stronger together.”

The president said the European Union “magnifies the power of the U.K. It doesn’t diminish it.” And on the key issue of trade, President Obama shut down any prospect of any immediate, replacement trade deal between the two countries if the U.K. were to leave the EU.

“There might be a U.K.-U.S. trade agreement, but it’s not going to happen anytime soon,” Obama said. Leaving the European Union, he added, would push the U.K. to the “back of the queue” on trade.

President Obama has been criticized for weighing in on the Brexit vote even ahead his remarks on Friday. In an op-ed he penned for the Telegraph, Obama also advocated that the U.K. remain in the European Union. “The European Union doesn’t moderate British influence – it magnifies it,” he wrote. “A strong Europe is not a threat to Britain’s global leadership; it enhances Britain’s global leadership.” Many in Britain have denounced the president’s visit and his comments, telling him in so many words to mind his own business.

On Friday, President Obama addressed the critics, saying he’s just offering his opinion. “This is a decision for the people of the United Kingdom to make,” Obama said. “I’m not coming here to fix any votes. I’m not casting a vote myself. I’m offering my opinion.”

The president also found himself defending the “special relationship” between the United States and the United Kingdom. He suggested the two countries are “bound at the hip” and said his comments were akin to a best friend sharing a point of view.

Obama, Cameron And The Day Of The ‘Remains’

The president’s entry into the ‘Brexit’ debate included adding to the economic scaremongering.

By Toby Young

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Obama To U.K.: Don’t Leave The EU

By Kevin Liptak And Stephen Collinson

[CNN](#), April 22, 2016

London (CNN)With flattery, poetry, and a blatant threat, President Barack Obama on Friday urged British voters to remain in the European Union – a controversial intervention into the referendum debate rocking America’s closest ally.

Obama rejected claims by anti-Europe campaigners that he was interfering in internal U.K. politics, and in a serious blow to the “Leave” campaign, warned Britain not to bank on a free trade deal with Washington if it quits the EU.

In perhaps the most significant moment in the referendum campaign so far, the U.S. President, taking advantage of his popularity in the United Kingdom, spoke with greater frankness about the possibility of a so-called “Brexit” than expected. He argued that a British departure from the alliance would not just be bad for the United Kingdom, but would run contrary to the national interests of the United States, threatening stability and prosperity in the Western world at a time of turmoil.

“Let me be clear, ultimately this is something that the British voters have to decide for themselves,” Obama said at a news conference alongside David Cameron, delivering a boost to the British Prime Minister’s bid to safeguard U.K. membership in the EU.

“But as part of our special relationship, part of being friends, is to be honest and to let you know what I think,” Obama said.

Why Brexit could hurt the US, too

“Speaking honestly, the outcome of that decision is a matter of deep interest to the United States because it affects our prospects as well,” Obama said, and also hinted that the U.K. would be a less valuable ally to Washington if it left the bloc.

“The United Kingdom is at its best when it is helping to lead a strong Europe. It leverages UK power to be part of the European Union,” Obama said.

“I think there is a British poet who said: ‘No man is an island’ — even an island as beautiful as this,” Obama said, quoting a beloved poem by John Donne, a contemporary of William Shakespeare.

Seeking to convince Britons of his arguments, the President also deployed flattery, paying warm tribute to their country’s role as a world leader and said it still had an outsized contribution to make. He also lavished praise on Queen Elizabeth II, with whom he and his wife Michelle had lunch at Windsor Castle, saying she was a source of “inspiration.”

But behind the compliments was a steely argument that infuriated campaigners who see the June referendum as a chance to reclaim British sovereignty from Brussels, to strengthen U.S. borders amid a European migration crisis and to free U.K. business of continental regulations.

One of Britain’s most famous and flamboyant political figures backing the “Leave” movement – London mayor and cabinet member Boris Johnson – warned in an opinion article in “The Sun” newspaper that Obama’s arguments were “incoherent,” “inconsistent” and “downright hypocritical.”

“The Americans would never contemplate anything like the EU, for themselves or for their neighbours in their own hemisphere. Why should they think it right for us?” Johnson wrote, also accusing Obama of snubbing Britain by removing a bust of war time prime minister Winston Churchill from the Oval Office in 2009.

But Obama hit back.

“I am not coming here to fix any votes, I am not casting a vote myself, I am offering an opinion,” he said. “In democracies, everybody should want more information, not less.”

He went on: “That is not a threat – that should enhance the debate.”

Personal greeting, royal chauffeur kick off Obama’s visit to Windsor

And the President scoffed at the long-running saga of the Churchill bust, which has frequently been used as a cudgel against him by political opponents in Washington and London. He said that for the last seven years, the piece has sat outside his private office in the White House residence, and that as the first African-American president, he wanted to have a bust of civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Oval Office.

“I love Winston Churchill. I love the guy,” Obama said.

In the most significant policy exchange of the hour-long news conference, Obama inflicted a serious blow on the “Leave” campaign, which maintains that Britain could make up for the loss of tariff-free access to European markets by quickly sealing a free trade deal with the United States.

“The U.K. is going to be in the back of the queue,” Obama said, pointing out that the United States was already working on concluding a free trade agreement with the European Union itself, noting that in the current political environment negotiating such deals was a heavy lift.

“I think it is fair to say that maybe some point down the line, there might be a U.K.-U.S. trade agreement but it is not going to happen any time soon,” Obama said.

The President also warned that divisions that could be fostered in Europe by a British exit could hurt the collective security of the United States and the continent and could harm NATO. And he said he wanted the British Prime Minister to be in the room when key decisions were made: “I want one of my strongest partners in that conversation.”

Cameron, with one eye on the furor whipped up by Obama’s intervention in the Europe debate, praised the U.S. leader as a personal friend, and as a friend of Britain who often offered sage advice. And he said that there was no contradiction in Britain having a strong “special relationship”

with the United States and taking a leadership role in the European Union.

"I have never felt constrained in any way in straightening this relationship by the fact we are in the European Union – in fact quite the reverse," Cameron said, adding Britain's power and reach was enhanced by its membership in the European bloc.

Michelle Obama makes fashion statement by wearing Oscar de la Renta for Queen meeting

Obama and Cameron also spoke during their meeting in 10 Downing Street about other challenges facing Europe and the West, including the refugee exodus from the Middle East and the need for NATO members to meet their spending commitments.

In a recent interview with "Atlantic" magazine, Obama complained about "free riders" in Europe and faulted Cameron for taking his eye off of the need to build a functioning state in Libya after a NATO intervention in 2011.

The two leaders also hoped to plot an effective plan to retake Mosul, in northern Iraq, where ISIS has been in control for almost two years. The U.S. has been working to develop the Iraqi military with the goal of liberating the city, but political concerns in Iraq's central government have led to questions about the effectiveness of the fighting forces.

Obama will reiterate his bid for greater cooperation during a visit to Germany on Sunday, where he'll meet with European allies, including Cameron, along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and French President Francois Hollande.

On that trip, he is also expected to make a long distance case to Americans about the need to preserve the U.S. relationship with Europe, following warnings by Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump that the transatlantic alliance is costing America too much money and not delivering sufficient results.

Cameron, who has previously condemned some of Trump's controversial remarks, was asked to weigh in on the campaign, following reports that the prospect that the real estate mogul could win the White House is triggering panic around the world.

He said he would not elaborate on his prior remarks but would not "subtract" from them either.

Obama Urges U.K. To Remain In EU

By Colleen McCain Nelson And Jenny Gross
[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Obama Threatens United Kingdom Over Trade If It Leaves European Union

By Charlie Spiering
[Breitbart](#), April 22, 2016

"I figured you might want to hear from the president of the United States what I think the United States is going to do," Obama said during a press conference Obama with Cameron in London.

If the United Kingdom left the European Union, he suggested that there would likely be a new trade agreement with them, but warned that "it's not going to happen anytime soon."

"Our focus is in negotiating with a big block of the European Union to get a trade agreement done, and UK is going to be in the back of the queue," he said. He added that U.S. negotiation with a "big market" of the European Union would help trade negotiations go smoother.

Obama added that the decision to exit would be made by the people of the United Kingdom.

"I'm not coming here to fix any votes," he said. "I'm not casting a vote myself. I'm offering my opinion."

Obama Warns Britain On Trade If It Leaves European Union

By Michael D. Shear And Steven Erlanger
[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama on Friday bluntly urged Britain to vote to remain inside the European Union in a referendum scheduled for June 23, and warned that a Britain outside the bloc could not count on maintaining its current economic relationship with the United States.

Taking an unusually direct position on another country's internal politics, Mr. Obama asserted that Britain's membership in the bloc did not limit British influence but "magnifies it."

Speaking alongside Prime Minister David Cameron at a news conference, he also directly addressed the potential consequences of a vote by Britain to leave. The president said that to do so would send Britain to the "back of the queue" for a trade deal with the United States, challenging those who have argued that Britain could quickly replicate the same favorable terms it enjoys as a European Union member.

Mr. Cameron is leading the campaign to remain part of Europe, but the issue has deeply divided his Conservative Party and polls suggest that the outcome could be close, making the forcefulness of Mr. Obama's statements especially striking.

Mr. Obama was stating his view of American national interests, while also clearly trying to support Mr. Cameron. But the arguments here are fierce and increasingly bitter, and Mr. Obama was attacked as a hypocrite and worse by those who favor a British exit, or Brexit.

Mr. Obama defended the right of a close friend to give an opinion on a matter of mutual interest. "Part of being friends is being honest, and, speaking honestly, the outcome

of that referendum is a matter of deep interest to the United States, because it affects our interests as well," he said.

Mr. Obama sidestepped a question on whether the "special relationship" between Washington and London would be damaged if Britain voted to leave the European Union.

Nor did Mr. Obama comment on a suggestion by Mayor Boris Johnson of London, a leader of the campaign to leave the bloc, that the president was unfriendly to Britain because of his ancestry. Mr. Johnson, a Conservative, suggested on Friday that Mr. Obama removed a bust of Winston Churchill from the Oval Office because it "was a symbol of the part-Kenyan president's ancestral dislike of the British Empire, of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender."

Mr. Obama said he saw another bust of Churchill every day in the White House residence.

"I love the guy," he said. But as the first African-American president, he said, he "thought it appropriate" to have a bust of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the Oval Office.

Mr. Cameron, for his part, smiled thinly and said that "questions for Boris are questions for Boris and not questions for me."

The prime minister praised Mr. Obama for his friendship and "sage advice," and said that Britain was made stronger through its continued membership in the European Union and that "the stronger we are, the stronger that special relationship" with the United States will be. Mr. Cameron noted that "it was hard to find any country that wishes Britain well that wants us to leave the E.U.," and that Britons should listen to their friends and then vote as they choose.

Strong historical, emotional, cultural and security ties with Britain would continue no matter the vote, Mr. Obama said. But the United States, he said, was convinced that Britain made a shaky Europe stronger and more stable by its membership and that the bloc "enhances" Britain's "influence and power and economy."

He argued that the United States accepted constraints on its sovereignty, too, in multilateral institutions like NATO, the United Nations Security Council, the Group of 7 and Group of 20, and did so for the common good, which also was in America's interests.

Earlier on Friday, Mr. Obama and his wife, Michelle, traveled by helicopter to Windsor Castle for lunch with Queen Elizabeth II, who turned 90 on Thursday, and her husband, Prince Philip, 94.

The Obamas also had a private dinner Friday night with Prince William and his wife, Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and Prince Harry at Kensington Palace in London.

Mr. Obama's comments at the news conference underlined his argument, made in an op-ed piece published on Friday in *The Daily Telegraph*, that Britain is stronger and more influential inside the European Union.

The president's decision to wade into the issue during his two-day visit prompted objections from many supporters of the campaign to leave the European Union. Nigel Farage, leader of the U.K. Independence Party, said that Mr. Obama should "butt out."

One of the most polarizing responses came from Mr. Johnson, who was born in Manhattan and retains his American passport as a dual citizen. Mr. Johnson, who is also a member of Parliament and has ambitions to replace Mr. Cameron as prime minister, has argued that the United States is a traditional nation-state that would never transfer some of its sovereignty to any European Union-like organization.

"For the United States to tell us in the U.K. that we must surrender control of so much of our democracy — it is a breathtaking example of the principle of do-as-I-say-but-not-as-I-do," Mr. Johnson wrote in *The Sun* newspaper, which is influential among working-class voters.

"It is incoherent. It is inconsistent, and yes it is downright hypocritical," Mr. Johnson said.

On Twitter, Nicholas Soames, a Conservative member of Parliament and a grandson of Churchill, condemned Mr. Johnson's essay, calling it "an appalling article" that is "totally wrong on almost everything." It was "inconceivable," Mr. Soames said, that his grandfather would "not have welcomed" the president's views on Britain's role in Europe.

A former leader of the Liberal Democrats, Menzies Campbell, said that "many people will find Boris Johnson's loaded attack on President Obama's sincerity deeply offensive," and Diane Abbott, a Labour Party lawmaker, said that "Boris dismissing President Obama as 'half-Kenyan' reflects the worst Tea Party rhetoric."

American officials suggested that there was an internal debate about the wisdom of the straightforward opinion editorial Mr. Obama wrote in *The Telegraph*, but decided that it was better to be upfront about the president's views as he arrived in Britain and not pretend to be coy.

Mr. Cameron clearly favored a strong message from the American president, whose position is shared by the leaders of Britain's main European allies, France and Germany.

Britain and France are the two strongest military powers in Europe, and Britain is the second-largest economy in the European Union and fifth largest in the world.

The economic risks of Britain's exit from the union are important to British voters, but so are immigration and the inability of Britain to limit the number of European Union citizens who want to live and work here. While studies show that the immigrants contribute considerably more to the British budget in taxes than they receive in benefits, there are worries that the immigrants are taking jobs away from Britons.

These arguments are likely to be more important than those about Britain's standing in the world or the country's relationship with the United States.

Obama In London: 'I'm Not Coming Here To Fix Any Votes'

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

President Barack Obama on Friday pushed back against criticism that he is unjustly interfering in the domestic politics of the United Kingdom by forcefully opposing its exit from the European Union.

"Well first of all, let me repeat: This is a decision for the people of the United Kingdom to make. I'm not coming here to fix any votes. I'm not casting a vote myself," Obama said during a news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron in London.

Obama remarked of British critics, "I'm offering my opinion, and in democracies, everybody should want more information not less.

"And you shouldn't be afraid to hear an argument being made," he said. "That's not a threat. That should enhance the debate."

The remarks follow an op-ed in The Telegraph published Thursday in which Obama urged the British people to snub Brexit when the referendum comes to a vote in June. More than 100 members of the country's Parliament had written Obama entreating him not to interfere.

London Mayor Boris Johnson ripped into Obama on Friday, suggesting in another op-ed that his hostility toward the United Kingdom's independence from the EU stems from his "half-Kenyan heritage" and disdain for Great Britain's history as a colonizer.

The Gospel According To Obama: President Preaches At The British People And Issues Extraordinary Warning That 'The UK Will Be At The Back Of The Queue' For Trade Deals With America If It Leaves The EU

By Matt Dathan, Mailonline Political Correspondent

[Daily Mail](#), April 22, 2016

Mr Cameron shook hands with Mr Obama after the President's lengthy intervention in favour of Britain's EU membership. The US President issued an powerful warning to the British people ahead of the June 23 referendum, exceeding even the hopes of In campaigners who were awaiting his endorsement.

But Justice Minister and Vote Leave spokesman Dominic Raab immediately hit back at Mr Obama.

Defying Critics, Obama Urges Britain To Remain In EU

By Luis Ramirez

[Voice of America](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON—U.S. President Barack Obama has dived into a heated debate over a June 23 referendum in which British voters will decide whether their country will remain in the European Union.

"I don't believe the EU moderates British influence in the world, it magnifies it," the U.S. leader said at a joint news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron following their meeting Friday.

Obama's remarks are a boost for Cameron, who has come out in support of remaining in the European Union.

But they have inflamed so-called Euroskeptics, who reject what they say is interference by the U.S. leader in a domestic matter.

In a column published in The Telegraph newspaper moments after Air Force One touched down late Thursday at Stansted Airport outside London, Obama urged Britain to stay in the EU.

"Ultimately, the question of whether or not the UK remains a part of the EU is a matter for British voters to decide for yourselves," Obama wrote. "A strong Europe is not a threat to Britain's global leadership; it enhances Britain's global leadership."

'Special relationship'

The United States and Britain have what Washington leaders have, since the time of Winston Churchill, described as "a special relationship," and the U.S. sees Britain's membership as Washington's voice in the 28-nation grouping.

Royal Guardsman look out from the Quadrangle of Windsor Castle after President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama arrived at Windsor Castle in Windsor, England, April 22, 2016.

"The United States sees how your powerful voice in Europe ensures that Europe takes a strong stance in the world, and keeps the EU open, outward looking, and closely linked to its allies on the other side of the Atlantic. So the US and the world need your outsized influence to continue — including within Europe," Obama wrote.

In his remarks alongside the British Prime Minister, Obama also warned that Britain would end up "in the back of the queue" on trade deals if it left the EU.

'Butt out'

Obama's statements drew a sharp rebuke from those who back Britain's exit.

Right-wing U.K. Independence Party leader Nigel Farage had strong words for the U.S. leader, saying he should "butt out." Farage and others argue that being in the EU has caused Britain to lose control of its borders by handing other countries the power to admit migrants who are then sometimes able to travel to the U.K.

London Mayor Boris Johnson described Obama's statements as hypocritical and said U.S. leaders "would never contemplate anything like the EU for themselves."

Those sentiments were echoed by Euroskeptic campaigners distributing leaflets in a southeast London neighborhood hours before Obama's arrival.

"I'd just say this to President Obama: I don't think he has the right to lecture us until the U.S. accepts an open border with Mexico, a supreme court in Havana, and VAT [Value Added Tax] set in Buenos Aires," Tom Harwood, a 19-year-old volunteer and university student, told VOA.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (left) stands with the President and First Lady of the United States Barack Obama and his wife Michelle, in the Oak Room at Windsor Castle ahead of a private lunch hosted by the Queen, in Windsor, Britain, April 22, 2016.

Lunch with Queen

Earlier Friday, the U.S. president and first lady Michelle Obama went to Windsor Castle for lunch with Queen Elizabeth II, who celebrated her 90th birthday a day earlier.

Obama presented the queen with a photo album of her numerous meetings with U.S. presidents and first ladies.

Obama said he had to confess that part of the reason for his trip was to wish the queen a happy birthday. He said the monarch was a "real jewel" to the world, not just Britain.

The queen does not express her opinions on political matters.

Obama Supports Cameron's Call For U.K. To Remain In EU

By Tom Risen

[US News & World Report](#), April 22, 2016

President Barack Obama said Friday that the world's economy and the fight against terrorism would be weakened if Britain decides to break its ties with the 28-member European Union, even as he defended himself against charges that he was meddling in internal British politics.

"I am not coming here to fix any votes, I am not casting a vote myself, I am offering an opinion," Obama said of the criticism during a press conference alongside British Prime Minister David Cameron. His comments followed an op-ed in the Telegraph on Friday in which the U.S. president appealed to the British public as a "friend" to remain in the organization.

U.K. voters head to the polls next month for a referendum on whether to leave the bloc. Obama, in London for a three-day visit, argued that the special relationship between the U.S. and U.K. is stronger because of the international organizations both countries belong to.

"Nations that make their presence felt on the world stage aren't those that go it alone," Obama said. "The U.K. is at its best when it is helping to lead a strong Europe. It leverages U.K. power."

London Mayor Boris Johnson, a leader of the campaign for the U.K. to leave the European Union, wrote his own op-ed in the Sun newspaper stating that Obama is hypocritical "to tell us in the U.K. that we must surrender control of so much of our democracy."

Johnson also made a controversial criticism in the article about "the part-Kenyan president's ancestral dislike of the British empire," noting a story about how Obama moved a bust of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill outside of the Oval Office when he became president.

Asked about Johnson's comment, Obama responded that he still keeps a bust of Churchill outside the Oval Office, but as the first African-American president he moved it during his term to make room for a bust of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

"I love Winston Churchill. I love the guy," Obama said.

The U.K. appears divided on whether to cut its ties with Europe. YouGov polling as of last week showed that 40 percent of U.K. citizens supported remaining in the EU, while 39 percent favor the so-called "Brexit." Another polling average showed a 51 percent to 49 percent split in favor of remaining in the union.

Obama also noted the global financial implications that would ensue if such international ties were broken because 44 percent of the U.K.'s exports go to Europe, and trade deals – including the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – would be harder to negotiate if Britain were not an EU member state. Cameron said that deal, which would eliminate tariffs on goods shipped between the U.S. and EU as well as align regulatory systems to facilitate trade, has the potential to be the biggest trade deal "in the history of the world."

The deal will almost certainly come up Monday when U.S. and U.K. leaders meet with French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Cameron added that he and Obama "would like to see an international anti-corruption coordination center."

The prime minister highlighted his nation's special status as an EU member that is not part of the eurozone single currency or open borders agreement, adding "we maintain our borders and will continue to do so." Many in Cameron's Conservative Party question the benefits of EU membership as the union's economic growth has lagged behind the U.K.'s in each of the last five years.

Cameron defended Obama's stance in favor of EU membership and said "I have not found a country that wishes Britain well that wishes us to leave the European Union."

"I want Britain to be as strong as possible" Cameron said. "We draw strength and project strength ... and make our people wealthier... by being in the EU."

Obama noted that European unity has been "under strain" because of global financial crises and the rush of

Syrian refugees fleeing to Europe, which he said amplifies a global debate about immigration during this “time of globalization.” It is believed that more than 1 million Syrian refugees migrated into Europe last year, and security concerns about the recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium have led some European and American lawmakers to call for stricter border controls.

Obama cautioned against giving in to “the forces of division,” alluding to rhetoric voiced by Republican presidential candidates, including Donald Trump, who has called for immigration reform and a temporary ban on Muslims entering the country.

“There is a temptation to want to just pull up the drawbridge,” Obama said. “We see that played out in some of the debates that have happened in the U.S. presidential race. That debate is accelerating in Europe.”

Both leaders spoke about their commitment to fight the Islamic State group and prevent terrorist attacks. The jihadist group has recently worked to expand its presence in Libya but “there are no plans for ground troops in Libya,” Obama said, adding that the U.S. and U.K. can supply training and expertise to government forces there.

“As this progresses, we can’t wait if [the Islamic State group] is starting to get a foothold there,” Obama said. “And so we are working not just with the Libyan government but a lot of our international partners to make sure that we’re getting the intelligence that we need.”

Regarding Syria, Obama said he and Cameron “have looked at all options” to end hostilities but added “none of them are great,” and he voiced his continued desire to see President Bashar Assad step down. Obama also criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin as “the pre-eminent backer of a murderous regime,” adding that he spoke with the Russian leader on Monday to put more pressure on Assad to maintain the cessation of hostilities.

Britain Would Go To The ‘back Of The Queue’ When It Comes To US Trade Deals If It Leaves The EU

By Laura Hughes

[Telegraph \(UK\)](#), April 22, 2016

Britain would not be able to strike a free trade deal with the US “any time soon” and would go to the “back of the queue” if it leaves the EU, as Washington’s focus would be on reaching agreement with the European Union, Barack Obama has said.

The President was speaking after Downing Street talks with Prime Minister David Cameron during a two-day visit which he has used to speak out in favour of continued UK membership of the 28-nation bloc after the June 23 referendum.

However, he said the special relationship is “solid” and “will continue – hopefully eternally” even if the UK votes to leave the EU and that he wasn’t here to “fix votes.”

He warned that leaving the EU would not be in Britain’s economic interests.

He said: “If, right now, I have got access to a massive market where I sell 44 per cent of my exports and now I’m thinking about leaving the organisation that gives me access to that market and that is responsible for millions of jobs in my country and responsible for an enormous amount of commerce and upon which a lot of businesses depend – that’s not something I would probably do.”

Obama Is Threatening Britain Over The EU. Are We Going To Take That?

By Tim Stanley

[Telegraph \(UK\)](#), April 22, 2016

Calm down Tim, calm down. Many Brits will be disgusted with the president’s remarks – many won’t take the threat seriously. Many will also note that his term is coming to an end. President Ted Cruz will, I’m sure, do a deal with us.

But there’s no denying that Remainers can claim that Obama has shot Leave’s fox. For years they have claimed that we could leave EU and trade freely with the world. Obama has thrown up a roadblock: the US, he said, would not be keen. This poses a serious problem to the Eurosceptic cause.

For the future, Britons have to rethink their relationships with everyone. This isn’t a common Eurosceptic point-of-view, but it is mine.

The only way Britain is ever going to assert itself on the world stage is if it actually chooses to do so. Leadership is lacking because a common sense of national purpose is lacking.

Frankly, I think Corbyn’s internationalist socialism is a better model than the one we have right now. Either way, tomorrow is St George’s Day (a Syrian born saint – Britain has always been multicultural at heart) and the anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

We don’t have to give up the fight for independence yet. Even if we are just a “happy few”.

Anger As London Mayor Tells ‘Part-Kenyan’ Obama To Butt Out

By Jill Lawless

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON (AP) – London Mayor Boris Johnson, a leader of the campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, faced a flurry of criticism Friday for suggesting U.S. President Barack Obama may have an “ancestral dislike of the British Empire” because of his Kenyan roots.

On a visit to the U.K., Obama weighed in on Britain's debate about European Union membership, urging U.K. voters to back staying in the 28-nation bloc.

"I don't think the EU moderates U.K. influence in the world – it magnifies it," Obama said at a news conference with Prime Minister David Cameron.

His opinion – also expressed in a Daily Telegraph newspaper article – angered campaigners for a "leave" vote in the June 23 referendum, who accused the American president of meddling.

Johnson said Obama's advice was "paradoxical, inconsistent, incoherent" because Americans "would never contemplate anything like the EU for themselves."

Writing in The Sun newspaper, Johnson recounted a claim that a bust of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was removed from the Oval Office after Obama was elected and returned to the British Embassy.

Johnson wrote that some said removing the bust "was a symbol of the part-Kenyan president's ancestral dislike of the British Empire, of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender."

Obama's late father was from Kenya, a former British colony that gained independence in the 1960s.

Obama did not respond directly to the remarks about his ancestry. But he did mention the Churchill bust, saying the Oval Office had limited space and, as the first African-American U.S. president, he thought it was important to have a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. in the room.

He said the Churchill bust remained in a prominent White House location outside his private office "so that I see it every day – including on weekends when I'm going into that office to watch a basketball game."

"I love Winston Churchill," Obama said. "I love the guy."

Johnson said later that he was "a big fan of Barack Obama" and had not been trying to suggest the president was anti-British.

But the mayor's comments drew criticism from his political opponents. Former Liberal Democrat leader Menzies Campbell said "this attack constitutes an unacceptable smear."

"Many people will find Boris Johnson's loaded attack on President Obama's sincerity deeply offensive," he said.

Stephen Wall, former British permanent representative to the European Union, said: Johnson's comment about the president's Kenyan heritage "is demeaning to the debate," and Labour Party lawmaker Diane Abbott said that "Boris dismissing president Obama as 'half-Kenyan' reflects the worst Tea Party rhetoric."

Churchill's grandson Nicholas Soames – like Johnson a Conservative lawmaker – tweeted that Johnson's article was "totally wrong on almost everything."

"It is not compulsory to have head of WSC (Winston Spencer Churchill) in President's office. Stupid irrelevant empty point to make," he said.

Nigel Farage, leader of the anti-EU U.K. Independence Party – who told Obama bluntly to "butt out" – supported Johnson's remark.

"Because of his grandfather and Kenya and colonialization, I think Obama has a bit of a grudge against this country," he said.

After meeting Obama at 10 Downing St., Cameron was asked about the comments by Johnson – a political rival in the Conservative Party who aspires to succeed Cameron as prime minister.

"Questions for Boris are questions for Boris ..." he said. "They're not questions for me."

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Obama Says Loves Churchill In British Row Over 'Part-Kenyan' Remark

By Estelle Shirbon And David Milliken

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Obama Rebutts Churchill Bust Truthers: 'Love The Guy'

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

On the same day the mayor of London questioned Barack Obama's commitment to the United Kingdom's ideals by citing a debunked story that the White House jettisoned the bust of Winston Churchill, the president affirmed his admiration for the country's iconic wartime prime minister. And he reminded the world that Churchill's image is well-enshrined at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In his op-ed assailing Obama for opposing Brexit, London Mayor Boris Johnson referred to claims that the current White House had returned the Churchill bust to the British embassy in Washington, a story that the administration rebutted in 2012 by noting that it had moved to the Treaty Room on the second floor of the residence.

Obama reiterated on Friday during a news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron that "right outside the door of the Treaty Room, so that I see it every day, including on weekends when I'm going into that office to

watch a basketball game, the primary image I see is a bust of Winston Churchill.”

“It’s there voluntarily, ‘cause I can do anything on the second floor,” Obama said. “I love Winston Churchill. Love the guy.”

Noting that President George W. Bush kept a Churchill bust in the Oval Office, Obama remarked upon how there are only so many tables where busts can be placed, lest it begin to look cluttered.

“And I thought it was appropriate, and I suspect most people in the United Kingdom might agree, that as the first African-American president, it might be appropriate to have a bust of Dr. Martin Luther King in my office to remind me of all the hard work of a lot of people who would somehow allow me to have the privilege of holding this office,” Obama said. “I think people should know that, know my thinking there.”

Obama Denies Disrespecting Churchill: I ‘Love The Guy’

By Julian Hatterm

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama on Friday batted back at allegations from London Mayor Boris Johnson that he disrespected former Prime Minister Winston Churchill by removing a bust of the leader from the White House.

“I love Winston Churchill. Love the guy,” Obama said during a press conference in London.

The London leader Friday accused Obama of snubbing the United Kingdom by getting rid of a bust of Churchill. The allegation has been a repeated line of attack from conservatives who say Obama is neglecting an important U.S. ally.

While Obama did remove one bust of Churchill from the Oval Office and return it to the U.K. shortly after entering office in 2009, he still keeps another, similar bust just outside his personal office in the White House residence.

“I see it every day — including on weekends, when I’m going into that office to watch a basketball game,” Obama said. “The primary image I see is a bust of Winston Churchill.”

Earlier on Friday, Johnson had published an op-ed in *The Sun* suggesting that Obama’s decision to remove the Oval Office bust was either “a snub to Britain” or “a symbol of the part-Kenyan president’s ancestral dislike of the British empire.” The op-ed came as part of a British backlash to Obama’s calls for the U.K. to stay in the European Union. Johnson and others are encouraging British voters to back leaving the EU.

In raising the issue of the Churchill bust, Johnson was entering into a long line of controversy over the move. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who is running for president, has hammered Obama on the issue, as had former GOP

presidential nominee Mitt Romney and ex-House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio).

The White House attempted to explain the issue in 2012, in the midst of the midterm elections.

Like all presidents, Obama had the option to redecorate the White House when he entered office in 2009.

“As the first African-American president, I thought it might be appropriate to have a bust of Dr. Martin Luther King in my office,” he said on Friday, “to remind me of all the hard work of a lot of people who would, somehow, allow me to have the privilege of somehow holding this office.”

But there were a limited number of places that busts could go.

“There are only so many tables where you can put busts,” he said. “Otherwise, it looks a little bit cluttered.”

So the White House decided to give the Oval Office Churchill bust — which had been officially on loan from the U.K. since President George W. Bush entered office — back to the British government. According to the *Washington Post*, it is currently installed in the U.K. ambassador’s residence in Washington.

Obama declined to respond to Johnson’s remarks about his ancestry during the press conference.

This story was updated at 2:00 p.m.

London Mayor Criticized For Obama ‘Part-Kenyan’ Remark

By Jane Onyanga-Omara

[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON — London Mayor Boris Johnson faced criticism Friday for writing that President Obama’s “part-Kenyan” heritage could have played a part in the decision to remove a bust of Britain’s wartime leader Winston Churchill from the Oval Office.

Johnson, who is leaving the role next month, wrote an article in *The Sun* supporting the campaign for Britons to vote to leave the 28-member European Union in a June referendum. The comments came as President Obama weighed in on the vote during a visit to the United Kingdom.

“In the residence on the second floor – my private office, it’s called the Treaty Room – right outside the door of the Treaty Room ... the primary image I see is a bust of Winston Churchill. It’s there voluntarily. I love Winston Churchill ... love the guy,” Obama said Friday.

He said when he was elected, his predecessor kept the bust of Churchill in the Oval Office and there are only so many tables where you can put a bust.

He said as the first African American president, he instead displayed a bust of Martin Luther King “to remind me of all the hard work of a lot of people who would somehow allow me to have the privilege of holding this office.”

In 2012, the White House said reports of the removal of the bust were false and that it was still in the White House.

In the article, Johnson, a member of the ruling Conservative Party, wrote that the bust of the revered World War II leader was sent from the White House to the British Embassy in Washington in 2009 after Obama took office.

“No one was sure whether the President had himself been involved in the decision,” Johnson wrote. “Some said it was a snub to Britain. Some said it was a symbol of the part-Kenyan President’s ancestral dislike of the British empire — of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender.”

Obama’s father was Kenyan.

John McDonnell, a member of parliament for Britain’s opposition Labour Party, tweeted in response to Johnson’s article: “Mask slips again. Boris part-Kenyan Obama comment is yet another example of dog whistle racism from senior Tories (Conservative Party members). He should withdraw it.”

Fellow Labour Party MP Chuka Umunna, added: “These Tory Mayoral types are beyond the pale... Boris plays on @BarackObama’s Kenyan ancestry.”

Johnson’s office didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment from USA TODAY.

Barack Obama Visit: Stick With EU, US President Urges UK

[BBC News \(UK\)](#), April 22, 2016

Barack Obama has urged the UK to stick with the EU, as he began his final trip to Britain as US president by having lunch with the Queen.

Mr Obama, who is on a three-day visit with his wife Michelle, is meeting PM David Cameron for talks.

Mr Obama has told the Daily Telegraph being in the EU magnified Britain’s influence across the world.

But London Mayor Boris Johnson called his view “hypocritical”, describing the EU system as “alien” to US traditions.

Prime Minister David Cameron is hosting Mr Obama at Downing Street.

The leaders are holding talks on the fight against so-called Islamic State (IS) and will later be joined by the UK’s home, foreign and defence secretaries, and the chancellor.

Mr Cameron and Mr Obama are expected to discuss the progress being made in combating IS in Iraq and what more can be done to tackle the group in Syria.

The situation in Libya, where the West is considering how to support the newly-established Government of National Accord (GNA) in the battle against IS, will also be discussed.

The pair will later hold a joint press conference.

Image copyright Reuters Image caption David Cameron and Barack Obama are holding talks before they are joined by UK government ministers

Image copyright AP Image caption The leaders were expected to discuss so-called Islamic State during their talks

Earlier the president and First Lady Michelle Obama attended a private lunch with the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh at Windsor Castle – the day after the Queen’s 90th birthday celebrations.

The Obamas brought the Queen a photo album of her many visits with US presidents and first ladies.

The album begins with her visit to the United States in 1951.

Then known as Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh, she toured George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate and met with President Harry Truman at the White House.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry will welcome the Obamas for dinner at Kensington Palace on Friday evening. Analysis

Image copyright Reuters Image caption The president and his wife had lunch with the Queen and Prince Philip

BBC deputy royal correspondent Sarah Campbell

The Duke of Edinburgh drove the Queen into the Castle grounds to meet the president and first lady as they disembarked from their helicopter.

After a quick chat, there was some discussion over where people should sit, with Mr Obama opting for the front seat.

Prince Philip, aged 94, returned to the wheel.

This is the third time the couples have met and the first time in the historic surrounds of Windsor Castle.

Their last meeting was during a visit in 2011 when the Obamas stayed in Buckingham Palace.

In 2009, in what was taken to be a sign of a friendly relationship between the families, the first lady was photographed with her arm around the Queen’s waist.

In their meetings since, including today, there does seem to be a genuine warmth between the two families.

Today’s lunch is private. To the frustration of the many journalists covering this visit, whatever the Queen makes of the president’s views on Britain in Europe will remain within the castle walls.

Image copyright AP Image caption Royal Guardsmen were on duty at Windsor Castle for the Obamas’ arrival

Image copyright AFP Image caption Prince Philip drove the Obamas and the Queen to Windsor Castle from its grounds ‘Silent testament’

The president’s intervention in the UK’s forthcoming EU referendum on 23 June has been hotly debated and sparked claims of “hypocrisy” from those who want to leave the EU. They claim the US “would never contemplate anything like the EU for itself”.

In an article for the newspaper, President Obama acknowledged that ultimately the matter was for British voters to decide for themselves.

But he also said: “The outcome of your decision is a matter of deep interest to the United States.

“The tens of thousands of Americans who rest in Europe’s cemeteries are a silent testament to just how intertwined our prosperity and security truly are.”

In response, Mr Cameron tweeted: “The US is one of our closest allies. So it’s important to hear Barack Obama on why we should remain in the EU.”

BBC North America editor John Sopel said the president had not needed to make his intervention and could have been much more nuanced.

“That he has is a mark of the profound concern felt in Washington about the implications of a British departure from the EU,” he said.

Media caption President Obama touches down in Windsor

However, BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg said a Brexit-supporting cabinet minister had stressed that Obama’s view “was not the settled view in the USA. The Republicans don’t agree and there is disquiet at his blatant meddling in UK politics”.

The minister had suggested Ted Cruz supported Brexit, she added. ‘Stick together’

Speaking to the paper, Mr Obama said that the US’s relationship with the UK had been “forged as we spilt blood together on the battlefield”.

He went on to say the UK had benefitted from being inside the EU in terms of jobs, trade and financial growth, and that it “magnifies” the UK’s global influence.

“This kind of co-operation – from intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism to forging agreements to create jobs and economic growth – will be far more effective if it extends across Europe. Now is a time for friends and allies to stick together,” he wrote.

Image copyright Reuters Image caption The president and his wife were at Winfield House in London before they joined the Queen and Prince Philip for lunch

Former US State Department spokesman James Rubin told BBC Breakfast the president had not offered any words of reassurance about Britain’s future relationship with the US if it left the EU because “it won’t be OK”.

“We have a phrase in America: ‘Friends don’t let friends drive drunk,’” he said, adding that it would be “a big mistake for Britain to leave the EU and set asunder what has been a very successful relationship”. ‘Hypocritical’

But Vote Leave’s Boris Johnson said although he was a “big fan” of Mr Obama, remaining in the EU is “clearly something we have a disagreement on”.

He said: “America’s a proud democracy built on principles of liberty. It is hypocritical for us to be told by America to embroil ourselves ever more deeply in a structure which would be absolutely alien to American traditions.

“I think most Americans would accept that there is something rum about asking us to subordinate our democracy in this way, when America would not dream in a million years of doing likewise.”

Image copyright AP Image caption Mr Obama arrived in the UK on Thursday night

Mr Johnson originally criticised Mr Obama in an article in the Sun but has since been criticised for making comments about the president’s “part-Kenyan” ancestry.

Tory MP Iain Duncan Smith, who is also part of the Vote Leave campaign, echoed Mr Johnson’s comments, adding: “I can imagine no circumstances under which he would lobby for the US Supreme Court to be bound by the judgements of a foreign court.”

Former British army commander Richard Kemp told the BBC Mr Obama’s comments on security were “diametrically opposite to the reality” and staying in the EU would be worse for UK’s national security and for international security.

Mr Obama’s UK stay is part of a tour taking in Germany and Saudi Arabia, which he left on Thursday after having discussions with King Salman on issues including Iran, Syria, Yemen and the fight against so-called Islamic State militants.

Why U.S. Businesses Agree With Obama About ‘Brexit’

By Max Ehrenfreund

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama’s relationship with the business lobby has always been contentious, but American business and the American president seem to be in agreement about European politics.

Obama is London Friday at the invitation of British Prime Minister David Cameron. The two men are hoping to persuade the British people that the United Kingdom should remain in the European Union, a question that voters will decide in a national referendum in June.

Ahead of Obama’s visit, a group that represents major transatlantic corporations released a survey showing that its members are worried about the chances that voters will want out.

Economists say that one of the major benefits of membership in the European Union is that manufacturers in the United Kingdom can export their products to countries on the European continent without paying tariffs or dealing with regulatory discrepancies in the rules governing their products.

The research firm Oxford Economics has forecast that exiting the E.U. could reduce the size of the U.K. economy by between 0.1 percent and 3.9 percent by 2030.

Those potential losses are a concern for U.S. firms that do business in the United Kingdom. Seven in 10 firms in the straw poll by BritishAmerican Business – which surveyed companies that do business in both countries – said the effect

of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union on their businesses would be negative or strongly negative, according to a press release.

Mark Dorsett, the U.K. director of Caterpillar, called the issue "fundamental to our business interests," according to the survey.

"We fully respect that the British people will decide the U.K.'s future relationship with the E.U., but we believe the U.K.'s continued membership of a reformed competitive E.U. is the best option," he said. Caterpillar, based in Peoria, Ill., employs 9,000 people in the United Kingdom.

Those arguing for the country's exit from the European Union say that regulations imposed from Brussels are hampering U.K. firms.

Yet if there is one thing that the business lobby seems to like less than regulation, it's uncertainty – and a vote to leave the European Union would raise lots of questions for firms that do business there by forcing British officials to renegotiate the rules that govern trade with the rest of Europe.

Outside of the survey by BritishAmerican Business, other U.S. corporate leaders have been making this point.

"If the outcome of the referendum is to exit, what you have for sure is going to be two years or three years of intense negotiation and a massive uncertainty," Daniel Pinto, the head of the corporate and investment bank at JPMorgan Chase, told investors in February. "It may be good or bad in the long term. In the short term, the amount of uncertainty based on the negotiations will be really bad for everyone."

Face Time With Queen, Princes Completes Obama's Royal Visit

By Darlene Superville

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON (AP) – President Barack Obama plunged into a whirlwind of socializing Friday that began over a birthday lunch with Queen Elizabeth II and was ending at a dinner hosted by the trio of young royals who represent the future of the British monarchy.

Obama, accompanied by his wife, Michelle, arrived by helicopter on the verdant grounds of Windsor Castle, the sprawling, centuries-old royal residence and tourist lure located just west of London where the queen celebrated her 90th birthday a day earlier.

With a patterned scarf tied around her head in a light drizzle, the queen climbed from the dark blue Range Rover that her husband, Prince Philip, drove to the landing area, and Britain's oldest and longest-serving monarch welcomed her third American president to the castle.

The couples exchanged handshakes before climbing into the vehicle – ladies in the back seat – for the short ride to the castle. Inside, the queen led the group into a sitting room

warmed by a fire and asked the president where he wanted to sit.

Obama was also expected to have dinner with the queen's grandsons later Friday.

"The queen's been a source of inspiration for me," Obama said later at a news conference alongside British Prime Minister David Cameron. "She is truly one of my favorite people ... an astonishing person."

The queen donned a periwinkle blue suit for the private lunch while Mrs. Obama wore an Oscar de la Renta print dress topped with a dark purple Narciso Rodriguez coat. The Obamas brought a gift in a box wrapped in gold paper and embossed with the presidential seal: a photo diary of the queen's many visits with U.S. presidents and first ladies. The album opens with her 1951 visit when, as Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh, she toured George Washington's estate at Mount Vernon in Virginia and met President Harry Truman at the White House.

She has not visited Obama at the White House.

Obama was capping the evening with a trip to Kensington Palace, where he and the first lady were invited for dinner with Prince William, his wife, Kate, and his brother, Prince Harry. William is second in line to ascend to the throne after his father, Prince Charles.

The series of royal engagements made up the centerpiece of Obama's three-day, valedictory trip to London, which was filled with multiple helicopter lifts and his lengthy motorcade winding its way through the city's narrow and winding streets.

Obama broke up the royal holiday by stopping at 10 Downing St. for private talks with Prime Minister David Cameron about the Islamic State group, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, the global economy, Russia's stance toward Ukraine, politics and other issues.

They also discussed Britain's possible exit from the European Union, or Brexit, which Obama opposes, as well as the U.S. presidential campaign that will determine Obama's successor.

Cameron is leading the campaign in favor of Britain's continued membership in the 28-nation EU and wants Obama to speak out against leaving. Voters will have the final say in a June 23 referendum. Cameron faces opposition from within his Conservative government and widespread skepticism among voters about the benefits of continuing in the EU. Backers of those who support Britain's exit have accused Obama of hypocrisy and meddling.

Obama said solving world challenges "requires collective action" as he stated his case for why Britons should keep their country in the EU.

The president and his family have enjoyed a series of engagements with the British royal family since he took office in 2009, including his first meeting with the queen that year.

After the appointment, Obama said she was “delightful” and reminiscent of his grandmother.

The queen also welcomed Obama on a state visit in 2011 that included an overnight at Buckingham Palace.

“Each time, the president has come away with an even deeper personal affection for her,” said Obama spokesman Josh Earnest.

The 2009 meeting is also where the queen and the much-taller Mrs. Obama showed how quickly they took a liking to each other by briefly standing arm in arm at a palace reception for participants at an economic summit in London. The queen strayed from protocol by wrapping an arm around the first lady, who reciprocated.

A palace spokesman at the time described the scene at the ladies’ first meeting as a “mutual and spontaneous display of affection.”

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IMMIGRATION

Undocumented Mother Pins Hopes On High Court, Then Rushes Back To Work

By Pamela Constable

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Catia Paz sat quietly inside a vaulted Supreme Court chamber. She was wearing her best Sunday outfit and listening intently as lawyers argued for and against an executive action by President Obama that would offer Paz — a mother of two from Woodbridge, Va. — her last remaining chance to become legal in America.

As the hearing ended, she descended the courthouse steps Monday to a cheering crowd of immigrant activists and families who were exuberantly predicting victory for their cause. But Paz, who had waited in line since 5 a.m. for a chance to witness the hearing, had no time to savor the moment. She was late for a job interview and had to start her cleaning shift soon after that.

“This means everything to me, and I am hoping for the best,” Paz, 31, said later. “If we win, I will finally be able to visit my country, to get a driver’s license, maybe to buy my own house. But we have a long wait until the judges decide. For now, I will just keep working and caring for my kids.”

Paz is one of an estimated 4 million undocumented immigrants who could benefit from the president’s 2014 action, which offered those whose children are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents the right to live and work in the United States for a three-year period that can be renewed. That program was challenged in federal court by 26 state governments, and it is now under review by the high court.

Like many members of the Washington region’s large Central American community, Paz followed a familiar path here. She crossed the border as a teenager, joining her parents and dozens of other relatives who had fled war-torn El Salvador since the 1980s. Over the years, many of them found ways to legalize. Her parents obtained extended protection as refugees; others became permanent residents.

But Paz has remained in legal limbo for 15 years, even after she graduated from high school in Woodbridge, married a Salvadoran man and began to raise a family. In 2012, her younger sister was granted deportation relief under the president’s executive action for those who arrived illegally as children, but Paz was one year too old to qualify.

Now, as the mother of two children born in the United States, she is a likely candidate for Obama’s 2014 initiative, called Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, and she has already prepared all the necessary documents with help from counselors at CASA of Maryland and Virginia, a service and advocacy agency for immigrants.

“Catia’s case is like thousands of our members,” said Kim Propeack, a senior official at CASA, which is based in Hyattsville, Md. “If the Supreme Court doesn’t vote in favor of this program, it would be devastating to communities across the country and in the Washington area. It would affect not only families, but the economy and the tax base.”

Opponents of Obama’s proposed programs argue that they would be costly to implement, that they constitute an excessive use of executive powers, and that they would grant amnesty to millions of people who entered the country illegally, benefiting from public health and education systems and taking jobs from American-born workers.

For now, Paz’s right to remain here hangs by a slim legal thread. Several years ago, when her older daughter fell ill, immigration officials granted her a temporary reprieve from deportation, based in part on her steady job history and clean record. But she must reapply for the exemption once a year and has periodically been required to wear a bulky electronic ankle bracelet, used to prevent people from going underground if they fear being arrested or deported.

“I try to hide it under long pants, but people can still see it. It makes me feel like a criminal,” said Paz, who works two jobs, as a cleaner and department store clerk. “Once I asked an officer at the court why I had to wear it. He said it was either that or prison.”

Even though she entered the country illegally, Paz is proud of her accomplishments. She has learned to speak English well and found solid jobs, earning \$14 an hour as a department store clerk and supplementing that by cleaning offices. Her husband, German, works in construction.

The couple and their daughters, Genesis, 7, and Alison, 5, live with her parents and sisters in a red brick suburban house that is crammed with toys and car seats. In the driveway, there is room for two pickup trucks and a van from the evangelical church where she and her family are active members.

Most days, her life is a blur of work shifts, school pickups, housework and church meetings. But as the rancorous debate over illegal immigration has become center stage in national politics and the current presidential race, Paz has made a point of attending rallies to protest deportations or support Obama's executive actions.

She also volunteered to attend the Supreme Court hearing Monday, along with about 50 other immigrants and activists. The justices heard 90 minutes of oral arguments on both Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and a related initiative that would expand Obama's 2012 order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Court observers and legal experts have said the justices did not give any public indication Monday that they were likely to revive Obama's programs. With the court divided 4 to 4 along ideological lines since the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, experts suggested it might issue a tie vote on the case, leaving Obama's actions stalled and 4 million undocumented immigrants in limbo.

"It was a very emotional experience, but I tried to listen carefully. This was about my life," Paz said at home one evening this week. She said she was "optimistic" because the justices seemed to ask more questions of lawyers from the opposing side. "A lot of people are saying negative things, but I tell them we should not lose faith," she said. "Like everything else, this is really in God's hands."

SECRET SERVICE

Secret Service Lays Out Security Plans For GOP Convention

By Kyle Cheney
[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

Amid threats, tension and heightened concern accompanying what may be the first contested Republican national convention in 40 years, delegates and party leaders have openly worried about their personal safety and about whether it is safe to bring spouses and children to the Cleveland event in July.

But the Secret Service has been preparing for this moment for more than a year, and in an interview, a

spokeswoman for the agency insisted that every aspect of the event is being taken into account when it comes to security blueprints. And while it's not possible to control every possible interaction at an event with thousands of delegates coming to the middle of a major city, the agency insists that convention participants should feel safe in and around the event.

"We don't want the focus of the [convention] to be security. We want it to be the event itself," said Secret Service spokeswoman Nicole Mainor.

A rundown of the measures in place:

-Massive pre-planning: In December 2014, the Republican convention was dubbed a "National Special Security Event," or NSSE, which triggers an intense planning process that includes nearly two dozen subcommittees. Each is charged with a separate strand of convention security: monitoring airspace, water security, access to transportation, pedestrian safety, credentialing participants — even trash collection.

"We do a tremendous amount of advance planning and coordination so that we can secure our protectees," said the spokeswoman, Nicole Mainor. "There is a subcommittee that addresses every portion of this pie."

-Multiple security agencies: Though the Secret Service is at the top of the pyramid, other security agencies — federal and local — handle crucial tasks. The Federal Emergency Management Agency handles natural emergencies. The FBI deals with "crisis response and incident investigation." The Secret Service will primarily be stationed in the "inner perimeter" of the event, which includes the Quicken Loans Arena and its immediate surroundings. Local police handle the "outer perimeter" that includes broader swaths of the city.

-Communication: As the convention approaches, the Secret Service will disseminate "numerous messages to all groups involved" in the convention — from the Republican leadership to delegates to dignitaries to the press — that will provide guidance on keeping the event safe. "Everyone will be very well informed well prior to the actual event occurring," Mainor said.

-Restrictions on public demonstrations: Protests will be allowed "within sight and sound" of the convention attendees, but they will be closely monitored to ensure compliance with safety restrictions. Mainor said that protests will be allowed in "a reasonable manner that does not break any laws." "When people break those restrictions, they'll be dealt with appropriately," she said.

-Multi-level ID checks: Inside the arena, attendees will be subject to multiple levels of ID checks. If a delegate loses his badge, those redundancies should ensure that no one else fraudulently enters the convention using that delegate's credential. "There's secondary checks that would identify that," Mainor said.

OFFICE OF HEALTH AFFAIRS

U.S. Agencies Issues Rules To Protect Workers From Zika

By Julie Steenhuysen
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

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TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

On Encryption Battle, Apple Has Advocates In Ex-National Security Officials

By Eric Lichtblau
[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

In their years together as top national security officials, Michael V. Hayden and Michael Chertoff were fierce advocates of using the government's spying powers to pry into sensitive intelligence data.

Mr. Hayden directed a secret domestic eavesdropping program at the National Security Agency that captured billions of phone records after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Mr. Chertoff pushed for additional wiretapping and surveillance powers from Congress both as a top prosecutor and as Homeland Security secretary.

But today, their jobs have changed, and so, apparently, have their views on privacy. Both former officials now work with technology companies like Apple at a corporate consulting firm that Mr. Chertoff founded, and both are now backing Apple — and not the F.B.I., with which they once worked — in its fight to keep its iPhones encrypted and private.

They are among more than a half-dozen prominent former national security officials who, to varying degrees, have supported Apple and the idea of impenetrable “end-to-end encryption” during a furious national debate over the balance between privacy and security in the digital age.

In white papers, op-ed articles, conferences, newspaper and television interviews and elsewhere, the former officials have made their support for Apple clear. While their former jobs in the government are always featured prominently in their public appearances, their current business affiliations often go unmentioned.

The barrage of support has given Apple a public relations boost in a fight it once seemed destined to lose, but it has surprised and angered some law enforcement officials.

These officials question whether the business relationships that some of the former officials now have with Apple and other Silicon Valley companies — jobs that usually

pay far above their former government salaries — are behind their enthusiastic advocacy of privacy and encryption.

Among those who have voiced support for Apple's position are Mike McConnell, a former director of national intelligence; David H. Petraeus, a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency; R. James Woolsey, another former C.I.A. director; and Richard A. Clarke, a former top White House counterterrorism official. Like Mr. Chertoff and Mr. Hayden, they all now work with firms that have ties to the technology sector, records show.

It is unclear how much money Apple and other technology firms involved in the F.B.I. litigation have paid to the firms where the former officials now work; most of the firms declined to discuss their private business dealings, calling them irrelevant.

Mr. McConnell, who served as national intelligence director under President Obama and George W. Bush, argues that keeping the United States' computer systems safe from rival nations and rogue hackers should outweigh the F.B.I.'s interests in unlocking smartphones in criminal cases.

“I believe ubiquitous encryption is something that the nation is going to have to embrace,” Mr. McConnell, who is now a senior executive adviser at the consulting giant Booz Allen Hamilton, said in a telephone interview. “Apple has been leading the fight to go down that path, Google is right behind and Microsoft will be there before too long.”

Booz Allen's executive vice president, Thad W. Allen, a former Coast Guard commandant, has also voiced support for Apple's position on encryption, because, he said, American technology firms need to stay competitive in the international market.

Booz Allen has made a recent push to form “strategic alliances” with Apple and other technology companies, executives said.

Mr. McConnell and other former national security officials said that their work in the private sector had no impact on their public support for Apple. Not everyone agrees.

“They've followed the money and adopted pro-privacy positions that they wouldn't have dreamed of taking while in government,” said Tim Shorrock, a writer and foreign policy commentator who wrote a book on the business side of intelligence.

Some current law enforcement officials say they have been angered by the former officials' sharp and sometimes personal criticism of the F.B.I. (Mr. Hayden, for instance, said in an interview, “I think Jim Comey's wrong,” referring to the bureau's director.)

The Justice Department and the F.B.I. declined to comment. But Stewart Baker, a former Homeland Security official who is one of the few former officials publicly backing the F.B.I. in the encryption debate, said it was frustrating to

see old colleagues now echoing what he sees as erroneous assertions from Apple about the threat to its customers' privacy.

Still, he conceded that the efforts had been effective. What started as a dispute over a locked iPhone used by a terrorist in San Bernardino, Calif., has instead become a broader one over privacy and computer security, Mr. Baker said, and "they're getting a lot of people to side with Apple."

So strong is their support that Apple has included comments from several of the former officials in its legal pleadings. One filing included a comment from Mr. Chertoff at a conference last month that if Apple were forced to create a "back door" to get around its encryption, it would be like creating "a bacteriological weapon."

Another vote of support that Apple has included in its legal filings came from Mr. Hayden, who is one of the top executives at Mr. Chertoff's consulting firm, the Chertoff Group. "America is more secure — America is more safe — with unbreakable end-to-end encryption," Mr. Hayden, who led both the National Security Agency and the C.I.A., told a television interviewer a week after the Apple fight broke out.

Mr. Chertoff's firm also produced a 28-page report this year on the value of encryption, and its dealings with technology companies on security issues are extensive. Apple was also a corporate sponsor of a cybersecurity conference it hosted in October.

Mr. Hayden has acknowledged that he might have come down differently in the Apple dispute when he was the head of the N.S.A. If faced with an unbreakable device, he might have gone straight to the budget office and said, "I'm going to need another \$500 million because I'm going to kick my way in," he told the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

Still, Mr. Hayden said in a telephone interview that his strong stance on encryption dated back years and was not influenced by his post-government work at the Chertoff Group.

"It doesn't have any relevance to what I think about this," he said. "I answered this on its merits."

Mr. Chertoff was traveling and unavailable for comment, the Chertoff Group said. The firm declined to discuss its financial dealings with Apple.

But Mr. Chertoff acknowledged in a panel discussion last month that during his time inside the government, there were situations in which "I knew I had to move heaven and earth" to find out where a threat was coming from. His current focus on encryption, he said, is complementary to that previous stance on security and not contradictory.

The encryption debate erupted in February after the F.B.I. said it needed Apple's technical help to get into the iPhone used by Syed Rizwan Farook, one of the San Bernardino attackers.

Initially, the F.B.I. appeared poised to win the battle for public opinion. The attack, which killed 14 people, was the worst terrorist strike on American soil since the Sept. 11 attacks. Mr. Farook was dead; the phone's owner — the county of San Bernardino, where he worked — had consented to the search; and the Justice Department had a court order to do it.

But Apple has since gained public sympathy, with polls giving it a small but growing edge over the F.B.I. in support, and the battle has essentially ended in a draw now that the F.B.I. has managed to get into the phone by paying an outside group to help hack it.

With the F.B.I. still pushing to open other locked phones, Apple's backers are preparing for a long fight.

Mr. Hayden, the former N.S.A. director, warned listeners last month at the American Enterprise Institute that the flare-up in the San Bernardino case was "not a one-and-done."

Encryption is at the root of Internet communications, Mr. Hayden said, and "there is nothing we can do to stop that." His advice to his onetime government colleagues on the other side of the fight was simple: "Get over it," he said.

Tracing The Path Of Four Terrorists Sent To Europe By The Islamic State

By Anthony Faiola And Souad Mekhennet
[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

On a crisp morning last October, 198 migrants arrived on the Greek island of Leros, all of them seemingly desperate people seeking sanctuary in Europe. But hiding among them were four men with a very different agenda.

The four were posing as war-weary Syrians — all carrying doctored passports with false identities. And they were on a deadly mission for the Islamic State.

Two of the four would masquerade as migrants all the way to Paris. There, at 9:20 p.m. on Nov. 13, they would detonate suicide vests near the Stade de France sports complex, fulfilling their part in the worst attack on French soil since World War II.

The other two men would not make it that far.

Stopped upon arrival in Greece for lying about their identities, they were delayed — but only for a few weeks before being granted permission to continue their journey deeper into Europe. Their story — including key details never before disclosed — offers a cautionary tale for a continent suddenly facing its worst security threat since the end of the Cold War. The mens' journey from the battlefields of Syria was reconstructed through interviews with intelligence officials and from French investigative documents obtained by The Washington Post, as well as an interview with an Islamic State commander.

European security officials say they believe that the Islamic State has seeded terror cells on the continent over the past year and was able to do so in part because the European Union failed to come to grips with a migrant crisis that opened a funnel for the militant group.

Europe is now working with Turkey to bar its doors, ending the waves of irregular migration that washed over the continent last year. But more than a million migrants — a record — have already entered. Hundreds of thousands of them, European intelligence agencies say, may have done so without thorough checks at their entry point: Greece.

The vast majority of migrants were genuinely fleeing war and poverty. But, over the past six months, more than three dozen suspected militants who impersonated migrants have been arrested or died while planning or carrying out acts of terror. They include at least seven directly tied to the bloody attacks in Paris and Brussels.

The Islamic State is gloating that they have far more lying in wait.

“We have sent many operatives to Europe with the refugees,” an Islamic State commander said in an interview over an encrypted data service. “Some of our brothers have fulfilled their mission, but others are still waiting to be activated.”

The accounts of the two men who landed in Leros with plans to die in France, only to stop short of their goal, expose the weaknesses in a haphazard system that has created risks of unknown dimensions.

“The Greeks failed in protecting the borders into the E.U.,” said a senior European intelligence official who, along with 11 other senior European, U.S. and Arab officials interviewed for this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss classified information.

He added, “And we all failed by not pushing hard enough to establish that security.”

Overwhelming the Greeks

In early September, just a few weeks before the four men landed on Leros, they were invited to attend a secret meeting in a central Syrian city controlled by the Islamic State.

Two of them — the ones who would blow themselves up outside the Stade de France — were later glorified in an Islamic State video as unnamed militants from Iraq. The other two men, both round-faced and lightly bearded, were Mohamed Usman, a Pakistani who claims to be 23 years old, and Adel Haddadi, a 28-year-old Algerian.

Usman and Haddadi had joined the Islamic State in 2014, the men would tell European investigators. In Syria, they received extensive training with automatic weapons, but neither was a stranger to extremism.

Haddadi had previously been on the watch lists of Algerian intelligence for his activities; Usman was suspected of links to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a radical Pakistani terror group

tied to the 2008 siege of Mumbai, according to two senior European security officials.

That September meeting in Syria would prove fateful to their futures. In the living room of a home, according to their accounts, a senior Islamic State official told them that the time had come to leave the Caliphate.

“You are on a mission to go to France, to kill, to become a martyr,” an Islamic State commander told them, according to their testimony, which was cited by a European security official.

The men, in interviews with European investigators, would later recall an intense sense of pride at being picked for such a mission.

“They were happy and honored that they were chosen to die for the cause and for Allah,” said the European security official. “They were told that they would go to paradise.”

To get as far as Leros, the four men were spirited out of Syria and into Turkey, where they made their way to the coast. From there, they told investigators, they took a smuggler’s raft laden with migrants. The vast majority of asylum seekers departing from Turkey were arriving on Greek islands — some of which lie a brief 30-minute boat ride away. The numbers of arrivals were so large, in the thousands per day, that Greece — a nation brought to its knees by recession and E.U.-imposed budget cuts — could not handle the caseloads.

Frontex, the E.U.’s border agency, provided some preliminary vetting. But managing the masses was largely left to the overwhelmed Greek Coast Guard and to local island police, who were more used to chasing pickpockets than screening for possible terrorists.

Many of the new arrivals — particularly Syrians fleeing war — had no passports or legal travel documents at all. Yet European intelligence agencies and security analysts now estimate that up until the Paris attacks in November, only about 20 percent of the new arrivals were being thoroughly questioned and checked.

“The fact that only about 20 percent of those who entered Greece were fully processed allowed for a lot of cracks in the system,” said Ioannis Michaletos, an Athens-based security analyst. “This increased security risks in Greece, but also for the rest of Europe.”

In an interview, Zacharoula Tsigigoti, lieutenant general of the Greek police, conceded her forces were overwhelmed. Greece, she said, had pleaded with the E.U. for more help, but until the Paris attacks, that assistance — including requests for more staff and machines to enter migrants’ information into a regional database known as Eurodac — was not forthcoming.

“We had been asking for support knowing we needed more specialized personnel in the islands and more Eurodac machines,” she said. “But we received very little. Everyone knew we were facing huge financial problems. So for months

we had to make due with what we had, hoping help would arrive.”

Destination: Paris

On the morning of Oct. 3, the four terrorists tried to blend in with the migrants who had come ashore that day. According to a manifest, they were among at least 47 asylum seekers who said they were Syrians fleeing war. But there was also a dizzying array of other nationalities, including Somalis, Yemenis, Afghans and Palestinians.

When their turn came, the two Iraqi militants showed authorities doctored Syrian passports, according to the classified French files obtained by The Post. Remains of the documents found near their bodies at the Stade de France suggested they had come from a cache of more than 3,800 passports — all authentic — seized by the Islamic State after its major advances in Syria in 2013.

While the passports had been tampered with to insert new photographs, they otherwise appeared real to the eye and touch. The men’s claims of being Syrian asylum seekers were not seriously questioned by Frontex or the Greeks. Along with dozens of other migrants who landed that day, they were not detained and merely told to leave Greece within six months.

Classified records show the Iraqis who claimed to be Syrian — and who still have not been identified — then quickly traveled over land to Serbia, where they registered at a refugee camp in Presevo on Oct. 7. By November, they had linked up with the other assailants involved in the Paris attacks.

On Nov. 13, they became the only non-European born attackers to take part in a series of assaults that saw nine men kill 130 people at different locations in Paris. But that day, what was nine assailants might have been 11, possibly leading to even more victims but for the grace of a few extra questions in Leros.

Like the two Iraqis, Usman and Haddadi also produced falsified Syrian documents that senior European intelligence officials now think came from the same Islamic State stash of seized passports. But when questioned by Frontex, the two men, unlike the Iraqis, crumbled.

Usman, a Pakistani, did not speak Arabic well — quickly betraying his claim to be Syrian. Haddadi knew almost nothing about the city he said was his birthplace — Aleppo, Syria.

Under E.U. guidelines, the most the European border agency could do was pass them on to the Greeks. So that’s what they did, and the local authorities promptly lumped them in with a then-surging backlog of economic migrants who were using fake documents to enter the asylum system.

Both men were transferred to the larger Greek island of Kos, where they were given lightening legal judgments. In what became a customary practice in Greece, Usman and Haddadi received suspended three-month sentences along

with an order to leave the country within a month. It didn’t matter how or which way they went.

After gaining their freedom on Oct. 28, Haddadi, the more senior of the two, quickly sent a text via the messaging app WhatsApp to their Islamic State handler in Syria.

“We need money,” it simply said, according to intelligence officials with access to the pair’s phone records.

That money soon arrived via the same method often used by migrants — a wire from Turkey to Greece. Now flush with cash, the two men continued their journey.

They were only 25 days behind their Islamic State comrades traveling to Paris.

The men, taking a path frequently traversed by migrants, embarked on a trek through the western Balkans.

They knew their destination was France, but the men said they had not been given precise instructions on when or where the attacks would unfold. They also were unaware of the identities of the other Paris attackers besides the two Iraqi militants they had traveled with. They were to get further instructions along the way.

The Islamic State commander who spoke to The Post said that was the way the group was seeking to operate.

“The cells don’t necessarily know one another; that’s to protect other operatives,” he said. “So even if one or two get arrested, they won’t be able to lead to other operatives, because they don’t know them. We are not finished yet with Europe, since they didn’t seem to have understood our warnings.”

But their delay in Greece had a major side effect that may very well have saved lives: As the nine attackers were fanning out across Paris on the evening of Nov. 13, Usman and Haddadi were still on the road. After passing through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, they arrived in the shadow of the Alps: Austria.

And they had received fresh orders to stay put.

The men entered Austria without passports and offering fake names, while this time claiming to be from their real countries, Pakistan and Algeria. On Dec. 4, both men applied for asylum in Austria, and then took up residence in a teeming refugee center — a converted truck storage depot — about a mile from the German border.

Their phone records show that they had begun reaching out to contacts all over Europe, a list that, investigators say, included other newly arrived migrants as well as longer-term immigrants tied to the region’s criminal underworld.

European authorities had immediately launched a massive investigation following the Paris attacks, and were beginning to retrace the attackers’ steps. After finding a Syrian passport at the Stade de France, investigators ran fingerprints and discovered that two of the dead men had arrived in Greece as Syrian migrants on Oct. 3. With the aid of German and U.S. intelligence, a manifest of the day’s

migrant arrivals — including photos — was run through databases and a face-recognition system of known radicals and Islamic State militants, according to a senior European intelligence official.

The searches returned two hits — men also claiming to be Syrian who had arrived that day.

On Dec. 10, Austrian police in Salzburg received their photos and fake Syrian names from French intelligence. Within four hours, they had tracked them down to the refu-gee center on Münchener Street. A SWAT team moved in, arresting the two men in their room. As they were taken into custody, Haddadi attempted to pass his SIM card to another migrant, who was later arrested.

During 150 hours of interrogation, both men would tell their stories. They are now being held at an undisclosed jail in Austria, and based on their testimony investigators are pursuing various leads that have already led to the arrest of two more migrants in the same Salzburg camp where the men were living. Officials expect that the two men will ultimately be extradited to France to stand trial in connection with the Paris attacks.

“They are sad because they are still alive, because they feel they should have been martyrs,” said a European security official. “They are sad they did not die with the others in France.”

ISIS Ex-Hostages Identify Brussels Suicide Bomber As Captor

By Aurelien Breeden

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

Najim Laachraoui, one of the two suicide bombers who attacked Brussels Airport last month, has been identified by former Islamic State hostages as one of their captors in Syria, a lawyer for several of the hostages said on Friday.

Marie-Laure Ingouf, a lawyer for Nicolas Hénin and Pierre Torres, two of the four French journalists who were first detained in 2013 by the Islamic State in Syria, said that the former hostages had identified one of their captors as Mr. Laachraoui, who used the name Abu Idris at the time.

In the latest issue of the Islamic State’s online magazine Dabiq, Mr. Laachraoui was identified by the nom de guerre Abu Idris al-Baljiki.

Mr. Henin, Mr. Torres and two other French journalists, Didier François and Edouard Elias, were freed in April 2014 after 10 months of captivity in Syria.

Ms. Ingouf declined to say whether the former hostages recognized Mr. Laachraoui in photographs that were published after the attacks in Brussels on March 22 that left 32 civilians dead and 340 wounded.

Mr. Laachraoui was one of the two suicide bombers at Brussels Airport; a third detonated explosives at the

Maelbeek subway station later that same morning. Seven others believed to be involved in the attacks are in custody.

Investigators believe that Mr. Laachraoui, a 24-year-old engineering student who dropped out of college, manufactured explosives used not just in the Brussels bombings but also in the November attacks in the Paris area, which left 130 dead.

Mr. Henin had previously revealed that one of their most brutal and sadistic captors was Mehdi Nemmouche, a Frenchman with links to the Islamic State who had killed four people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels.

CYBER NEWS

Spy Chief Pressed For Number Of Americans Ensnared In Data Espionage

By Dustin Volz

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Rights Groups Want White House Framework Banning Monitoring Of Muslims

By Julian Hattem

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

More than two dozen civil liberties and human rights groups on Friday pressed the White House to make sure anti-terrorism efforts don’t infringe on people’s ability to freely practice their religion in peace.

Especially given the “current climate of scapegoating and anti-Muslim bigotry,” the groups wrote, the Obama administration should be sure to implement policies making it difficult for a future president to use current policies to monitor Muslims.

“It is all too easy to imagine a subsequent administration seizing on CVE [countering violent extremism] programs that are now in development as vehicles for systematic and large-scale profiling, patrolling and surveillance of American Muslim and communities presumed to be Muslim,” the 27 organizations wrote in the letter to White House counterterrorism adviser Jen Easterly.

Many rights groups have routinely been concerned about CVE programs, which aim to prevent violent extremism by encouraging teachers and community leaders to discuss ways that people become radicalized. Critics worry that the programs quickly amount to having people spy on their neighbors, and allow police to use schools, community centers and religious institutions to gather intelligence.

"Among our concerns is that law enforcement may use CVE as a pretext for intelligence gathering and other activities that treat entire communities as suspect," the groups wrote Friday.

Rights advocates have been outraged at suggestions by Republican presidential candidates Donald Trump and Ted Cruz that law enforcement officials should monitor mosques and Muslim communities.

On the heels of the terrorist attacks in Brussels last month, Cruz said that the U.S. should "patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods before they become radicalized."

The Obama administration has advocated for CVE-style programs, but has so far refrained from the kind of federal guidance for which the rights groups have advocated.

The organizations say that the White House should issue a federal framework for which kinds of policies to avoid, that could be implemented by federal, state and local agencies.

"[A]ppropriate strategies would treat communities holistically and address a range of needs and social problems, rather than through the singular lens of national security or law enforcement," they wrote.

Among the groups signing Friday's letter were Amnesty International, the American Civil Liberties Union, the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations and the Brennan Center for Justice.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

Obama Says Can Only Solve Syrian Problem Through Negotiations

By Roberta Rampton And Kylie MacLellan
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Russian Military Buildup Near Aleppo, Syria, Threatens Truce, Kerry Warns

By Peter S. Goodman
[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

Secretary of State John Kerry said Friday that Russia had moved heavy artillery into position outside Aleppo in northern Syria, raising new concerns that a partial cease-fire will come undone.

Russia's military buildup, described by Mr. Kerry in a meeting with The New York Times editorial board, came on the same day that talks in Geneva aimed at finding a political resolution to the years of civil war began to break down.

After the main opposition coalition walked out, Staffan de Mistura, the United Nations special envoy for Syria, said the fragile truce was "in great trouble if we don't act quickly."

Mr. Kerry, who was in New York attending the signing of the Paris agreement on climate change, said that he was generally encouraged by Russia's participation in the diplomatic effort. But he said he was not certain if Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin was sincere in his stated aims for the buildup: combating terrorism.

"We are not going to sit there and let him do his thing supporting the regime and hammer at the opposition and say, 'This is working,'" Mr. Kerry said. "Obviously, we're not stupid about it."

Critics of the partial cease-fire deal between the United States and Russia argue that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his allies have been using the pause in fighting to retake territory and buttress his standing. On Friday, the opposition coalition walked out over a lack of progress in the talks as warplanes bombed heavily in northern Syria.

If Mr. Assad were to retake Aleppo, he would once again control what was before the war Syria's largest city and economic center. Such a victory would give his government a psychological boost after more than five years of war.

Ever since Mr. Putin injected military forces into the Syrian civil war last fall, promising to target extremist Islamist groups, the Russian operation has been aimed more directly at shoring up the power of his regional ally, Mr. Assad.

Asked whether the latest Russian intervention was truly aimed at fighting shared Islamist enemies or rather a means of helping Mr. Assad, Mr. Kerry said, "We have yet to discover whether they are bona fide."

Mr. Kerry said that the Russians might be moving on Aleppo because members of the Al Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al Qaeda, were mixed throughout parts of the region, and that they were terrorists not party to the cease-fire. At the same time, he said, the region is home to insurgent groups that oppose Mr. Assad and have agreed to the cease-fire.

"That has proven harder to separate them than we thought," Mr. Kerry said. "And there's a Russian impatience and a regime impatience with the terrorists who are behaving like terrorists and laying siege to places on their side and killing people."

He said that to try to head off renewed fighting they have agreed with the Russians to a new 24-hour monitoring system. "We've even proposed drawing a line, an absolute line, and saying, 'You don't go over there, we don't go over here, and anything in between is fair game.' And they are considering that, and I think we will get there in the next week or so."

Mr. Kerry said that President Obama on Monday spoke directly to President Putin about the buildup near Aleppo, adding that he planned to speak with his Russian counterpart, Sergey V. Lavrov, later on Friday.

"We are not giving any benefit of the doubt," Mr. Kerry said. "We have challenged them very directly by this to show in effect that they are serious about this. And if they're not

serious about it then it becomes very, very difficult to hold on to a cessation of hostilities.”

Mr. Kerry declined to discuss what options the Obama administration might pursue. Analysts suggested that the options were few and perilous and that the Obama administration had shown no appetite for wading deeper into a messy war.

The United States has so far resisted giving increased lethal military aid to nonextremist opposition fighters, including shoulder-fired anti-aircraft weapons that would render Russian aircraft vulnerable, but could fall into the hands of terrorists.

The administration could potentially unleash covert Special Forces to take on the Islamists, but that would go against the grain of a pillar of the Obama administration’s policy to avoid further military involvement in the Middle East.

Analysts said they viewed the latest American moves to pressure Russia to avoid hostilities as no more credible than past threats.

“For this administration, it’s always been about ISIS,” said Andrew J. Tabler, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, referring to the Islamic State group. “If the Russians are there and they are propping up the regime, well, O.K.”

Mr. Tabler said the Russians had never had the same objective as the United States when it came to the partial truce. Instead, Russia agreed to a pause in hostilities in February, and then began pulling out some forces, while preserving a large enough offensive force to continue to wage war on behalf of Mr. Assad.

Aleppo is now divided, roughly split between the government-held west and rebel-held east. If the government can retake all of Aleppo and maintain the capital, Damascus, it effectively wins the war, Mr. Tabler said, adding that this would banish the Islamists and more moderate opposition groups to the desolation of sparsely populated areas to the east.

For the Obama administration, intent on dispatching ISIS, such an outcome might be the least unpalatable. Yet the course of the Russian offensive poses risks that could intensify other problems.

“The administration can let the Russians try to blast their way out of it, but the Russians blasting their way out it exacerbates the migrant crisis,” Mr. Tabler said. “The Russian activities are expelling people out of the country. Russia plays the role of arsonist and firefighter.”

Mr. Kerry all but acknowledged that America’s options were limited should it find itself at cross-purposes with Russian forces in Syria.

“The problem is when you go down that other road you’re talking about a lot more fighting and a lot more casualties and you’re talking about a lot more refugees and that brings with it a whole different set of problems,” Mr. Kerry

said. “So, are we bending over backwards to try to make it work? Yeah, we are going to try to make it work.”

Nick Cumming-Bruce and Anne Barnard contributed reporting.

Syria Peace Talks In Danger Of Collapse, Says U.N. Envoy

By Sam Dagher

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Syrian Peace Talks Limp On To Next Week With Opposition Absent

By John Davison And Stephanie Nebehay

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

U.N. Urges U.S. And Russia To Act Quickly To Save Syria Peace Talks

By Nick Cumming-Bruce

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

The United Nations special envoy for Syria on Friday called for urgent intervention by the United States, Russia and other powers to save fragile peace talks threatened by escalating hostilities and stalled negotiations.

The envoy, Staffan de Mistura, said a partial cease-fire that came into effect at the end of February was still in effect but “in great trouble if we don’t act quickly.” He added that a meeting of the International Syria Support Group led by Russia and the United States, which brokered the truce, was “urgently required.”

His comments came at the end of a week in which opposition negotiators pulled out of formal peace talks to protest mounting violations of the truce and the government’s refusal to allow deliveries of humanitarian aid to civilians trapped by fighting.

Airstrikes on Friday hit insurgent-held areas in Aleppo, where residents counted at least 11 airstrikes in eight neighborhoods, in addition to attacks by surface-to-surface missiles, that left at least 16 people dead, Adnan Hadad, an antigovernment activist in the city, said in an Internet chat.

Rescue workers and residents called it the most intense day of bombing since a partial truce was announced at the end of February.

Despite a flurry of activity in the past two days that brought about the evacuation of 500 people in need of medical care from besieged towns in Syria, and delivery of aid to the town of Rastan, the situation on the ground remained dire. The United Nations acknowledged this week

that since the start of the year it had reached fewer than half the people in towns mostly besieged by government forces, and even fewer — barely seven percent — in so-called hard-to-reach areas.

The apparent impasse of the Geneva talks has shifted diplomats' attention to a proposed ministerial meeting of the 17-member group of global and regional powers most engaged in the Syrian crisis. This meeting could take place at the end of the month, possibly in New York, but diplomats said a date and location had yet to be agreed upon.

United States officials have said that Russia had moved artillery to support an offensive by Syrian government forces on Aleppo, increasing their concerns about the level of Moscow's commitment to using its influence with the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, to make progress in the talks.

Mr. de Mistura said he would continue his meetings in Geneva, probably until Wednesday, but he acknowledged that both sides are "extremely polarized." Diplomats monitoring the talks have said that they did not expect much in the coming days.

The High Negotiation Committee, representing a coalition of opposition groups, withdrew most of its negotiators in Geneva over the past two days, and said there was little point in returning to formal talks until there was a clear commitment from the Syrian government to talk about a political transition that does not include Mr. Assad. So far the government has offered only a government of national unity, interpreted by opposition negotiators to mean they would be offered a few cabinet positions in a government still led by Mr. Assad.

Mr. de Mistura said he would meet the Syrian government's top negotiator, Bashar Jaafari, on Monday to discuss the proposal for a government of national unity, but he acknowledged that after five meetings he still did not understand what the government proposal entails.

"Is this going to be cosmetic, is this going to be real, and if it is real what does it mean for the opposition?" he asked.

As government warplanes stepped up attacks on the insurgent-held suburbs of Damascus, one crashed southeast of the city, according to antigovernment activists. Russia's semiofficial Interfax news agency confirmed the report and said the plane was a MIG-23.

Islamic State — the extremist militant group, which was never party to the partial cease-fire — claimed in a news release issued on social media to have captured the plane's pilot. The group released video that showed its fighters around the wreckage of a plane, but it did not show the pilot, and there was no word from the Russian or Syrian governments on whether a pilot was missing.

Deadly Airstrikes In Syria Further Strain Cease-Fire As Peace Talks Near Collapse

By Erin Cunningham

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Fresh air raids and deadly clashes across Syria are threatening to unravel the country's already fragile cease-fire, activists and rights monitors said Friday. The renewed fighting comes as peace talks brokered by the United Nations also are on the verge of collapse.

Airstrikes on rebel-held areas of Aleppo killed at least 19 people on Friday, some of the deadliest raids since a cessation of hostilities took hold in late February, activists said. Government strikes also reportedly killed civilians in the nearby province of Idlib.

The reports come a day after U.N. special envoy Staffan de Mistura told Radio Television Suisse in Geneva, the site of the talks, that the Syrian war has killed about 400,000 people, a figure far higher than previous U.N. estimates of 200,000 to 250,000.

In Geneva, the talks faltered this week as opposition delegates walked out to protest what they said were Syrian regime violations of the cease-fire. On Friday, the head of the Syrian government delegation to the negotiations, Bashar Jaafari, said that he had met with de Mistura and that the talks would resume Monday. The opposition, represented by the High Negotiations Committee, has said that technical representatives will remain in Geneva to discuss humanitarian aid.

The U.N.-supported negotiations have stalled over the opposition's demand that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad step down as a precondition for any political transition. The government delegation has said that Assad's position as president is nonnegotiable.

With the cease-fire brokered by the United States and Russia under strain, the United States said this week that it was concerned about reports that Russia was rebuilding its military capabilities in Syria, where it began a military intervention last fall intended to boost Assad, a longtime ally. A few weeks ago, Russia said it was withdrawing its forces, but its troops and aircraft still appear to be participating in the fighting.

The Syrian Civil Defense force, a grass-roots volunteer unit that assists civilians in the aftermath of strikes, said Friday that its teams were reporting "streets littered with bodies" in places such as Aleppo, Syria's largest city.

"We return to work with sadness and heavy hearts," the group, also known as the White Helmets, posted Friday on its Twitter account. "Attacks are everywhere," it said in a separate post.

Also on Friday, regime forces clashed with Kurdish fighters in the northeastern city of Qamishli for the third straight day. Syria's ethnic Kurds have declared an

autonomous zone in parts of northern Syria, raising tensions with government forces. Reports posted online by activists suggested that Kurdish forces from the People's Protection Units, or YPG, managed to wrest control of several regime positions in Qamishli. Later, activists said a truce was declared.

The YPG has emerged as a key ally for the United States in its campaign against the Islamic State militant group in Syria. The YPG has also taken advantage of Russian airstrikes to fight rebels in areas it believes should be under Kurdish control.

Deadly Airstrikes Hit Northern Syria As Talks Stall

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

BEIRUT (AP) – At least 18 people were killed Friday when airstrikes hit several rebel-held neighborhoods in Syria's contested northern city of Aleppo, anti-government activists said, an escalation that placed added strain on a fragile cease-fire.

Aleppo, Syria's largest city and former commercial center, has seen sporadic clashes since the cease-fire took effect in late February, as government troops have advanced, boxing in opposition-held areas from all sides except for a corridor from the northwestern edge of the city.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 19 people were killed in the airstrikes in Aleppo's Bustan al-Qasr neighborhood and other parts of the city controlled by rebels. The Observatory described the series of airstrikes as the most intense on the city since the cease-fire began. The Local Coordination Committees, an activist-operated media outlet, said at least 18 people were killed in Friday's airstrikes.

The February cease-fire has been teetering amid rising violence, and U.N.-brokered talks in Geneva to resolve the conflict have been bogged down, with the Saudi-backed opposition delegation recently suspending its participation.

The High Negotiations Committee, which represents most of the opposition at the U.N.-brokered talks, accuses the government of repeatedly violating the U.S. and Russian-brokered cease-fire, illegally detaining thousands of people and blocking humanitarian aid access.

France's foreign minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, warned that the negotiations over Syria's political future have entered a "danger zone."

Speaking with reporters in Paris, he said that humanitarian access to besieged areas "must be total" and that there have been "too many fetters."

The Syrian government's envoy to peace talks in Geneva, Bashar Ja'afari, defended his government's record on humanitarian aid, lashing out at the opposition for shedding "crocodile tears" about alleged lapses.

Ja'afari spoke to reporters at U.N. offices in Geneva where indirect peace talks and other meetings on Syria's crisis have been held in recent months. He said his delegation will meet with U.N. mediator Staffan de Mistura again on Monday.

The U.N. envoy meanwhile said the current round of talks will continue until "probably Wednesday, as originally planned." But he said the two sides are "extremely polarized" and the cease-fire is in trouble.

De Mistura told reporters the hobbled peace process needs support from a group of countries known as the International Syria Support Group, led by the U.S. and Russia, and called on that body to reconvene at ministerial level.

The envoy also took issue with the government's claim that it was not besieging any towns or villages. He said the international community counts 18 priority besieged areas in Syria: 15 by the government, two by the armed opposition, and one by the Islamic State group.

De Mistura acknowledged that his estimate – made on Swiss TV a day earlier – that Syria's five-year war had taken 400,000 lives was "not verified." The U.N. stopped officially counting the toll at an estimated 250,000 dead several months ago, insisting lack of access prevented the collection of accurate figures.

Also Friday, a government plane crashed southeast of Damascus, and an Islamic State website said the extremist group, which operates in the area, downed the MIG-23. There was no immediate comment from the Syrian government.

Syrian government forces and Kurdish fighters were meanwhile clashing for a third day in the northeastern city of Qamishli, with at least seven people killed. Lezkin Ibrahim, a Kurdish media activist in Qamishli, said the fighting Friday was concentrated in the city center, forcing residents to stay indoors and shops to close.

He said Hawar news, the outlet where he works, has recorded 10 civilians and six Kurdish fighters killed. He said the wounded are being taken to neighboring towns for treatment because local hospitals are blocked by the fighting.

The Observatory, which monitors the conflict through activists on the ground, said the clashes killed seven, including a child and a woman.

Kurdish forces, who have carved out a zone of semi-autonomy in northern Syria, seized the Alaya prison in Qamishli on Thursday after government forces inside it surrendered.

Ibrahim said the fighting started after government forces attacked a Kurdish security patrol, killing two of its members on Tuesday. He said the government has shelled the city for the first time, and that government helicopters flew over the city on Friday.

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U.S. Military Doubles The Number Of Civilians It Admits Killing In Anti-ISIS Fight

By Dan Lamothe

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

The U.S. military on Friday acknowledged killing 20 civilians and wounding 11 more in recent airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, more than doubling the number of civilian fatalities it has admitted causing in the military campaign against the Islamic State.

The nine errant airstrikes occurred between Sept. 10 and Feb. 2, U.S. Central Command said in a statement. Six of the strikes occurred in Iraq, and three occurred in Syria, U.S. military officials said.

"We deeply regret the unintentional loss of life and injuries resulting from those strikes and express our deepest sympathies to the victims' families and those affected," the military's statement said.

The Pentagon had previously acknowledged killing an additional 15 civilians and wounding 15 in earlier airstrikes.

The latest disclosure came after Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter announced this week that he would authorize sending an additional 200 military advisers to work with Iraqi military and deploy both Apache gunship helicopters and rocket artillery strikes in a planned offensive to reclaim the northern Iraqi city of Mosul from the Islamic State.

The casualties also were announced after Col. Steve Warren, a military spokesman in Baghdad, said Wednesday that the authority to launch airstrikes that could cause civilian casualties has been delegated to lower levels than when the military campaign began. Initially, those strikes had to be approved by the top commander for Central Command, but authority has since been given to Army Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland, the top U.S. commander in Baghdad, or one of his deputy commanders, Warren said.

The most significant strike involving civilian fatalities acknowledged Friday occurred Oct. 5 in Atshanah, Iraq, near the city of Al Huwayjah, U.S. military officials said. Eight civilians were killed in a strike the U.S. military characterized as targeting a known position used by Islamic State fighters to launch mortars.

Five more civilians were killed Dec. 12 in the Iraqi city of Ramadi during an airstrike on what U.S. military officials described as a known Islamic State checkpoint after the

civilians "unexpectedly moved into the target location after weapons already were in flight." Another civilian in Ramadi died Nov. 12 during an airstrike targeting Islamic state fighters, U.S. officials said.

The other strikes that resulted in fatalities occurred in Kubaysah, Iraq, Sept. 10; near Raqqa, Syria, Dec. 10; in Tishreen, Syria, Dec. 24; in Mosul, Iraq, Jan. 11; and in Al Ghazili, Syria, Feb. 2. Two civilians died in the Kubaysah strike, and one each was killed in the other locations, U.S. military officials said.

U.S. Military Chief Pays Quiet Visit To Iraq Post Where Marine Died

By Missy Ryan

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, paid a visit on Friday to a tiny artillery outpost in Iraq, presenting Purple Hearts to four service members wounded in a recent rocket attack that also killed an American Marine.

During a stop in Iraqi Kurdistan at the end of a three-day visit to Iraq, Dunford slipped away by helicopter to Fire Base Bell, a tiny post adjacent to a larger Iraqi base southeast of Mosul. Accompanied by only a handful of aides, Dunford spent about 90 minutes with the approximately 200 Marines at the isolated facility, close to the front lines with the Islamic State.

Speaking to reporters later in the day, Dunford said he distributed the awards at the very gun position where Staff Sgt. Louis Cardin, a member of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, was killed last month in a militant rocket attack.

Cardin's death, which came shortly after the defensive base was established, was the second combat death of the renewed U.S. military campaign in Iraq, signaling deepening involvement in the campaign against the Islamic State.

Dunford said it was an emotional moment as he thanked the Marines, who operate four M777 Howitzers, providing protection not just to Iraqi troops massing for an eventual offensive to reclaim Mosul, but to nearby American advisers helping them prepare for it.

When defensive fire was required, "they're gonna get it on time and they're gonna get it on target," he said.

The general described progress in preparations for a future Iraqi offensive to reclaim Mosul. After meeting with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and Massoud Barzani, president of the Iraqi Kurdistan, this week, he said he saw signs that the Iraqi leaders appeared to be ready to collaborate on a joint plan to push into the city.

The United States is hoping that Kurdish peshmerga forces, who have proved effective in rebuffing the Islamic State, will play a key role in the offensive.

Dunford said Iraq and its allies had gained the momentum against the militants, who have lost territory across Iraq since they burst into northern Iraq in 2014. But he said maintaining the momentum requires additional efforts to build up a cohesive, well-equipped Iraqi force capable of taking on a well-armed group. "Once you got somebody in a headlock, you don't let them go," he said.

He acknowledged that morale continue to be mixed across the Iraqi army, suggesting the Iraqi government would likely select the units with the most experience and hardiness, such as the elite Counter-Terrorism Service forces, to spearhead the advance into well-defended Mosul.

Dunford said good leadership, along with the presence of coalition air cover, would increase the confidence and morale of Iraqi troops. President Obama recently approved the use of American attack helicopters for the Mosul battle.

"This is a clash of wills," he said. "Whoever's will is the strongest is going in the end to be successful."

The Baghdad Follies

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

Iraq, engaged in a brutal war against the Islamic State, faces myriad other problems, including a depleted treasury and a weakening dam in Mosul that if not repaired could flood a huge strip of territory and kill thousands. None of these problems can be effectively addressed given the failure of governance and societal cohesion that has now produced another political crisis.

On Tuesday Salim al-Jubouri, the Parliament speaker, suspended Parliament, days after lawmakers voted to remove him and elected an interim replacement. The turmoil centers on political corruption and fiscal mismanagement, which have become major issues since oil prices collapsed in 2014, sharply reducing the country's main revenue source as Iraq's military battles ISIS.

In February, under pressure from the Shiite clergy and with support from America and Iran, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi proposed a cabinet overhaul that would remove appointees with political and sectarian connections and replace them with presumably less corruptible nonpolitical technocrats.

After the list of technocrats was announced on March 31, Shiite political blocs, which dominate the government and fear the loss of patronage and influence, pushed back and forced Mr. Abadi to include more of their allies. Moktada al-Sadr, a radical Shiite Muslim cleric who once fought American troops and has refashioned himself as an anti-corruption reformer, is using the threat of street protests to demand more representation for technocrats and Mr. Abadi's resignation. Parliament has postponed action on Mr. Abadi's cabinet overhaul three times and this has led to moves to oust Mr. Jubouri as well.

Mr. Abadi has been unable to repair the social divisions and sectarian tensions that former Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki fed by alienating Sunnis and Kurds, who are minorities in the majority Shiite nation. By refusing to consult other political leaders in advance, Mr. Abadi has failed to build the coalitions needed to support initiatives like the cabinet overhaul. Even the threat of the Mosul dam collapse went unaddressed until the Americans publicly warned of impending disaster. Only then did Baghdad name an Italian firm to make repairs.

Such political dysfunction has been the one constant in Iraq since the American invasion in 2003. It has made some people rich and powerful, and has left millions of others without jobs, public services and hope of a better life. Now with the Islamic State holding significant territory in Iraq, including Mosul, the second-largest city, the government's incompetence poses a regional threat.

The United States is working with Iraq to prepare for a major assault to retake Mosul, a necessary goal. But President Obama has done little to explain the expanding mission to the American people to win public support. There are now about 5,000 American forces in Iraq, despite Mr. Obama's past pledges to withdraw all troops. On Monday, Pentagon officials said they were moving American military advisers closer to the front lines, giving Iraqis eight helicopters and providing \$415 million to pay the salaries of Kurdish militias.

American officials have been trying to persuade Iraqi leaders to calm the frictions and focus on the urgent Islamic State threat. Even as the Iraqis pursue military victory, they also need to create a plan to rebuild Mosul and allow Sunnis — who remained after the terrorist group forced Yazidis, Assyrians and other minorities to flee — more self-governance. But so far, the political chaos makes that impossible.

It would be disastrous if Americans, Iraqis and their partners were to succeed in the military campaign against the Islamic State only to have the politicians in Baghdad squander another chance to build a better future. More than 13 years since Saddam Hussein's overthrow, there's less and less reason to be optimistic.

175 States Signing Landmark Paris Deal On Climate Change

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – Leaders from at least 175 countries were signing the Paris Agreement on climate change Friday as the landmark deal took a key step forward, potentially entering into force years ahead of schedule.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, holding his young granddaughter, joined dozens of world leaders for a signing ceremony that set a record for international diplomacy: Never

have so many countries signed an agreement on the first available day. States that don't sign Friday have a year to do so.

"We are in a race against time," U.N. secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the gathering. "The era of consumption without consequences is over."

Many now expect the climate agreement to enter into force long before the original deadline of 2020. Some say it could happen this year.

After signing, countries must formally approve the Paris Agreement through their domestic procedures. The United Nations says 15 countries, several of them small island states under threat from rising seas, were doing that Friday by depositing their instruments of ratification.

China, the world's top carbon emitter, announced it will "finalize domestic procedures" to ratify the Paris Agreement before the G-20 summit in China in September. Ban immediately welcomed the pledge.

The United States also has said it intends to join the agreement this year. The world is watching anxiously: Analysts say that if the agreement enters into force before President Barack Obama leaves office in January, it would be more complicated for his successor to withdraw from the deal because it would take four years to do so under the agreement's rules.

The United States put the deal into economic terms. "The power of this agreement is what it is going to do to unleash the private sector," Kerry told the gathering, noting that this year is again shaping up to be the hottest year on record.

The agreement will enter into force once 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions have formally joined it. Maros Sefcovic, the energy chief for another top emitter, the 28-nation European Union, has said the EU wants to be in the "first wave" of ratifying countries.

French President Francois Hollande, the first to sign the agreement, said Friday he will ask parliament to ratify it by this summer. France's environment minister is in charge of global climate negotiations.

"There is no turning back now," Hollande told the gathering.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also announced that his country would ratify the agreement this year.

The climate ceremony brought together a wide range of states that on other issues might sharply disagree. North Korea's foreign minister made a rare U.N. appearance to sign Friday, and Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe brought applause when he declared, "Life itself is at stake in this combat. We have the power to win it."

Countries that had not yet indicated they would sign the agreement Friday include some of the world's largest oil

producers, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Nigeria and Kazakhstan, the World Resources Institute said.

The Paris Agreement, the world's response to hotter temperatures, rising seas and other impacts of climate change, was reached in December as a major breakthrough in U.N. climate negotiations, which for years were slowed by disputes between rich and poor countries over who should do what.

Under the agreement, countries set their own targets for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The targets are not legally binding, but countries must update them every five years.

Already, states face pressure to do more. Scientific analyses show the initial set of targets that countries pledged before Paris don't match the agreement's long-term goal to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), compared with pre-industrial times. Global average temperatures have already climbed by almost 1 degree Celsius. Last year was the hottest on record.

The latest analysis by the Climate Interactive research group shows the Paris pledges put the world on track for 3.5 degrees Celsius of warming. A separate analysis by Climate Action Tracker, a European group, projected warming of 2.7 degrees Celsius.

Either way, scientists say the consequences could be catastrophic in some places, wiping out crops, flooding coastal areas and melting Arctic sea ice.

"This is not a good deal for our island nations, at least not yet," the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, Nauru President Baron Divavesi Waqa, told the gathering. "The hardest work starts now."

As the Paris Agreement moves forward, there is some good news. Global energy emissions, the biggest source of man-made greenhouse gases, were flat last year even though the global economy grew, according to the International Energy Agency.

Still, fossil fuels are used much more widely than renewable sources like wind and solar power.

Friday was chosen for the signing ceremony because it is Earth Day.

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175 Nations Sign Historic Paris Climate Deal On Earth Day

By Doyle Rice

[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

World leaders from 175 countries signed the historic Paris climate accord Friday, using Earth Day as a backdrop for the ceremonial inking of a long-fought deal that aims to slow the rise of harmful greenhouse gases.

"We are in a race against time." U.N. secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the gathering at the United Nations headquarters in New York. "The era of consumption without consequences is over."

"The poor and most vulnerable must not suffer further from a problem they did not create," Ban added.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry signed the document while holding his young granddaughter. She was one of 197 children at the event to represent the parties that adopted the agreement, Ban said.

"These young people are our future. Our covenant is with them," Ban said. "Today is a day for our children and grandchildren and all generations to come."

The non-binding treaty, approved in Paris in December after years of U.N. climate negotiations, aims to slow the rise of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, blamed for putting Earth on a dangerous warming path.

The deal sets a target of limiting global warming by 2100 to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees F), as compared to pre-industrial levels. To accomplish that, each nation sets its own target for reducing emissions and updates that mark each year.

Friday's signing sets a record for the number of countries signing an agreement on the first available day, the Associated Press reported. The old record goes back to the Law of the Sea in Montego Bay, which was signed by 119 countries in 1982, according to AccuWeather.

Signing the accord is only one step in the process. The leaders must now go back to their home countries' governments to ratify and approve the agreement, which could take months or years. The deal goes into effect once 55 countries representing at least 55% of global emissions formally join.

Nations not at the ceremony will have one year to sign the accord, then will need extra time to get it ratified and approved by their governments.

The U.S. and China, which together account for nearly 40% of global emissions, said they intend to formally join the agreement this year, AP reported. Both nations signed the document Friday.

"The signing could not come soon enough," said Andrew Steer, president of the World Resources Institute. "Each month since the Paris agreement was reached has brought fresh evidence that Mother Nature has a fever and all life on Earth is suffering the consequences."

Last year was the planet's hottest on record, and 2016 is already on path to surpass it, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA.

Over the past winter, the peak in Arctic sea ice was the lowest since records began 37 years ago, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

"The signing and early ratification of the Paris agreement will be essential if we are to save the world from runaway climate change," said Hugh Sealy, a U.N. climate change expert from St. George's University in Grenada.

Environmental groups praised the event.

"We won't beat climate change with a piece of paper," said Rhea Suh, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Today marks a beginning, a historic start."

"We're leaving the age of Jurassic fuels behind — for good — and moving to cleaner, smarter ways to power our future," she said.

Others weren't as impressed.

Mike Duncan, president of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, called the signing "nothing more than a parlor game lacking consequence or purpose; it's purely symbolic."

"The simple truth of the matter is that the agreement is an exercise in futility as the reduction targets are wholly unachievable," he added.

Kerry Celebrates Signing Of Paris Climate Deal

By Devin Henry

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

Secretary of State John Kerry celebrated the signing of the Paris climate agreement on Friday, telling United Nations delegates it should sharpen the world's focus on fighting climate change.

"Today is a day to mark and to celebrate the hard work done by so many to win the battle of securing the Paris agreement," Kerry said at U.N. headquarters in New York. "But knowing what we know, this is also a day to recommit ourselves to actually win this war."

Kerry called the deal "powerful," but said it alone won't keep the Earth from warming more than 2 degrees Celsius, the underlying goal of climate negotiators.

"The power of this agreement is the opportunity it creates, the power is the message it sends to the marketplace," he said.

"The power of this agreement is what it is going to do to unleash the private sector, and what it IS already doing to set the global economy on a new path toward smart, sustainable development."

Officials from more than 170 countries gathered in New York to sign the climate deal on Friday, Earth Day. The deal, reached in Paris in December, represents the first time the the international community has agreed to reduce its greenhouse gases to confront climate change.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the number of countries signing the deal Friday was a record for the U.N.

“We are breaking records in this chamber and that is good news, but records are also being broken outside: record high global temperatures, record high ice loss, record high carbon levels in the atmosphere,” he said.

“We are in a race against time and I urge countries to move quickly to join the agreement at the national level so the Paris agreement can take affect as quickly as possible.”

Signing the deal means nations intend to eventually “join” the pact and execute its terms. Once 55 countries producing at least 55 percent of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions join the deal, it will take effect.

Fifteen nations will formally join the deal on Friday. United States officials, the State Department said this week, are still working on the internal documents necessary to join, something they intend to do this year.

U.S. And 170 Other Nations Sign Historic Climate Agreement

By Darryl Fears

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Secretary of State John F. Kerry joined the leaders of 170 nations Friday morning in signing an agreement to lower greenhouse gas emissions as part of a global effort to ward off potentially catastrophic impacts of climate change.

The event, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, coincided with Earth Day and marked “the largest number of countries ever to sign an international agreement in a single day,” said U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

“We are breaking records in this chambers, and this is good news. But there are also records being broken outside,” Ban said, referencing the hotter-than-ever recorded temperatures of the first three months of 2016. Other events tied to climate change also have triggered sharp concern globally: Greenland’s massive ice sheet has experienced more melting this spring than researchers have ever seen. Coral reefs known for their eye-catching colors are turning white in warming seas, with the Great Barrier Reef experiencing unprecedented bleaching.

“We are in a race against time,” Ban said.

The signing at 10:50 a.m., an hour behind schedule due to dignitaries’ lengthy speeches, was for a commitment to abide by the accord reached by an overwhelming majority of U.N. member states at climate talks in Paris late last year. Negotiators there agreed to take steps to prevent global temperatures from rising by no more than 2 degrees Celsius — 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit — by the end of the century. Island nations that took part in the talks argued that an even tougher mark of 1.5 degrees Celsius was needed to avoid devastating sea-level rise.

“This is a day to commit ourselves to actually winning this war,” Kerry stressed in his remarks near the end of the event’s opening ceremony. As 2015 closed as the warmest

year since the start of the industrial age, the nations in Paris heeded the mounting evidence: “Nature is changing due to our choices,” Kerry said.

The power of the climate accord, he noted, is the message it sends to the private marketplace to make sustainable goods and technology to battle global warming. “What it’s going to do is unleash the private sector,” he said.

The Obama administration faces a difficult fight with members of Congress to implement the U.S. greenhouse gas reduction goals. Many Republican lawmakers remain skeptical about whether human activity is causing climate change — despite overwhelming consensus by the world’s leading scientists — or whether the planet is even warming long term.

Longtime skeptic Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.) has said the declaration by the U.N. International Panel on Climate Change “proves that the U.N. is more interested in advancing a political agenda than scientific integrity.”

In February, the Supreme Court issued a stay on the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Program, considered to be the Obama administration’s most ambitious effort to control greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. The stay means the EPA cannot take industry cleanup actions at least until challenges are resolved in lower courts. Oral arguments in one case are expected to start in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on June 2.

“While the Clean Power plan is an important element of the president’s Climate Action Plan, it is only one component of a broad set of domestic actions this administration has put in place or is in the process of putting in place across the economy to reduce carbon emissions,” EPA spokeswoman Melissa J. Harrison said.

With their actions in New York on Friday, Kerry and leaders from China, Brazil, France, Congo, Italy, Morocco and other nations affirmed that climate change is indeed real and vowed to address it. The agreement comes with no mechanism compelling governments to fulfill their pledges, however. Like President Obama, other heads of state face determined opposition against expensive regulations.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada drew a large round of applause when he declared that developed nations such as his, the United States and those in the European Union are responsible for much of the emissions that drives climate change and should therefore help poor nations that are mostly suffering as a result.

“Canada’s ambition cannot end at home” with its own actions to curb carbon dioxide levels and other emissions, Trudeau said. “We have a role to play with poor nations, too. They should not be punished for something they did not do.”

The largest round of applause followed the appearance of award-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio, a vocal and longtime environmental advocate who was among the last

speakers. DiCaprio compared climate change to the overriding crisis of Abraham Lincoln's time, slavery.

"Yes, we have achieved Paris," DiCaprio said, addressing the politicians and officials before him. DiCaprio urged leaders to fight for the accord in the absence of a mandate to enforce it. "It will mean nothing if you return to your countries and fail to push beyond the promises of this agreement," he said.

After 21 years of meetings, talks and debates, DiCaprio said, the time for talk is over. "Our planet will not be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong."

Read more:

IPCC report says humans almost certainly cause global warming

The great thaw

5 things you should know about the historic Paris agreement

China, U.S. Pledge To Ratify Paris Climate Deal This Year

By Michelle Nichols And Valerie Volcovici

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Behind Climate Deal, A Changed World

By Mark Trumbull

[Christian Science Monitor](#), April 22, 2016

The signing of a global treaty on Friday marks more than just the symbolic launch of new policies on climate change. What's perhaps most significant is the changed mind-set that made the accord possible.

Where some past efforts to address global warming were marked by bickering and the search for grand bargains, the agreement reached four months ago in Paris was about pragmatism and nudges. Aspiration met the art of the possible.

The attitude seemed to be: Let's stop talking and start acting. That, it turned out, helped make the difference.

After all, a similar United Nations-backed climate summit in Copenhagen ended with a whimper in 2009. At today's Earth Day signing by more than 170 nations in New York, by contrast, countries are embracing an accord that promises to have tangible results and truly global buy-in.

A central agreed-on goal is to hold average global temperatures to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The deal, and the attitude behind it, might build a foundation for additional international steps in the future – steps that many climate experts say will be necessary to put that 2-degree target within reach.

How did this turnaround happen?

It's a story that involves both individual leadership and collective learning from past failures, climate experts say. They also cite two fundamental trends that have altered the currents in which policymakers swim: mounting scientific evidence of the threat and the rising availability of technologies to address it.

"The costs of acting are going down, while the costs of inaction are going up," says Michael Tubman of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, a nonpartisan group in Washington that supports policies to respond to climate change.

Since 2009, the price of solar power has fallen more than 80 percent, for example. Meanwhile, a rising perception of climate change as a here-and-now phenomenon may help explain why public concern about the issue has generally been edging up around the world since 2009, when the Copenhagen summit convened. What the world thinks

The pattern shows up in polling from Brazil to India, Kenya to Germany, and the United State. As of the Paris talks in December 2015, a global median of 54 percent saw global warming as a "very serious" challenge, according to Pew Research Center polling.

The issue remains politically divisive. In the US, for example, Republican candidates for president have voiced skepticism or outright opposition toward the treaty. Yet US participation in the Paris agreement doesn't require a congressional vote. And some policy experts say that, while political support for climate action may ebb and flow, the general trend is becoming deeper rooted over time.

Even in the US and China, the world's two biggest carbon-emitting nations, the Pew Center polling in 2015 found more than two-thirds of adults supporting action by their country to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions as part of an international agreement. In the US, 50 percent of Republicans feel that way.

In coal-reliant China, attitudes reflect not merely the climate issue but, more immediately, the high levels of pollution in populated cities as a risk to public health.

Against this backdrop, presidents and prime ministers from around the world have taken a heightened leadership role. So did nongovernment figures such as Pope Francis and philanthropist Bill Gates.

"Extraordinarily – I've never seen it in my entire time in public life – 140 heads of government all came to Paris on the same day to make clear their personal commitment to a global agreement," US Secretary of State John Kerry said in remarks during the December summit.

In that speech, he also pinpointed a crucial change in approach that set Paris in contrast with the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. That accord sought internationally agreed and binding carbon-reduction targets. Critics say is lacking in the current agreement. But supports say it makes action more feasible.

“Let me tell you something,” Mr. Kerry said. “Having been at Kyoto, and trying to pass it on the floor of the United States Senate, and not being able to, we have learned the lessons of the past. The reason that so many countries are at the table now, the reason that nearly all nations – all but 10 – have announced their own targets, is precisely because this doesn’t work one-size-fits-all. Because we have learned, through the years, that every country needs to take action based on its own assessments and its own capabilities, and those will change over time.” Push your neighbor

The new approach, in which nations develop their own plans, hinges on peer pressure as well as the domestic interests of each nation.

The “decentralized, non-binding approach is exactly what has brought so much weight and value to this year’s summit,” wrote the Monitor’s David Unger at the time. “Rather than be bound to a paper text, countries are instead bound to one another.”

That created a new sense of fellowship and activism. Small island nations became loud voices in a so-called “high ambition coalition,” supporting the goal of holding warming to 2 degrees, and the aspiration of capping the temperature rise at just 1.5 degrees.

And big nations also played their role. China, for one, didn’t want to again get the climate-laggard label it had in Copenhagen, said Joanna Lewis of Georgetown University, who spoke at a climate-policy discussion this week, hosted by The Christian Science Monitor. Leaders from the US and India, as well as China, could have easily been dissuaded by political or economic challenges at home.

“It took a tremendous amount of moral courage from these three leaders to really stick to their determination to get things done,” said Andrew Light, a senior fellow at the World Resources Institute, at the Monitor event.

Though it’s not formally part of the Paris agreement, new public and private investment in energy breakthroughs could hold the key to whether the world can actually achieve the 2-degree target. The commitments nations are making so far, while meaningful, will need to be expanded significantly over time to reach that goal, policy experts say.

But with the US and China pledging to move this year, the needed ratification by 55 nations accounting for 55 percent of global emissions might happen some time in 2016.

For now, the 170-plus nations signing the agreement at the UN in New York are more than have ever signed a treaty on its first day.

This Controversial Carbon Proposal Could Be The Key To Success For The World’s New Climate Agreement

By Chelsea Harvey

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

As people around the world gather to celebrate Earth Day, world leaders have convened New York this morning to sign a landmark agreement aimed at slashing greenhouse gas emissions and keeping global climate change in check. And as discussions intensify around the agreement’s likelihood of success, a growing number of experts are arguing that carbon pricing — a controversial economic method intended to cut down on emissions — may be the key.

On Thursday, a group of world leaders came forward with an ambitious new vision statement calling for the world to double the extent of global emissions covered under carbon pricing schemes by the year 2020 — and quadruple it within the next decade.

The group, known as the Carbon Pricing Panel, was convened by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde. It includes six heads of state — the leaders of Ethiopia, Chile, Canada, France, Germany and Mexico — as well as the governor of California, the mayor of Rio de Janeiro and the secretary general of the UN’s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The idea of carbon pricing is simple enough: By placing a monetary charge on carbon emissions, we can create an incentive to reduce them. The concept can take two major forms. Cap-and-trade schemes place a limit on the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions permitted and allow industries with low emissions to sell their leftover allowances to industries with higher emissions. In this case, the price becomes established by the market. A carbon tax, on the other hand, places a fixed price or tax rate on carbon emissions, which serves as an incentive to keep emissions low.

With the carbon tax approach, “you fix the price, and then you let the market respond to that price by adopting new technologies and changes in behavior,” said David Victor, an expert on global policy and strategy at the University of California San Diego. “The two systems share in common the idea that government by itself can’t figure out the best way to cut emissions so it should be left up to the market.”

The idea of carbon pricing has long been touted by economists as an effective tool for lowering emissions and combating climate change, and it’s increasingly gaining the support of business and political leaders as well. The Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition — an advocacy and leadership group launched during the Paris negotiations in December — consists of more than 20 national governments and dozens of private sector partners, including several notable oil and gas companies, such as Shell and BP.

Still, the idea has been slow to catch on with many political leaders — particularly in the U.S., where talk of carbon taxes has been highly controversial. California remains the only state with any pricing scheme in effect (a

cap-and-trade system), although groups in several others, such as Washington and Massachusetts, are working to implement carbon taxes.

Currently, only about 12 percent of global emissions are already covered by carbon pricing schemes. The new goal would expand this coverage to 25 percent by 2020 and, most ambitiously, 50 percent within the next decade.

Most of the current 12 percent comes from just a few places, Victor said — mainly the emissions trading schemes in the European Union and California, the two largest such programs in the world. Other programs already in existence include a trading scheme in Quebec and a carbon tax in British Columbia. But more may be on the way.

According to The World Bank, approximately 90 countries included proposals for carbon pricing schemes in the individual commitments they've made as part of the Paris Agreement. The most critical of these, if we're to make the 25 percent coverage goal by 2020, is that of China, Victor said. China has already launched a pilot emissions trading system in several provinces and is planning to implement a national program next year.

"That action alone gets you potentially 20 percent or so of world emissions," Victor said.

The importance of China's program was also noted in a new report from the Environmental Defense Fund and the International Emissions Trading Association, released alongside the vision statement on Thursday. The report explores the steps that would be necessary in order to meet the new goals, and concludes that they are possible — but only if existing carbon pricing schemes are maintained, China goes through with its proposed program and additional global action is taken.

Notably, the report recommends that emissions from civil aviation be placed under a pricing scheme and points out the need for other high-emitting countries — such as the U.S. — to implement or significantly scale up their own national programs.

Even if this happens, Victor pointed out that most of the existing or planned programs in the world today allow heavy regulations — for example, on automobile emissions — to do most of the work, rather than letting the market take care of itself. This is true in the European Union and in California, he said, and is likely done by design in order to prevent the market from driving prices too high and losing public support.

"What we don't see anywhere in the world today at large scale is actual real carbon pricing," he said. "They look like carbon pricing on the surface and you look behind the facade and you see most of the work is getting done by regulation."

Actually allowing the markets to work by themselves would be a "real accomplishment" some day, he said. But for now, the biggest challenge is simply getting more governments on board with any pricing scheme at all.

"The 50 percent goal by 2030 is going to be much harder because it involves getting lots of other countries to adopt carbon pricing systems that aren't even thinking about it right now," Victor said.

But making it happen may be a crucial component of the Paris Agreement's success.

"There is a growing sense of inevitability about putting a price on carbon pollution," said World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim in a statement accompanying the Carbon Pricing Panel's goals. "In order to deliver on the promises of the historic Paris climate agreement, a price on carbon pollution will be essential to help cut emissions and drive investments into innovation and cleaner technologies."

U.S. To Buy Heavy Water From Iran's Nuclear Program

By Timothy Gardner, Patricia Zengerle, Arshad Mohammed, Lesley Wroughton And Kirsti Knolle

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

U.S. To Buy Material Used In Iran Nuclear Program

Deal to purchase heavy water from Tehran aims to protect broad accord reached in July

By Jay Solomon

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Top House Republican Condemns Reported U.S. Purchase Of Iran Heavy Water

By Patricia Zengerle

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Republicans Accuse Obama Administration Of Back Door In Iran Sanctions Fight

By Karoun Demirjian

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

House Republicans are doubling down against the White House in a campaign to prevent Iran from doing business in U.S. dollars, the latest political spat between them and the Obama administration over implementation of the Iran nuclear deal.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-Calif.) introduced a measure this week to make denying Iran access to dollars a hard-and-fast law, while GOP leaders

have issued near-daily condemnations of the administration for not promising more forcefully that Iran won't find a backdoor to the U.S.-based financial system.

"If President Obama won't rule out new concessions to the Iranian regime, Congress should," Royce said. "Iran's supreme leader must not be allowed to seek 'death to America' with U.S. dollars in his pocket."

It's a charge administration officials reject and have repeatedly tried to discredit, saying they have no intention of letting Iran start to deal in dollars.

But on Thursday, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.)'s office raised the pitch of the GOP's campaign, writing on the speaker's blog that Secretary of State John Kerry had "left the door ajar, if not completely wide open," to giving Iran "an unprecedented economic windfall" during talks with his Iranian counterpart this week.

Ryan suggested that Friday might be the day when Kerry gives Iran the keys to the financial, dollar-denominated castle.

State Department spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday that Kerry would speak with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif about sanctions relief, and that the U.S. government had been trying to explain to international banks that deal in dollars where they could interact with Iran without running afoul of U.S. sanctions.

Seeking to put a lid on the tempest, administration officials have been insisting that Iran will not get access to U.S. dollars. The nuclear deal rolled back European restrictions on doing business with Iran faster than U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic, but Iran is finding it difficult to take advantage of those new trade partnerships because so much of the global market is dominated by U.S. dollar transactions. Many international banks fear running afoul of U.S. sanctions still in place over Iran's non-nuclear activity.

The administration has deployed various officials to muzzle the GOP criticism, trotting out acting Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes Adam Szubin for a speech at the Center for a New American Security last week to lay out the objectives and limitations of U.S. sanctions.

Szubin focused on the merits and dangers of being tough with secondary sanctions that govern other countries' transactions, and have become the latest flashpoint for concern as Iran seeks to cash in on the benefits of the nuclear deal.

But Republicans — who fiercely opposed the Iran deal to begin with — aren't satisfied.

They charge that President Obama and his deputies are primed to open the financial floodgates to Tehran, in order to satisfy Iranian leaders complaining that financial institutions' reluctance to do business with a former pariah state has kept them from realizing the full extent of sanctions relief they were expecting under the nuclear deal.

In his speech last week, Szubin addressed said there are "risks" that come along with "tough sanctions" — and that in the long term, the U.S. could endanger its central role in global trade and finance if it made business impossible between second and third-party countries with less-stringent sanctions.

"If we lose that," Szubin said of the U.S.'s central role in the global financial puzzle, "we lose the very economic leverage that has made our sanctions so effective in the first place."

Democrats in Congress are taking the administration at their word that it has no intention of letting Iran access dollars.

"I haven't seen any reason to believe there is a concern here," Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Ben Cardin (D-Md.) said Thursday. Though he opposed the nuclear deal, he stressed that his chief interest now is keeping it intact.

But congressional Republicans are skeptical, signaling they believe the administration's explanations could just cover for a crafty sleight of financial hand instead.

"We cannot grant Iran access to the U.S. dollar in any form," House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said this week. "Iran shouldn't get relief simply because they agreed in word to a flawed nuclear deal."

Obama Says European Unity Under Strain From Migration, Could Hurt U.S.

By Roberta Rampton And Kylie MacLellan
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Will Europe Do Anything To Stop The Drownings Of Migrants?

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

THE NEWS of the latest human tragedy in the Mediterranean came just as Europe's leaders were congratulating themselves on having curtailed the flow of desperate refugees attempting to reach their shores. According to the United Nations refu-gee agency, some 500 people may have drowned last week when a large boat jammed with migrants from Africa sank somewhere between Libya and Italy. The survivors, 41 Somalis, Ethiopians, Egyptians and Sudanese, drifted at sea in another boat for several days before being rescued. "All the people died in a matter of minutes," one told investigators.

European Union officials have been touting the initial success of a strategy to prevent asylum seekers from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East from crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece. The scheme is morally and legally dubious: New arrivals in Greece are being deported

back to Turkey in exchange for \$6 billion in E.U. aid to the regime of Recep Tayyip Erdogan — and, it seems, pandering to his political demands, including the prosecution of a German comedian who insulted him. The dirty reward is that landings in Greece have dropped off precipitously, from 26,000 in the three weeks before the policy was launched to fewer than 6,000 since April 4.

Nothing has been done to address the causes of the exodus, however, so smugglers might shift their activities from the Turkey-Greece route to the still more dangerous passage between the North African coast and Italy. Some 6,000 mostly African refugees arrived in southern Italian ports in four days last week, according to the International Organization for Migration, bringing the total for the year to nearly 24,000. Some 800 have died along the way, the agency said, including those in the latest accident.

Predictably, some European leaders are calling for more aggressive measures to stop the flow of boats, including stationing European warships in Libyan waters. While some measures of force may be appropriate, what's missing is a more humanitarian commitment to provide for those seeking refuge and to tackle the conflicts driving them from their homes.

In a statement on the latest sinking, the U.N. refugee agency said "increased regular pathways for the admission of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe" was the way to undermine the smugglers. So far, however, most countries are failing to meet E.U. quotas for resettling refugees already in Europe; a number have also failed to pay into a fund to cover the cost of the Turkey deal.

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has proposed a plan for providing aid to African countries in exchange for more measures to stop people-smuggling. However, this potentially worthy approach quickly became tangled in a debate over funding, with Germany flatly rejecting Mr. Renzi's suggestion that money be raised through the issuance of Eurobonds.

Meanwhile, no one in Europe appears ready to take the steps that would do most to solve the problem: ending the assaults on civilians by the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, and helping a new, internationally backed Libyan government establish its authority. The Syrian mess is tacitly delegated to the Obama administration, which continues to insist on a failing strategy of leverage-free diplomacy. The result will be more desperate asylum-seekers' journeys, and more tragedy.

Obama's Trip To Germany Reflects New Closeness

By Carol E. Lee And Anton Troianovski
[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Obama Sidesteps 'genocide' In New Armenia Proclamation

By Michael Doyle
[McClatchy](#), April 22, 2016

President Barack Obama on Friday soothed a key foreign ally but antagonized some Americans with long memories, by issuing an annual proclamation commemorating the 1915 expulsion of Armenians from present-day Turkey that studiously avoids the term "genocide."

In his eighth and final Armenian proclamation, Obama followed his past practice and that of previous presidents by finding synonyms for the word, which Armenian-Americans say is essential to an accurate description of what took place but that the Turkish government finds objectionable.

Obama used "Meds Yeghern," an Armenian phrase sometimes roughly translated as "great catastrophe" or "great calamity," to describe the events in commemorating their 101st anniversary. While Armenians consider the phrase essentially synonymous with "genocide," it lacks the same global punch.

"Today we solemnly reflect on the first mass atrocity of the 20th century — the Armenian Meds Yeghern — when one and a half million Armenian people were deported, massacred and marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire," the president said.

The White House issued Obama's five-paragraph statement in advance of Armenian Remembrance Day, April 24. On that day in 1915, hundreds of Armenian intellectuals were arrested in Turkey and killed or exiled, the start of an eight-year-long mass ordeal.

"We honor the memory of those who suffered during the dark days beginning in 1915 — and commit to learn from this tragedy so it may never be repeated," Obama's statement said.

I have also seen that peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a foundation for a more just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past.

President Barack Obama

But as with presidents including George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush before him, Obama drew far more attention for the word he didn't use than for the words he'd polished and made public.

As a candidate, Obama had sought Armenian-American votes by endorsing the "genocide" term as appropriate for the events that lasted through 1923.

"We have learned that there is a difference between campaigning and governing," Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, said in an interview.

An exception was Ronald Reagan, who on April 22, 1981, issued a proclamation citing “the genocide of the Armenians” that preceded the Holocaust.

“Recognition of the Armenian genocide could have been a proud part of (Obama’s) legacy,” said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif. “Instead, this decision will be just another sad milestone in the struggle to prevent genocide by exposing genocide and its perpetrators.”

Hamparian, who met with White House National Security Council staff Thursday about the issue, likewise blasted Obama for “caving in to pressure from Turkey and betraying his commitment to speak honestly about the Armenian genocide.” Other activists said much the same.

“America deserves a president who speaks truthfully and condemns all genocides,” said Armenian Assembly of America Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, adding that “selective acknowledgment . . . is indefensible, sends the wrong message and hurts U.S. credibility.”

In past debates, genocide-resolution critics have cautioned that the language could inject uncertainty into a restive region and strain relations with a strategically placed NATO ally. American warplanes make heavy use of Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base.

The country also is a serious customer of the U.S. defense industry, which further strengthens its hand. Last year, for instance, the Obama administration approved selling \$70 million worth of “joint direct attack munitions” and \$310 million worth of upgrades for the Phalanx ship defense system.

The Turkish opposition – echoed by some U.S. diplomats, military leaders and corporate executives – has also helped block congressional Armenian genocide resolutions for years. The latest House of Representatives resolution – introduced 13 months ago, with 66 co-sponsors – has still not had a hearing.

In 2000, then-Rep. George Radanovich, who represented much of the Fresno, California, area, came close to getting a genocide resolution to the House floor. But then-Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., yanked it, at the request, Hastert said, of the Clinton administration. Hastert subsequently joined a lobbying firm paid \$35,000 a month by Turkey.

Obama Stops Short Of Calling Armenian Massacre Genocide

By Jordan Fabian
[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama on Friday marked the anniversary of the Ottoman Turks’ massacre of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 but once again stopped short of labeling it a genocide.

“Today we solemnly reflect on the first mass atrocity of the 20th century — the Armenian Meds Yeghern — when

one and a half million Armenian people were deported, massacred, and marched to their deaths,” he said in a statement.

The statement came on the final Armenian Remembrance Day of Obama’s presidency.

Obama’s refusal to call the mass killings a genocide is a gesture to Turkey, a NATO ally of the U.S. and an important member of the president’s coalition fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

But it also breaks a 2008 campaign promise, when he said the “the Armenian genocide is not an allegation ... but rather a widely documented fact.”

Obama noted the debate over the use of the term genocide and urged the Turks to make a full accounting of the mass killings.

“We continue to underscore the importance of historical remembrance as a tool of prevention, as we call for a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts, which would serve the interests of all concerned,” he said.

“I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view has not changed.”

He also invoked Pope Francis, Turkish scholars and other figures who have recognized the massacre as genocide.

“We continue to welcome the expression of views by those who have sought to shed new light into the darkness of the past,” he said.

Armenian-American organizations and human-rights groups have long pressed Obama to call it a genocide as president, to no avail.

“It seems President Obama will end his tenure as he began it, caving in to pressure from Turkey and betraying his commitment to speak honestly about the Armenian Genocide,” Armenian National Committee of America Executive Director Aram Hamparian said in a statement Thursday, before the White House issued the presidential statement.

Rep. Adam Schiff (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, called Obama’s decision “painfully inexplicable” given his comments about the killings as a senator and presidential candidate.

“I’m gravely disappointed that President Obama will now leave office without fulfilling his commitment to recognize the Armenian Genocide,” he said in a statement. “Recognition of the Armenian Genocide could have been a proud part of the president’s legacy; instead this decision will be just another sad milestone in the struggle to prevent genocide by exposing genocide and its perpetrators.”

Updated at 11:55 a.m.

Obama Says No Plans To Deploy Ground Troops In Libya

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

The Latest: Obama Won't Say Whether He'll Visit Hiroshima

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON (AP) – The Latest on President Barack Obama's visit to the United Kingdom (all times local):

1:20 p.m.

President Barack Obama is sidestepping a question about whether he'll become the first president to visit Hiroshima during his visit to Japan next month.

Obama was asked about a potential visit during a news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron. He says to wait until he visits Asia before asking him questions about Asia.

The White House has been weighing whether Obama should visit the site when he's in Japan in May for a summit of the Group of 7 industrialized countries. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry paid a high-profile visit earlier in April.

The U.S. attack on Hiroshima in the final days of World War II killed 140,000 people and scarred a generation of Japanese, while thrusting the world into the dangerous Atomic Age.

No serving U.S. president has visited the site, and it took 65 years for a U.S. ambassador to attend Hiroshima's annual memorial service.

1:15 p.m.

President Barack Obama says the death of Prince is a remarkable loss. He's calling Prince a great performer who put out great music.

Obama says he didn't know Prince well but recalls his performance at the White House last year as creative, original and full of energy.

Obama is speaking at a news conference after meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron. Obama says he listened to "Purple Rain" and "Delirious" at the U.S. ambassador's residence on Friday in tribute to Prince and "to get warmed up" before his meeting with Cameron.

1:10 p.m.

President Barack Obama says the United States has looked at other options if a fragile cease-fire in Syria falls apart and "none of them are great."

Obama says the cessation of hostilities has held together longer than he expected. But he says even if it collapses, the U.S. will try to put it back together.

The president says his phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday was intended to emphasize the importance of maintaining the ceasefire.

Obama has faced repeated questions about his "Plan B" if the cease-fire the U.S. and Russia brokered fails. Obama has accused Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime of violating that ceasefire amid renewed violence within the country. The Islamic State group and the al Qaida-linked Nusra Front are not part of the ceasefire.

1:00 p.m.

President Barack Obama says North Carolina's law that limits anti-discrimination protections for lesbian, gay and transgender people is wrong should be overturned.

Obama is criticizing the state law and others targeting LGBT people during a news conference in London. He says they're in response to politics and strong emotions. Obama says some of the proponents are good people but that he disagrees with them.

Obama is commenting after the U.K. put out a travel advisory warning British citizens about possible discrimination if they travel to certain U.S. states. Obama says Americans in those states are "wonderful people" and that British citizens should feel free to come and enjoy themselves. He says they'll be treated with "extraordinary hospitality."

Obama says the U.S. isn't unique in having a federal system where states can make their own policies.

5:50 p.m.

President Barack Obama says he keeps a bust of Winston Churchill right outside the door of his private office on the second floor of the White House.

He says the primary image that he sees every day before entering what is referred to as the Treaty Room is the bust of Churchill. Obama says, "I love the guy."

Obama is responding to criticism from London's mayor. Boris Johnson said earlier that removing the bust of Churchill from the Oval Office was a symbol of the "part-Kenyan president's ancestral dislike of the British Empire."

Obama says that as the first African-American U.S. president, he thought it was important to have a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. in the Oval Office. He says that's to remind him of the hard work of people who came before him that allowed him to have the privilege of serving as president.

5:45 p.m.

President Barack Obama says leaving the European Union would send Britain to the "back of the queue" for a trade deal with the United States.

Obama is answering questions after telling a news conference with Prime Minister David Cameron that he hopes Britain will stay in the EU. Obama says "I don't think the EU moderates U.K. influence in the world – it magnifies it."

Those who argue for an exit from the 28-nation bloc sometimes claim Britain could easily negotiate new trade deals if it leaves the EU's free-trade zone. But Obama says it would be at the back of the queue because the U.S. priority would be cutting a deal with the much bigger EU.

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5:40 p.m.

President Barack Obama says that participation in alliances such as the United Nations and NATO means the U.S. doesn't get 100 percent of what it wants, but its participation helps make the world better off.

He says NATO formalizes the architecture that deters aggression and that participation in the International Monetary Fund helps produce an orderly financial system.

Cameron is making clear that the UK's participation in the European Union is "our choice, nobody else's." But he says as the U.K. makes that choice, it makes sense to hear from its friends.

5:35 p.m.

President Barack Obama says the United Kingdom is at its best when it is leading a strong Europe as part of the European Union.

Obama is giving a strong defense of arguments for the U.K. staying in the 28-nation bloc during a joint news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron. He says the U.S. wants a strong U.K. as its partner.

Obama says EU allows the U.K. to spread British values across the continent. He says the single economic market brings "extraordinary economic benefits" to British citizens. Obama says that, in turn, is good for the U.S.

Obama says Americans want Britain's influence to grow, including within Europe. But he says ultimately the decision is up to the British people.

5:30 p.m.

British Prime Minister David Cameron says the U.K.-U.S. "special relationship" is strengthened by Britain's membership in the European Union.

Cameron is speaking in a joint news conference with President Barack Obama. The U.S. leader has stepped into Britain's debate about EU membership – and angered opponents of the bloc – by saying it is in U.S. interests for the U.K. to stay in.

The issue has overshadowed a trip on which Obama and Cameron discussed thorny topics including the fight against the Islamic State group, the European migrant crisis and global corruption.

Cameron is hailing the trans-Atlantic relationship and says "our collective power and reach is amplified by Britain's membership of the European Union."

He says EU membership is "a powerful tool to deliver on the prosperity and security our people need and to stand up for the values our countries share."

5:15 p.m.

President Barack Obama says Queen Elizabeth II is truly one of his favorite people and a "real jewel to the world," not just the United Kingdom.

Obama says he must confess that part of the reason for visiting the UK is to wish the queen a happy 90th birthday. He and first lady Michelle Obama met with the queen Friday and gave her a custom photo album.

Obama is speaking at a press conference with Prime Minister David Cameron. The president says that if he is fortunate enough to reach the age of 90, he hopes to be as vibrant as the queen.

3:20 p.m.

President Barack Obama has opened a meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron at 10 Downing St.

Obama arrived via motorcade after flying back to London via helicopter from Windsor Castle, where he had lunch with Queen Elizabeth II.

Cameron greeted the president and the two leaders exchanged small talk about sports and keeping their kids out of trouble.

The two leaders plan to discuss a range of pressing security and political issues, including the campaign against the Islamic State group and the U.K.'s deliberations about remaining in the European Union. Obama and Cameron will take questions from reporters together after their meeting.

3 p.m.

To commemorate her 90th birthday, The White House says President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama have given Queen Elizabeth II a custom photo album chronicling her visits with U.S. presidents and first ladies.

The queen's first visit to the United States was in 1951 as Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh. She toured Mount Vernon and met with President Harry S. Truman. Since then, the queen has met with nearly every U.S. president.

Her first visit to the United States as queen occurred in 1957 when she met with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and former President Herbert Hoover.

The White House says the collection of historical photos highlights the enduring close friendship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

2:45 p.m.

London Mayor Boris Johnson is drawing a storm of criticism for suggesting President Barack Obama may have

an “ancestral dislike of the British Empire” because of his Kenyan roots.

Obama has urged Britain to stay in the European Union, angering Johnson and others who want the country to leave the bloc.

Writing in The Sun newspaper, Johnson recounted a claim that a bust of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was removed from the Oval Office after Obama was elected and returned to the British Embassy. Johnson wrote that some said removing the bust “was a symbol of the part-Kenyan president’s ancestral dislike of the British Empire, of which Churchill had been such a fervent defender.”

Former Liberal Democrat leader Menzies Campbell says Johnson’s comment are “an unacceptable smear,” while Labour Party lawmaker Diane Abbott says that “Boris dismissing president Obama as ‘half-Kenyan’ reflects the worst Tea Party rhetoric.”

The White House has said that the Churchill bust is still in a prominent place in the presidential residence.

2:00 p.m.

It’s hard to make arriving via helicopter for lunch with the queen look like a casual affair, but Queen Elizabeth II nearly managed it.

Tying a scarf over her head, the queen and Prince Philip came out in light rain to meet President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama as Marine One landed outside Windsor Castle.

After quick but warm greetings, the four got into a black Range Rover. Philip drove and Obama joined him in the front seat. Britain’s longest-serving monarch sat in the back.

At the castle, the 90-year-old queen got out of the SUV largely by herself, nearly before Obama could assist. Inside, she could be heard noting almost apologetically that “this room is full of mirrors” and asking Obama where he’d like to sit.

The first lady’s office says her magenta and black floral print dress was made by Oscar de la Renta. She wore a black, Narciso Rodriguez overcoat.

The queen wore a smart, blue suit and black, square-heel pumps. Her head scarf was a small, floral print.

1:20 p.m.

After dinner with two princes on Friday, President Barack Obama will dine with an ambassador and a prime minister the following day.

The White House says U.S. Ambassador Matthew Barzun will host Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron for dinner Saturday at his London residence, Winfield House.

Set amid 12 acres (5 hectares) of grounds in London’s Regent’s Park, the 1930s neo-Georgian mansion is palatial. But it’s not as historic as 300-year-old Kensington Palace.

That’s where the president and first lady Michelle Obama will dine Friday as guests of Prince William, his wife the Duchess of Cambridge and his younger brother Prince Harry.

1:00 p.m.

President Barack Obama has arrived in Windsor, England, for a royal lunch with Queen Elizabeth II.

The two heads of state were sitting down at Windsor Castle, just west of London, on Friday. It’s the day after the queen and much of Britain celebrated her 90th birthday. First lady Michelle Obama and Prince Philip, the queen’s husband, were joining the meal.

Obama says he’ll wish the queen a happy birthday in person.

The queen and Prince Philip came out to greet Obama and the first lady in a light drizzling rain as they disembarked from Marine One at Windsor Castle.

Obama’s socializing with the British royals was continuing later Friday over dinner with Prince William, his wife Kate and brother Prince Harry at Kensington Palace in London.

He was meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron in between the royal engagements.

9:00 a.m.

Campaigners for a British exit from the European Union are expressing anger at U.S. President Barack Obama’s call for the U.K to stay in the bloc. U.K. Independence Party leader Nigel Farage says Obama should “butt out.”

Obama due to meet Prime Minister David Cameron later Friday.

London Mayor Boris Johnson, a leader of the exit campaign, says Americans “would never contemplate anything like the EU for themselves.” Writing in The Sun newspaper, Johnson said Obama’s stance “is a breathtaking example of the principle of do as I say, not as I do.”

8:50 a.m.

President Barack Obama is urging Britons to vote to stay in the European Union, saying the challenges in the world require allies to “stick together.”

In an op-ed published in the Telegraph newspaper, Obama says Great Britain’s presence in the EU “magnifies” Britain’s influence and helps spread “British values.”

The piece was published Thursday evening as Obama arrived in London for a three-day visit. Some have speculated that the trip is timed to boost the campaign against the so-called “Brexit” ahead of a June referendum. Not all Britons are welcoming Obama’s opinion.

Obama writes he’s offering his view “with the candour of a friend” and notes the decision will affect U.S. interests.

He writes, “The U.S. and the world need your outsized influence to continue – including within Europe.”

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Obama Ducks Question On Hiroshima Visit

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

President Barack Obama refused to say on Friday whether he will become the first U.S. president to visit Hiroshima since the city was destroyed by a nuclear weapon more than seven decades ago. The president declined to answer a reporter's question seeking to confirm a report from Nikkei that cited unidentified U.S. officials.

"I think you have to wait until I get to Asia to start asking me Asia questions," Obama remarked at the end of a lengthy response to a series of foreign policy-related questions from Bloomberg Politics reporter Justin Sink.

Secretary of State John Kerry visited Hiroshima on April 11, addressing the issue of nuclear security while remarking that Obama had been invited.

Administration officials told POLITICO on Friday that a decision on whether Obama would visit Hiroshima had not yet been made.

U.S. To Propose Obama Visit Hiroshima In Late May: Nikkei

By Kaori Kaneko

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Cuba Relents, Allows Cuban-born Travelers On Historic Cruise

By Curt Anderson

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

MIAMI (AP) – Cuba has loosened a policy banning Cuban-born people from arriving by sea, allowing Carnival Corp. to go forward with the first U.S. cruise to the island in a half-century, the Cuban government and the Miami-based cruise line announced Friday.

The company at first barred Cuban-born Americans from buying tickets for the planned May 1 cruise to comply with Cuba's ban, drawing complaints from the Cuban-American community in Miami and a discrimination lawsuit. Then, the company said it would sell tickets to Cuban-Americans but hold the cruise only if Cuba relented and changed its policy.

Early Friday, Cuban state media announced the loosening of the maritime ban, and Carnival CEO Arnold Donald said in a statement that the trip would go forward May 1 from Miami. The 704-passenger Adonia of Carnival's Fathom brand is scheduled to make the initial seven-day trip, with future cruises planned every other week.

Donald said Carnival negotiated a change in Cuban policy, and that now its cruise ships and other commercial vessels will be treated the same as aircraft, which already are permitted to carry Cuban-born passengers.

"This is very positive outcome resulting from discussions we have been having for quite some time," Donald said in a conference call with reporters. "Today's development will impact countless lives. It's now available to everyone."

In Havana, Cuban state media said the change is part of a broader shift in policy that removes many of the prohibitions on Cubans traveling by ship. Those prohibitions were put in place in response to Cuban exiles launching attacks from the water in the first years after the Cuban revolution.

The Cuban government said people born in Cuba will now be able to travel as passengers and crew on merchant ships and cruise ships, and will eventually be allowed on board yachts as both passengers and crew. The announcement does not specifically mention ferries.

Carnival originally adhered to Cuba's longstanding previous policy by preventing Cuban exiles from booking passage on the cruise, sparking protests by Cuban-Americans outside the company's Doral headquarters, criticism from Secretary of State John Kerry and local politicians and a federal lawsuit that claimed discrimination.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez, a Cuban-American who had questioned the previous Carnival policy, said Carnival Chairman Micky Arison called him Friday about the agreement. Arison also owns the NBA's Miami Heat.

"This policy change was the right thing to do, and I congratulate both Mr. Arison and Carnival on their efforts in what is probably one of the very few times that a corporation has successfully negotiated the changing of a policy with the Cuban government," Gimenez said in a statement.

Beginning May 1, the Fathom will visit the ports of Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba. Carnival says bookings will start at \$1,800 per person and feature an array of cultural and educational activities, including Spanish lessons.

The cruise is among the many changes in U.S.-Cuban relations since a thaw between the old Cold War foes began in late 2014.

Carnival is the world's largest cruise line, operating 10 brands with 100 ships that visit 700 ports worldwide, according to the company.

Associated Press writer Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this story.

Follow Curt Anderson on Twitter:
<http://twitter.com/Miamicurt>

This story corrects spelling of Gimenez in fourth paragraph from the end

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Cuba Eases Decades-Long Restriction On Sea Travel

By Lizette Alvarez

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

Cuba reversed a decades-old policy on Friday, lifting a restriction on Cubans who live on the island or anywhere else, including the United States, that prevented them from entering or leaving the country by cruise ship or commercial vessel, according to a statement in the country's national newspaper, Granma.

The decision, another softening of Cuba's Cold War stance toward the United States, came after Carnival Cruise Line, under political pressure, said it would delay its inaugural cruise to Cuba from Miami, scheduled for May 1, because the government would not relax a law prohibiting people born on the island from traveling there by ship. In response to the change, Carnival said that the cruise would depart as scheduled, making it the first American cruise ship to visit Cuba in 50 years.

Cuba's policy change may also be a nod to the money Cuba stood to lose if Carnival had been forced to cancel the trip. The directive, which will take effect on Tuesday, also marked a rare turn of events: An American corporation persuading the Castro government to alter a policy.

"We made history in March, and we are a part of making history again today," Arnold Donald, the president and chief executive of the Carnival Corporation, said in a statement. Last month, Carnival became the first American cruise company to obtain Cuban approval to sail to the island.

Friday's decision also paved the way for eventual approval for Cuban-born people to travel back and forth from other countries to the island by yacht. Cuban-Americans in Miami who support engagement with Cuba have long envisioned taking their own their boats to the island, which is 90 miles from Florida.

The decision is significant because the Cuban government has long been wary of sea travel between the United States and Cuba. For decades, Cubans had few ways to flee, and did so primarily by raft and rustic boats. Officials there also feared that Cuban-born citizens living in South Florida would travel to Cuba by boat to try to undermine the government.

In 1980, after tensions in Cuban skyrocketed as the economy plummeted, Fidel Castro temporarily lifted the restriction and allowed boats from the United States to pick up Cubans in the port of Mariel. More than 125,000 Cubans left the island by boat. Most were picked up by relatives, friends or recruits from Miami.

The Cuban government, in its announcement in Granma, stressed that all passengers leaving and entering Cuba must have authorized visa or immigration documents to do so. In its statement, the government also emphasized that its decision stands in contrast to the United States' restrictions that prevent American citizens from traveling freely to Cuba.

Cuba Lifts Sea Ban For Citizens, Clears Way For Historic Carnival Voyage

By Marc Frank

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

U.S. Business Relations With Cuba Seem To Have One Speed: Slow

By Mimi Whitefield

[Miami Herald](#), April 22, 2016

A Tampa company that's in negotiations to open a warehouse outside Havana that would stock food, wine and other products needed in Cuba's growing tourism industry is hopeful it will eventually get the green light, but Cuban officials have made it clear that the government will be its partner and it could take some time.

In the 16 months since Cuba and the United States announced they had begun the process of normalizing relations, there's been a flurry of interest from American companies eager to sample the formerly forbidden fruit of the Cuban market, but as many are finding, navigating Cuban law, policy, priorities and the multiple agencies necessary to win approvals can be tricky.

Getting U.S. approval for a project that's an exception to the embargo or that falls within a series of new rules on trade with Cuba that the Obama administration has been issuing since the rapprochement began is just the beginning of what can be a long, winding road.

Tim Hunt, the lawyer for Tampa-based Florida Produce, said he's optimistic the firm might get a draft term sheet back from the Cubans by the end of the month after what he describes as a "very good meeting" recently with Cuban officials. They told him they would get back to him on a potential Cuban partner for Florida Produce, a veteran of exporting food to the island.

"It seems it's going to be a very, very slow-moving process," Hunt said. Florida Produce first presented its plan for a wholesale distribution center, stocked with legal U.S. exports, to Cuban authorities in October.

"Our idea gives Cuban companies, restaurants and hotels an opportunity to buy products as needed. We think we have a compelling argument," Hunt said.

John Kavulich, president of the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, says it also has been slow going for the seven New York companies that accompanied Gov. Andrew Cuomo on a trip to Cuba in April 2015. Four of the companies — Cayuga Milk Ingredients, Chobani Greek Yogurt, Pfizer and Regeneron — have reported no exports to Cuba in the intervening year, according to Kavulich.

The U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control authorized the use of U.S.-issued credit cards by Americans in Cuba a year ago, but MasterCard, which was also on the Cuomo trip, said it is up to each bank to decide whether cardholders will be allowed to use their cards on the island. Another company that went on the trip, Infor, didn't provide follow-up information, and JetBlue is awaiting a decision from the U.S. Department of Transportation on its bid to offer commercial air service to Cuba.

Most of the companies that have found a degree of success so far are in the tourism and telecom businesses — both priorities for the Cuban government. Emphasizing how important tourism has become, Cuban leader Raúl Castro said last week: "Each hotel inaugurated is another factory that generates within our border much-needed export income for our country."

On the eve of President Barack Obama's visit to Cuba in March, Starwood Hotels & Resorts announced that it had signed deals to operate Havana's iconic Hotel Inglaterra and the Hotel Quinta Avenida, located on Havana's prime Fifth Avenue, with Cuban government partners. It also has signed a letter of intent to convert Havana's Hotel Santa Isabel into a member of its "The Luxury Collection."

After renovations, the hotels will reopen and the names of American hospitality brands will appear in Cuba for the first time in more than five decades. Starwood already has listed the Four Points by Sheraton Quinta Avenida, with a May 30 opening, and the Inglaterra, with a July 1 opening, on its website, but neither hotel is bookable yet.

Marriott International, which is also trying to swing its own hotel deal in Cuba, is currently in the process of merging

with Starwood in a deal that would make Marriott the world's largest hotel company.

Airbnb, the San Francisco in-home-stays booking company, also has found success in Cuba. It launched there in April 2015 with 1,000 listings. That has grown to 4,000 listings, and guests from all 50 states have stayed in accommodations in Airbnb's Cuba network, said Brian Chesky, chief executive and an Airbnb co-founder.

"Cuba is the fastest-growing market ever for Airbnb," said Chesky, who took part in an Entrepreneurship Summit during Obama's visit. It's also a profitable market for the company.

There also have been a few telecom deals signed for roaming and direct connect, but so far Google, which has offered to bring high-speed Internet to Cuba, has had to content itself with a small-scale demonstration in Havana.

Google products such as Cardboard and Chromebooks are on display and visitors can try out high-speed access. Such efforts, Google said, "demonstrate what might be possible in the future."

Richard Feinberg, a professor of international political economy at the University of California, San Diego, and a senior Latin American fellow at the Brookings Institution, also sees the Cuban government as a reluctant partner for U.S. companies. "In my view, the Cuban government is self-embargoed. The United States cut a significant hole in the embargo [with its new regulations that allow more trade and commerce with Cuba], but the Cubans are largely saying, 'No, not until the whole embargo is lifted.'

"There has been some progress in the business relationship," he added, "but we're still in the early innings before there is a fully normal commercial relationship."

Feinberg said the Cubans also "need to rethink their preference for only wanting to do business with big, big, big groups. That is wrong-headed."

But even being a big company doesn't necessarily guarantee success.

On March 22, the same day Obama gave an historic speech to the Cuban people, Carnival Corp. signed an agreement with the Cuban government for its Fathom line to begin cruise service from Miami to Cuba on May 1. It was considered a coup — the first time a cruise line would offer service from the United States to the island in more than 50 years.

But an outcry about a long-standing Cuban policy that bars anyone born in Cuba from entering or leaving the island by vessel and two lawsuits by potential passengers who had tried to book the cruise and were excluded prompted Carnival to reconsider.

It said it would delay the Fathom cruise until a change in Cuban policy. That came Friday and the Fathom cruise will leave as originally scheduled.

“U.S. companies are eager to take advantage of new opportunities in Cuba without fully understanding Cuban laws and how they are interpreted,” said Andy Gomez, a Cuba scholar. “Carnival serves as a good example of how vague Cuban laws can be. Sometimes they’re not even laws, but guidelines left to the interpretation of the Cubans.”

Castro said as much during last week’s Seventh Congress of Cuba’s Communist Party when he was talking about hundreds of economic guidelines approved during the previous party congress.

Some of these guidelines have been difficult to implement, he said, because some Cuban officials thought that all that was needed was to create a document “sending it from one end of the country to the other.” During follow-up, he said, “We saw that everyone had applied the policy in their own way.” He advocated more training and more frequent updates.

Kavulich isn’t particularly optimistic about the prognosis for new business deals, especially those involving Cuba’s nascent private sector, after analyzing the discussions at the party congress. “Those in the newly reconstituted middle class, and their relatives abroad, should be prepared for a walk instead of a jog or run to implement changes to the commercial, economic and political structures in Cuba,” he said.

“For United States companies, there will continue to be limited opportunities to provide products and services which earn revenues for the government of the Republic of Cuba, specifically relating to tourism,” he said. “However, the importation of products and services that will require expenditures — and assist with further developing a middle class — will be marginal.”

Cuba isn’t opposed to private enterprise, but it must be a complement to socialism and state-run businesses, Castro said during the party congress. And it’s clear the Communist Party doesn’t want private businesses to get very large either.

A guideline that states “concentration of property will not be allowed” in the non-state sector will be amended to include the phrase “nor of wealth,” Castro said. “The private company will operate within well defined limits.”

China To Develop Floating Nuclear Power Plants

By Michael Forsythe

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

HONG KONG — All the radar systems, lighthouses, barracks, ports and airfields that China has set up on its newly built island chain in the South China Sea require tremendous amounts of electricity, hard to come by in a place hundreds of miles from the country’s power grid.

Beijing may have come up with a solution: floating nuclear power plants.

A state-owned company, China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, is planning to build a fleet of the vessels to provide electricity to remote locations including offshore oil platforms and the contentious man-made islands, the state-run newspaper Global Times reported on Friday.

The paper quoted an executive at the company, Liu Zhengguo, as saying that “demand is pretty strong” for the floating power stations, which would be built by one of its subsidiaries.

In January, Xu Dazhe, the director of the China Atomic Energy Authority, told reporters in Beijing that China was planning to develop offshore floating nuclear energy plants, saying they “must undergo a rigorous, scientific evaluation,” but also linking these to China’s desire to become a “maritime power.” Mr. Xu said at the time that developing China’s nuclear power-generating capacity was part of the country’s five-year economic development plan, which runs through 2020. China has more civilian nuclear power stations under construction than any other country.

China would not be the first country to employ floating nuclear power plants. In the 1960s, the United States Army installed a nuclear reactor inside the hull of a World War II freighter to provide electricity for the Panama Canal Zone. And nuclear power has been on vessels since 1955, when the commanding officer of the Nautilus, an American submarine, sent word that the craft was “underway on nuclear power.” Since then, nuclear reactors have provided propulsion — and electrical power — for ships like American aircraft carriers and Russian icebreakers.

Typhoons regularly cross the South China Sea, and ships and submarines that run on nuclear power generally have the means to quickly sail away from a storm. It is unclear how mobile or seaworthy these reactor ships will be. Safety regulations for the seaborne reactors are being drawn up and reviewed, Global Times said, quoting Tang Bo, an official at China’s National Nuclear Safety Administration.

A rendering of a possible Chinese floating nuclear power station was published on the English-language website of Global Times’s parent company, the Communist Party’s flagship newspaper, People’s Daily. The image showed the small ship or barge next to a pier, surrounded by what looked like floating ice. Two life buoys under the pilothouse could be mistaken for eyes, giving the ship a cartoonlike feel. It has a noticeable resemblance to the planned British polar research vessel that the public had voted to name “Boaty McBoatface.”

Anyone for “Boaty McNukeface”?

How An Email Sparked A Squabble Over Chinese-Owned Lenovo’s Role At Pentagon

By Hayley Tsukayama And Dan Lamothe

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Ever since Chinese computer maker Lenovo spent billions of dollars to acquire IBM's personal-computer and server businesses, some lawmakers have called on federal agencies to stop using the company's equipment out of concerns over Chinese spying.

This past week, those lawmakers thought the Pentagon finally heeded their warnings. An email circulated within the Air Force appeared to indicate that Lenovo was being kicked out.

"For immediate implementation: Per AF Cyber Command direction, Lenovo products are being removed from the Approved Products List and should not be purchased for DoD use. Lenovo products currently in use will be removed from the network," stated the message. The apparent directive was generally welcomed as it circulated around Capitol Hill.

Then the Pentagon's press office weighed in. Not so fast, it said.

Ann Stefanek, an Air Force spokeswoman, said the message was mistaken, "not properly coordinated" and should not have been sent. Neither the Air Force nor the rest of the Defense Department has banned Lenovo products, she added.

In fact, the "Approved Products List" referenced in the Air Force message focused on communications equipment such as routers, rather than personal computers, for which Lenovo is known. Army Lt. Col. Valerie Henderson, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said Lenovo has never been on that list.

Those statements to The Washington Post did not go over well with lawmakers such as Rep. Robert Pittenger (R-N.C.), who is working on two proposals that would severely limit the use of products from any Chinese company on U.S. government computer systems.

"My office received verifiable evidence that the Air Force intended on removing Lenovo as a supplier," Pittenger said. "However, the Defense Department is now claiming this Air Force directive was unapproved and inaccurate."

"Should the Air Force have legitimate concerns with Lenovo, I am troubled that the Defense Department would not take swift action in support of that evidence," he added.

The squabble comes amid heightened tension between the United States and China over cybersecurity. The Obama administration accused the Chinese of a massive hack in 2014 of the Office of Personnel Management, which exposed the personal data of 22.1 million federal workers, including some Defense Department personnel who had gone through background checks.

Meanwhile this week in China, Apple confirmed that its iBooks Store and iTunes Movies services were disrupted, just two months after they were launched there. The move, some analysts said, was part of a broader tightening of the country's control of the Internet.

"China's cyberespionage continues to grow and puts America's economic and national security in jeopardy," said Mike Wessel, a member of the U.S.-China Economic Security Review Commission who also saw the Air Force Cyber Command message. "Putting Chinese-produced and controlled equipment on some of our most sensitive networks is a recipe for disaster."

Worries over companies' ties to foreign governments have been aired before — other Chinese firms, including telecom equipment makers ZTE and Huawei, have been the subject of probes by the Treasury Department and Congress.

Lenovo has repeatedly denied any link to state-sponsored cyberespionage. In a statement, the company said: "Lenovo has been a trusted supplier of information technology in the US since 2005 when it bought the IBM ThinkPad PC business. Every single company selling technology to the US government — including HP, Dell, Cisco, Apple and Lenovo — use foreign components in their products. So it's critical that the US continue to follow a standards-based process that allows for procurement of technology that is both cutting edge and totally secure."

In 2004, when Lenovo bought IBM's PC business, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) — a Treasury Department body that routinely examines transactions and investments that foreign companies make with U.S. firms — launched a probe of Lenovo. Another followed when Lenovo bought IBM's server business in 2014.

One of the main concerns that surfaced in the 2014 review was over the maintenance of Lenovo servers. Lenovo had agreed to contract IBM to service U.S. government servers. Still, some questioned whether Lenovo workers would have to be called in for support either remotely or on-site, should the contract with IBM lapse — a scenario some U.S. officials deemed unacceptable.

The 2014 probe also looked into the state connections of Legend Holdings, which has a controlling share of Lenovo and is in turn partially owned by a Chinese state entity called the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Both acquisitions were ultimately cleared by CFIUS.

"U.S. officials have an obligation to defend our nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic. That vigilance should transcend borders, or a standard focused on the ownership shares of a company," said Nancy McLernon, chief executive of the Organization for International Investment. "Regardless of whether the government contracts with Amazon, Lenovo or Microsoft — it has the duty to ensure national security concerns are addressed on their merits, following objective standards and processes."

Still, the CFIUS rulings did not stop agencies from cutting off the company. In 2006, the State Department said it would not use on classified networks 16,000 computers it had bought from Lenovo. The reason was security concerns.

There was also an effort in 2011 to remove Lenovo hardware purchased for use at the Tobyhanna Army Depot in Pennsylvania, which was a site for IT repairs.

The U.S. government also told consumers last year to uninstall from Lenovo's laptops preloaded advertising software, called Superfish, that altered which ads users saw. It warned that the software made the devices vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Besides facing turbulence in Washington, Lenovo has had to contend with a downturn in the overall PC market. The firm has pushed hard to make inroads in the U.S. market, tapping celebrities such as Kobe Bryant and Ashton Kutcher as spokesmen to broaden its appeal.

While the firm remains the world's top-selling PC manufacturer, a report from IDC indicates that its PC shipments in the first quarter of 2016 shrank 8.5 percent from the same period last year.

Apple's Online Book, Film Services Go Dark In China

By Paul Carsten
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Women Who Fled Boko Haram Tell Of Devastation And, Rarely, Hope

By Helene Cooper
[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

YOLA, Nigeria — When the boy next door joined Boko Haram, Mummy Ibrahim knew she had to run.

For the past few months, her next door neighbor had been telling everyone in their village just outside of Maiduguri that he was going to force Mummy, a soft-spoken girl with large eyes, to be his bride.

And, she said, he had finally figured out the way to do it: by pledging allegiance to Boko Haram and then taking, by force, the girl he had watched grow up into a gorgeous 15-year-old.

Mummy fled. In the middle of the night, she and her family crept out of their house and ran. It took two days to get to the village of Wuba, where friends hid them for two weeks, and then another week to make it to this town, where the United Nations has set up a refugee camp populated primarily by the women and children Boko Haram has driven from their homes.

On Friday, as Samantha Power, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, toured the camp, she was confronted by hundreds of those women and girls, standing over coal pots, sitting on mats, playing with babies. Ms. Power, who has been touring the region most affected by

Boko Haram this week, promised them that President Obama had not forgotten them, that the United States would not rest until all the thousands of women believed to have been kidnapped by Boko Haram have been freed.

At the American University of Nigeria in Yola, Ms. Power donned basketball shorts and sneakers for a basketball game billed as peace through sports. She met with eight of the "Chibok girls" — part of the 276 schoolgirls whose mass kidnapping by Boko Haram two years ago brought worldwide attention to the terrorist group. These Chibok girls escaped shortly after their kidnapping. More than 200 Chibok girls have not been found.

But what was stark about Ms. Power's visit to Yola was the sheer number of displaced women and girls there — by far the majority of the 1.5 million in and around Yola. In the camp, most of them were kept at a distance from Ms. Power's security-surrounded entourage, as proud officials showed off the clinic, classroom and the outdoor kitchens with coal pots hanging over fire pits. Each one of them had a story that spoke to the devastation Boko Haram has wrought, particularly on women and girls.

There was another Mummy: Mummy Jabula, 16, standing at the outdoor kitchen and looking curiously at the delegation of Americans. Boko Haram militants killed her parents four months ago, in their village not far from Maiduguri, she said. Mummy Jabula, the oldest of her parents' six children, had grabbed her little sister and her four younger brothers and fled.

"I am the mother now," she said. Asked about her parents, she started to cry and said something in Hausa. A woman standing nearby translated: "It pains her heart," she said. "She can't talk anymore."

Nearby, Fatimah Hassan was sitting on a mat on the ground. For four months last year, her village was occupied by Boko Haram. But "I was not raped," said Ms. Hassan, 51. "I am an old woman. They wanted the girls."

A few miles down the road, Christiana Joel, 14, said she was at church for a children's day in April 2015 when Boko Haram fighters attacked her village of Lassa, in Borno State. Her father hustled her and her eight brothers and sisters back to their house, told them to leave only when it started looking really bad, grabbed his gun and took off to fight the Boko Haram militants. When the children eventually bolted from their house, Christiana's oldest brother, Levi, disappeared in the melee. She has not seen him since, and seemed overcome when she spoke of him. She said he was her favorite brother.

Maria Saidi, 26, kept prisoner by Boko Haram for more than a year outside Maiduguri, said she was whipped — 20 lashes — the first time she tried to escape. Then, four months ago, after more than a year with Boko Haram, she said she was forcibly married to a fighter, coincidentally one with her same last name of Saidi. Early the next day, while her new

husband was doing his morning prayers, she bolted. Four months later, she still feels the bruises from the whipping.

But escape doesn't necessarily bring solace.

Hussaina Jidda, 26, ran away from her village of Madagali in February when Boko Haram came. She eventually made it, with her baby, to Yola. Her four nieces were not so lucky. They were all kidnapped. Three of them remain missing.

One of them got away after two months with Boko Haram, during which she said she was forcibly married, raped and impregnated. The woman, Bilkisu Jidda, 20, returned to Madagali after running away into the bush at night. Her mother, the wife of Mrs. Jidda's brother, accepted her back again.

Most of the rest of the village did not.

"They keep pointing at her, saying she is the wife of Boko Haram, when she comes out of the house," Mrs. Jidda said.

Eight months after her escape, Bilkisu Jidda had her baby, a boy. She named him Hamidu. She is taking care of her son as best as she can, but most of the time she keeps him in her mother's house, away from the village, her aunt said. When mother and baby go out, "everyone calls him Boko Haram son," Mrs. Jidda said.

"She used to be a happy girl. But now all her friends are kidnapped — she doesn't laugh anymore."

Mummy Ibrahim still manages to laugh. Waiting for Ms. Power to walk by as she sat on her mat, Mummy Ibrahim, who had fled her village before her next-door-neighbor-turned-Boko-fighter could get his hands on her, was crocheting a hat out of a purple ball of yarn and discussing her plans for her future.

When she first heard him announce that he intended to forcibly marry her, "I was so scared," Mummy Ibrahim said. But now, she's making plans. In preparation for the visit of the American delegation, she had dressed up: lilac eye shadow, kohl-rimmed eyes, rose lipstick and three exquisite scarves around her head, each one echoing colors in her conservatively cut gown.

"I will be a tailor," she said. Around her, smoke curled from a not-quite-damped fire. Temperatures climbed to 101 degrees. Members of the American delegation were mopping sweat from around their eyes as they trooped to the next stop on their tour.

Mummy Ibrahim looked at their departing backs, smiling. Then she corrected herself. "A businesswoman, I mean. I will be a businesswoman."

Portugal Clears The Way For Extradition Of Ex-C.I.A. Agent To Italy

By Elisabetta Povoledo

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

A former undercover C.I.A. agent will be handed over to Italy, where she was convicted of taking part in the 2003 kidnapping of an Egyptian cleric in one of the renditions ordered by the George W. Bush administration, after appellate courts in Portugal, where she lives, turned down her appeal this week.

In January, a Portuguese court ruled that the former agent, Sabrina De Sousa, should be handed over to Italy, but the order was stayed pending appeal. On Friday, her Italian lawyer, Dario Bolognesi, said in an interview that the appeal had been denied, and that Ms. De Sousa would be extradited after May 4.

News that Portugal's Constitutional Court had turned down her appeal this week was also reported on Friday by The Washington Post and by the Portuguese newspapers *Diário de Notícias* and *Expresso*. Her Portuguese lawyer, Manuel de Magalhães e Silva, did not respond to requests for comment.

Ms. De Sousa, who holds dual American and Portuguese citizenship, has denied any wrongdoing or involvement in the kidnapping, which took place while she was working undercover for the C.I.A. as a diplomat in Milan. She resigned from the agency in 2009 and avoided trial by leaving Europe, but was convicted in absentia that year. Despite the risk of arrest, she returned to Portugal last year to be closer to her family.

Last October, the Portuguese authorities briefly detained her and confiscated her passport so that she could not leave the country, though she was freed pending the court proceedings.

Ms. De Sousa has exhausted her appeals in the Italian judicial system. It is not clear that if she is sent to Italy whether she will immediately begin serving her prison term, which would last a minimum of four years.

Portuguese courts, including the Constitutional Court, have stated that Ms. De Sousa, upon being sent to Italy, should have the right to a new trial, or at least the opportunity to present new evidence and witnesses in an appeal.

But Armando Spataro, one of the Italian prosecutors who helped secure criminal convictions of around two dozen Americans, including Ms. De Sousa, in connection with the kidnapping, said he saw no legal grounds for a new trial. She would be sent straight to prison, "and that's that," he said.

Mr. Bolognesi, her defense lawyer, said the situation was less certain. He said he would soon meet with Italian magistrates to discuss the possibility of a pardon from President Sergio Mattarella. Some of the other C.I.A. operatives convicted in the case got either full or partial pardons, while others have asserted claims to diplomatic immunity (Ms. De Sousa's attempt to do so was not successful). And still others have simply stayed away from countries that might extradite them to Italy. As of yet, none of the Americans have been imprisoned in Italy.

The top Italian agents involved in the kidnapping were acquitted after important testimony was ruled to be a state secret.

Because some of Ms. De Sousa's co-defendants have been pardoned and some of the Italian agents have been acquitted, she should be pardoned, too, Mr. Bolognesi said. "We're going to insist on this point," he said.

The cleric, Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, also known as Abu Omar, was seized in Milan in February 2003 as part of the United States' practice of rendition, in which a terrorism suspect is captured and delivered to another country for interrogation.

Mr. Nasr was taken to a military base before being transferred to Egypt, where he claims he was tortured.

The case riveted Italy and became a major source of friction in relations between the United States and Italy. Within the field of international law, the prosecutions of the C.I.A. agents for their role in renditions were closely watched.

In 2013, an Italian court sentenced Mr. Nasr in absentia to six years in prison for terrorism activities. He remains in Egypt.

Deal Is Reached To Return The Opposition Leader Riek Machar To South Sudan

By Jacey Fortin

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

After four days of delays, a deal has been reached to allow South Sudan's opposition leader, former Vice President Riek Machar, to fly to the capital and be reinstated as deputy to President Salva Kiir.

Mr. Machar's arrival is considered a major step toward carrying out a peace deal agreed to last year that calls for the formation of a transitional government in South Sudan, where more than two years of civil war have killed tens of thousands of people and displaced over two million more.

Mr. Machar was originally scheduled to travel on Monday, but disagreements over the number of soldiers and types of weapons that he would be allowed to take to the capital, Juba, caused delays, raising fears that the whole peace deal could collapse.

But on Friday, both sides agreed to a compromise brokered by an international commission that is overseeing the transition.

The commission's chairman, former President Festus Mogae of Botswana, said Thursday that he welcomed the government's decision to allow Mr. Machar to travel with 195 soldiers, each carrying their individual light arms, as well as 20 rocket-propelled grenade launchers and 20 machine guns. "No further delay is tolerable," Mr. Mogae added.

Speaking from Juba, South Sudan's minister of information, Michael Makuei Lueth, said the government

accepted the agreement, though he did not preclude the possibility of logistical problems.

Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, an opposition spokesman, said Friday that Mr. Machar was scheduled to land in Juba on Saturday afternoon. "Peace is finally here," Mr. Gatkuoth said.

But after four days of tense negotiations between the parties, doubts remain about whether Mr. Machar's trip will take place as scheduled.

The 195 troops scheduled to travel to Juba on Saturday would join 1,370 soldiers who arrived last week in accordance with the peace deal.

Juba is where the war erupted in December 2013, pitting members of the presidential guard and South Sudanese troops — some loyal to Mr. Kiir, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, and others loyal to Mr. Machar, a Nuer — against one another. Clashes broke out largely along ethnic lines and spread throughout the country.

The opposition's chief of general staff, Gen. Simon Gatwech Dual, said this week that he was still concerned about the strength of the government's troops and weaponry in Juba.

"But if the deal is implemented," he added, "peace will prevail."

NATO's New Deterrent May Include Bigger Black Sea Presence

By Tsvetelia Tsoleva

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

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Argentina Pays Down Much Of Its Debt; US Judge Drops Orders

By Larry Neumeister And Luis Andres Henao

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

NEW YORK (AP) — Argentina paid creditors on Friday who had refused debt restructurings after its record default, ending a long-standing legal dispute that returns the South American country to international credit markets after nearly 15 years.

A Manhattan judge whose orders have blocked Argentina from operating normally in financial markets vacated his rulings Friday after the country paid billions of dollars to foreign creditors. U.S. District Judge Thomas P. Griesa got the "greatest pleasure" lifting his orders after Argentina lived up to its promises, mediator Daniel Pollack said in a statement.

Pollack, a New York lawyer who was appointed by Griesa last year, negotiated over \$8 billion in settlements between Argentina and bondholders since January. Pollack

said the judge does not speak publically except through his court actions but had told him to make public his happiness with the changed circumstances.

“Judge Griesa has expressed to me that he is very gratified by this momentous development in the 15-year litigation over which he has presided,” Pollack said.

“Injunction lifted. No more chains. No more clamps. #CiaoDefault,” Argentine Economy Minister Alfonso Prat-Gay wrote on Twitter. “A new era is beginning. Argentines are ready to start growing.”

The lifting of the orders came after Argentina notified the judge Friday that it had fulfilled its promises to all bondholders who had reached deals with it by Feb. 29. A majority of the nearly \$10 billion owed to creditors had been settled by that date. Pollack said billions of dollars were paid to bondholders Friday.

The long standoff between Argentina and mostly foreign investors, including U.S. hedge funds, occurred after Argentina suffered its worst economic crisis in 2001 and defaulted on a record \$100 billion of debt with bondholders.

Many foreign bondholders went to court rather than trade their bonds for bonds worth between 25 percent and 29 percent of their original value. The less valuable bonds were accepted by 93 percent of Argentina’s bondholders, leading some to characterize the U.S. hedge funds, who refused debt restructurings as “vultures” picking on the carcass of Argentina’s crisis.

The holdouts spent more than a decade litigating for payment in full rather than agreeing to provide Argentina with debt relief. They also sent lawyers around the world trying to force Argentina to pay its defaulted debts and were even able to get a court in Ghana to temporarily seize an Argentine naval training ship.

Griesa issued orders blocking Argentina from paying the bondholders, who accepted the discounted bonds through U.S. financial institutions, unless bondholders who did not trade their bonds were paid as well. Those orders effectively crippled the country’s ability to maneuver through world financial markets, forcing Argentina to issue domestic bonds to raise funds and to search for backdoor financing from countries like China. The long, costly fight led to changes in how debt is issued worldwide. Many countries have restructured contracts in attempts to avoid getting into similar situation.

Lawyers for bondholders who carry bonds worth less than \$2 billion had tried to delay expiration of the orders on the grounds that Argentina would stop negotiating. A federal appeals court rejected the argument recently and Pollack said settlements continue to be made.

Former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez had refused to negotiate with the creditors casting the fight as a U.S. court trying to bully a sovereign nation. But President Mauricio Macri campaigned last year on promises to end the

dispute and attract foreign investment to the continent’s second-largest economy.

A recent repayment deal finally broke an impasse that had kept Argentina on the margins of international credit markets, forcing it to print more money that stoked one of the world’s highest inflation rates.

Earlier this week, Prat-Gay said that Argentina’s high inflation rate is expected to be helped by the payments to bondholders and the country’s triumphant return to global credit markets, where it recently received robust demand for a \$16.5 billion bond offering.

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Heno reported from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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No Deal Between Greece And Lenders Seen On Friday: Eurogroup Head

By Jan Strupczewski
[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

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Greece And Its Creditors Make Progress On Differences

If Athens prepares contingency austerity measures, finance ministers could discuss how to ease the country’s debt burden next week

By Gabriele Steinhauser And Viktoria Dendrinou
[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

France’s Young Protesters: Whatever It Is, They’re Against It

By James Mcauley
[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

The word they use is “agora,” the Greek term for a city’s social and political heart.

Since March 31, hundreds of thousands of predominantly young protesters have transformed city squares across the country into spaces where a growing social movement known as “Nuit Debout,” or “Stand Up at Night,” hopes to establish a new agora for France.

Most of these young people have taken to the streets in response to the French government’s proposed labor

reforms, which would make it easier for employers to fire employees and challenge France's famous 35-hour workweek.

But Nuit Debout — rivaling the French student riots of 1968 in numbers, if not fervor — is not a response to a particular policy, even if it may have been inspired by one. It is more general, a sprawling, impromptu, mostly nonviolent grass-roots movement without a clearly articulated program.

In a sense, the demonstrations are France's version of Occupy Wall Street, an inchoate, amorphous rejection of what members call an unacceptable status quo.

But if Nuit Debout is an initiative fundamentally concerned with French politics and society, it has also welcomed those who take issue with similar themes in their own countries. This week, for instance, thousands applauded as Yanis Varoufakis, the Greek finance minister, spoke to protesters in Paris.

For Galatée de Larminat, 17, a high school student who lives in the area, the point is “to found a real democracy.”

“Not a representative democracy,” she said Monday, “but a direct democracy that relies on citizen assemblies — a popular assembly, in fact.” In the last two weeks, she says she has come 10 times to Paris's Place de la République, the unofficial epicenter of the movement. She usually stays for hours at a time.

More specifically, there is also the sense among many protesters that the French government, under François Hollande, a Socialist, has betrayed the leftist cause in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in January and November 2015.

For many in this camp, the proposed labor reforms and the “déchéance de nationalité” — a proposal to strip French nationality from dual citizens convicted of terrorism — were flagrant violations of party values. For others, the state of emergency that Hollande declared after the attacks has merely increased the powers of police to surveil the population.

“It's not at all a leftist government,” said Maxime Tant, 27, who works in an art museum in Paris. “This is not the socialism of Jean Jaurès.”

“What we have right now is not a democracy but a representative system that's just aristocratic. A representative system is just that: representation. But a real democracy is power of the people by the people.”

“The Socialist Party right now,” said de Larminat, “is basically a party of the right.”

The movement's leftist orientation has at times overshadowed its identity as a democratic, universal conversation. Last Saturday night, for instance, Alain Finkielkraut, a prominent French philosopher with conservative views, was heckled and harassed by some protesters as he entered the Place de la République.

For most of those gathered in Paris, the square is a profound symbol because of its nominal connection to the idea of French revolution, the lifeblood of French history — and, to some extent, French public life — after 1789. In the center of the square, a 19th-century statue of Marianne towers over passersby: The avatar of the French Republic, she is the secular patron saint of a state that knows no god.

But the large square is ultimately where Parisians have chosen to express solidarity. It was here that they marched after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 and created a de facto memorial after the attacks on Nov. 13 that left 130 dead across the city. If it is still a site of public grief, the square is also now where nearly 3,000 people gather every night to discuss, debate and drink.

Every night, there are speeches, demonstrations and sit-ins. There is an area designated for drafting a new French constitution, but there is also a Nuit Debout bookstore and even a Nuit Debout falafel stand.

For Bernard Vatrican, 70, a sociologist, this is the difference between the agora of 2016 and the riots of 1968.

A student in Nice in 1968, Vatrican said he took part in the protests in that year, in which fellow students stormed their universities and caused a general strike that essentially shut down the country for an entire month.

“The revolt then was a revolt against a mode of life, and a revolt of innumerable ideologies. There was the conflict between the Marxists and the Communists, the Trotskyists and the Maoists, the anarchists, et cetera,” he said Monday in the Place de la République.

“What strikes me today is that even though there's a little bit of that, the majority of people I've heard in the last few days are much more tolerant. They listen, they discuss, and what they try to do is construct rather than destruct.”

Nuit Debout began on March 31 and, at least in Paris, has continued even after authorities tore down some temporary structures that protesters built last week.

U.S. Military Pitches In After Japan Earthquakes

By Kirk Spitzer

[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

TOKYO — Instead of getting ready for a new assignment that will take him to the National War College in Washington, D.C., Marine Corps pilot Chris Murray spent the last week ferrying food, water and other emergency supplies to earthquake-stricken Japan.

The 6.5-magnitude earthquake on April 14 and even more powerful 7.3-magnitude tremor 28 hours later were two of the strongest quakes to ever to strike Japan. At least 48 people were killed and nearly 1,200 were injured.

Yet it's an assignment that Murray, 41, says he welcomes.

“Everybody looks at the Marine Corps as ‘guns and bullets and bombs,’ but we do a lot of disaster-relief missions, too, because there are so many out here. We look forward to it because it’s personally rewarding for everybody,” said Murray, commander of a squadron of V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft based in Okinawa, Japan. He spoke in a telephone interview Friday.

The Marines are among hundreds of U.S. military personnel responding to the two powerful quakes that struck southwestern Japan barely a day apart last week.

Even with a well-developed culture of preparedness, Japanese authorities have struggled to cope with the disaster.

The initial quakes and ensuing landslides severed roads and highways and knocked down bridges. About 9,900 homes were destroyed or badly damaged and some 100,000 people are now living in shelters and evacuation centers — many in overcrowded conditions, with shortages of food and water

Near-constant aftershocks have plagued survivors.

Through Thursday, the Japan Meteorological Agency counted 765 aftershocks, many of them strong enough to cause significant new damage. There have been so many aftershocks that the agency has given up issuing daily forecasts.

Near-torrential rain on Thursday added to the misery. Rescue and recovery work were largely halted for a day, and more than 1,000 evacuees were forced to move from one shelter to another for fear of landslides.

Worse, at least 10 additional deaths have been blamed on “economy class syndrome”: lethal blood clots that form in the legs and extremities of people who have been sleeping in cars or other cramped spaces.

A man walks past the rubble of a collapsed house following an earthquake in Mashiki, Japan. (Photo: Getty Images)

Naoshi Hirata, a professor at the University of Tokyo’s Earthquake Research Institute, said scientists and disaster-preparedness officials were shocked not just at the magnitude of the two earthquakes, but at the quick succession and overall intensity with which they struck.

In addition to magnitude, which measures the overall strength of an earthquake at its source, Japan uses a “Shindo” scale of 1 to 7 to measure the intensity, or level of shaking, of a tremor at various locations. Both quakes were 7 on the scale.

“Successive earthquakes of intensity level 7 at the same location has never been recorded,” Hirata said.

Fumio Yamazaki, a professor at Chiba University’s Department of Urban Environment Systems, said scientists are examining what lessons they can learn from the twin quakes. The tremors struck at a relatively shallow level —

about six miles deep — in the Kumamoto region of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s main islands.

That region has not been known for particularly powerful quakes; some of the most strongest quakes to strike Japan have occurred offshore.

“This tells us that inland earthquakes may occur in the areas where, historically, earthquakes have not been known,” Yamazaki said.

There are some signs that the recovery efforts are beginning to take hold. Officials announced that power had been restored throughout the effected area by late Wednesday and that water supplies were expected to be fully restored by Thursday.

On Friday, 700 civilian volunteers from around Japan joined the 30,000 police, firefighters and members of Japan’s self-defense forces who have been working on rescue and recovery operations since the weekend. Hundreds more are expected to join them over the next few days.

Meanwhile, Murray and his Marines continued to deliver food, water and other supplies to the region on Friday, hopscotch-ing from a Marine airbase in central Japan, to a Japanese warship off the coast of Kyushu, to a makeshift landing zone in a sports field near the town of Minami-Aso — one of the worst-hit areas.

“We train for this all the time. We’re going to be here as long as the Japanese government says they need us,” said Murray.

Investigators Say Mexico Has Thwarted Efforts To Solve Students’ Disappearance

By Azam Ahmend And Paulina Villegas

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

By contrast, the Mexican government says that it has fully cooperated with the experts, completing the vast majority of their information requests, while it is still processing the rest.

For the families of the missing, young men training to be teachers in the impoverished stretches of rural Mexico, the experts’ departure is devastating. All along, they have refused to believe the government’s version of events — that their children, who were in the city of Iguala as part of a protest, were kidnapped by local police officers working for powerful criminal gangs, then killed and incinerated in the garbage dump of a nearby town. In its version of the story, the government never gave a clear motive for the attack.

But for many Mexicans, the case represents something far greater than 43 people: It is a window onto the tens of thousands of others who have also disappeared during the nation’s decade-long drug war, and the anguish visited on their families. Caught between cartel violence and a government either unwilling or unable to help, they are victims twice.

The arrival of the international experts inspired hope and a shot at closure, if only vicariously, for those who suffer their losses quietly on the margins of Mexican society. In an exceptional gesture, Mexico was granting foreigners permission to conduct a true investigation. Now their departure is a bitter one.

"This is something that will probably haunt us for a long time," said Francisco Cox, a Chilean human rights lawyer and another member of the group of experts. "But it didn't make sense to stay here, because in a certain way it's giving legitimacy to something deep inside you know isn't right."

Though the group's final report will be issued on Sunday morning, the case is far from solved. The remains of only one of the 43 has been found and identified; the rest are all still missing.

Another question is how high the collusion between the drug gangs and the government goes. Although the government's own investigation focused on the complicity of the local authorities, the expert panel uncovered evidence that state and federal officials and even military personnel were present on the night of the students' disappearance.

"It was clear in the government's investigation and the official account that there was an intention to keep this case at a municipal level, in terms of responsibility," said Carlos Beristain, another expert in the investigation. "But we revealed the presence of state and federal agents at the crime scenes, and furthermore that their participation implied responsibility."

The government insists that the parting of ways with the international experts is amicable, and has thanked them in public for their work. The experts were not forced out, according to the government. They ran out of time.

The government says it has played no part in a smear campaign. There is a free press in Mexico, and the government cannot prevent certain outlets from writing what they want, it says.

In written responses to questions, Eber Betanzos, the deputy attorney general for human rights, said that his office has worked closely with the experts. "The Mexican state recognizes their work, their efforts and the attention to the victims," he said.

But when asked to issue a joint statement denouncing the media campaign against the experts, the government more than once declined to do so.

When the experts arrived in Mexico, in March of last year, they received a warm welcome from the government. At first, the experts said, there was a willingness to share documents and respond to requests for information, and a collegiality that seemed to match the government's public posture.

That abruptly changed in September, when the experts published a report that contradicted the government's version of events, referred to by the former attorney general as the

"historic truth." While the government's investigation said that the students were killed and then burned in a garbage dump in the town of Cocula. Neither this panel of experts nor another international team of forensics experts also working on the investigation have found any physical evidence at the dump site corroborating a fire of such dimensions.

"After our report, it was pretty clear the relationship had changed," Mr. Cox said. "They still thought that we would sustain their version of what had happened."

Routine requests from the government took months, the experts said. Suggestions for ways to streamline the investigation were ignored. A media smear campaign began, assaulting individuals in the group, including accusations that they misspent money and had made statements supportive of terrorist acts in the past.

For the investigators, the message was clear. "There are sectors within the government that don't want certain things to be questioned and therefore there is an attempt to reinforce the 'historical truth,' without taking into account the new elements we have uncovered," Mr. Beristain said. "These sectors within the government looked at us as a threat and this hardened their view towards us, which actually reinforces the impunity that stops things from changing in this country."

The media attacks largely focused on Ms. Paz and another female lawyer, Ángela Buitrago, who earned broad recognition for prosecuting government and military malfeasance in Colombia. In addition to little known outlets, some national newspapers, like El Financiero and Milenio, took part as well.

In one instance in January, Ms. Buitrago was waiting in line at the Mexico City airport when she noticed a story on the front page of a local newspaper — about her. It began with a characterization of Ms. Buitrago as someone known to "fabricate testimony and pressure alleged witnesses in order to imprison military figures and politicians." It also quoted a person she had prosecuted as saying that any investigation in her hands would lack all credibility.

"It was unimaginable," she said. "The purpose of all this was just to delegitimize the investigation, and to discredit and distract us."

Ms. Paz, too, said she became a target. Pro-government organizations claimed that she had fabricated the case of genocide against the former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt.

Though the government has repeatedly denied playing a role in the media campaign, it wields an inordinate amount of control over the news media here. The state spends hundreds of millions of dollars every year in advertising, making it a highly influential voice in the market.

"We couldn't go out on the streets every day and read all the newspaper headlines insulting us," Ms. Paz said.

Perhaps the most direct example of government pressure came in the form of a criminal inquiry opened into Emilio Álvarez Icaza, the executive secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the international body that appointed the experts.

The inquiry was opened after a pro-government activist filed a complaint against Mr. Icaza, claiming fraudulent use of the money for the experts, funds that had been furnished on agreement by the Mexican government.

For weeks, the government sustained its investigation, claiming it had a responsibility to follow up on every complaint. But human rights experts in the region said the action sent a message, warning those agitating against the government's narrative. Eventually, the government dropped the case, but not before it sent a chill.

"It is interesting that they would chose to investigate this patently baseless claim when there are thousands of families who are desperately seeking their loved ones without any assistance from the attorney general," said James L. Cavallaro, the president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. "That is profoundly disturbing."

The Movement To Legalize Pot Gains Speed In The Americas

By Joshua Partlow

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

With a swipe of his pen this week, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto proposed that Mexican citizens could legally possess up to an ounce of pot.

The day before, Canada's health minister stood at a United Nations podium and announced that her country would introduce new federal legislation to make cannabis legal by next year.

Already, people are free to smoke marijuana in four U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and medical marijuana is allowed in almost half the country. Uruguay has fully legalized weed for sale. And a large chunk of South and Central America, including Brazil, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Costa Rica, have made marijuana more available in varying ways, whether it is for medicinal or recreational use.

In the shift toward legalization of marijuana, the Americas have emerged as a leader. This is a remarkable shift for a region that includes some of the world's leading producers of marijuana, coca and opium poppy, and where the U.S. government has spearheaded a decades-long campaign against cultivation of the substances.

"It's undeniable that the terms of the debate about drugs are changing in Mexico and in the world," Peña Nieto said during a speech Thursday announcing his new legislative proposal. "Fortunately, a new world consensus is gradually emerging in favor of reform."

For many Mexicans, the prospect of such reform seemed unimaginable just a few years back. Using illegal drugs has long been taboo in this conservative, predominantly Catholic country — as is true in many other Latin American nations. Drug-trafficking groups have inflicted horrific violence on the country, with an estimated 100,000 people dying in the past decade as the cartels have battled for control of shipping lanes to the United States. Polls have shown a majority of Mexicans oppose legalizing drugs, fearing that would increase addictions and crime.

To have a Mexican president come out publicly in favor of loosening drug laws struck many people as historic.

"This was the breaking point," said Jorge Diaz Cuervo, a Mexican economist and politician who recently published a book on the prospect of legalizing marijuana. "There is now a before and after."

Peña Nieto's initiative would make it legal for anyone to own up to 28 grams of marijuana — or one ounce — as long as it was intended for personal use. It would also permit the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, and make it easier to free prisoners who are being held on minor drug charges. The move came after five public forums held across Mexico this year to solicit public opinion and expert testimony on the prospect of changing drug laws. Mexicans were previously allowed to possess up to 5 grams.

Peña Nieto spoke this week at a U.N. General Assembly special session on narcotics that had been scheduled at the request of Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala, the first such gathering in nearly 20 years. In his speech, he said that the policy of prohibition of drugs has failed, and that countries needed to look for an alternative.

His initiative would need legislative approval, although with presidential support many expect it has a good chance. The proposal was seen by legalization advocates as a welcome first step, although some argued that it was important to pass additional measures — such as allowing Mexican farmers to grow marijuana so that the medicinal industry could succeed.

Zara Snapp, a drug policy expert from Mexico, said it was important to "move drugs out of the security realm and into the health and human rights space."

But opposition still is formidable in Mexico for blanket legalization of marijuana and other drugs.

And critics of Peña Nieto's plan say that increasing the quantity of marijuana that adults can smoke will simply lead to more consumption and will not significantly reduce the business of drug cartels, which make money in diverse ways, including extortion, human trafficking and the trafficking of cocaine and heroin.

Elias Octavio Iñiguez Mejia of the right-leaning National Action Party, who serves as president of the health commission in the lower house of congress, said that he would consider medicinal use of marijuana, as long as

studies on its effects were done in Mexico by Mexican institutions. But he remains firmly opposed to recreational use.

"It's not a panacea, nor is it going to decrease crime," he said. He predicted that Mexico "will enter a dynamic where our children, who are a vulnerable group, will see consumption as a normal thing."

Alejandro Gertz Manero, a former Mexico City police chief and ex-federal secretary of public security, said that the only thing that would come from the proposed reforms is "narcos are going to become respectable businessmen."

"This is a veritable circle of contradictions, of scandalous affirmations, of evasion of responsibilities," he said. "We should diagnose and find solutions, but what's happening now is the height of ridiculousness."

A shift in mind-set

Past legislative efforts to decriminalize marijuana use in Mexico have failed. One of the driving forces behind such efforts was Fernando Belaunzarán, who served as a congressman from the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) until last year.

Last April, Belaunzarán received a text message asking for help from Raul Elizalde, a businessman in Monterrey whose 8-year-old daughter, Grace, suffered from severe epilepsy. Elizalde wanted to provide his daughter with marijuana oil, an experimental treatment available in the United States and Europe, but Mexico had banned the substance.

After a judge ruled in favor of the Elizaldes, and they won access to the substance, Grace's case became a symbol in Mexico of the burgeoning debate over marijuana use. Peña Nieto, who appeared at a news conference at the health ministry in Mexico City on Thursday with Raul Elizalde, said his decision to push reforms was motivated by a desire to avoid "the suffering of girls, boys and patients, like Grace, who have epilepsy or other conditions and can't access effective therapies."

Peña Nieto also highlighted the problems of Mexico's prison system, crowded with low-level drug offenders. He warned against the "injustice that thousands of people, especially women, many of them mothers, suffer for being turned into criminals for consuming marijuana."

Peña Nieto is considered a conservative on the drug issue, so his announcement surprised some Mexicans. But in recent months, the debate has changed. Last fall, the Supreme Court ruled that a group of activists could legally grow and sell marijuana. The Senate is also considering legislation to have a state-regulated marijuana industry.

Earlier this month, Mexican newspapers reported that Peña Nieto wasn't planning to attend the U.N. drug summit. But after reviewing the results of the public forums, Peña Nieto decided to go.

After his speech Thursday, he shook hands with Belaunzarán, the former congressman who has long advocated for legalization.

"Congratulations on this first step," Belaunzarán told him.

"It is a first step," Peña Nieto agreed.

The U.S. Can't Afford To End Its Global Leadership Role

By Ivo Daalder

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Ivo Daalder, U.S. ambassador to NATO from 2009 to 2013, is president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Robert Kagan is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a contributing columnist for The Post.

The economic, political and security strategy that the United States has pursued for more than seven decades, under Democratic and Republican administrations alike, is today widely questioned by large segments of the American public and is under attack by leading political candidates in both parties. Many Americans no longer seem to value the liberal international order that the United States created after World War II and sustained throughout the Cold War and beyond. Or perhaps they take it for granted and have lost sight of the essential role the United States plays in supporting the international environment from which they benefit greatly. The unprecedented prosperity made possible by free and open markets and thriving international trade; the spread of democracy; and the avoidance of major conflict among great powers: All these remarkable accomplishments have depended on sustained U.S. engagement around the world. Yet politicians in both parties dangle before the public the vision of an America freed from the burdens of leadership.

What these politicians don't say, perhaps because they don't understand it themselves, is that the price of ending our engagement would far outweigh its costs. The international order created by the United States today faces challenges greater than at any time since the height of the Cold War. Rising authoritarian powers in Asia and Europe threaten to undermine the security structures that have kept the peace since World War II. Russia invaded Ukraine and has seized some of its territory. In East Asia, an increasingly aggressive China seeks to control the sea lanes through which a large share of global commerce flows. In the Middle East, Iran pursues hegemony by supporting Hezbollah and Hamas and the bloody tyranny in Syria. The Islamic State controls more territory than any terrorist group in history, brutally imposing its extreme vision of Islam and striking at targets throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

None of these threats will simply go away. Nor will the United States be spared if the international order collapses, as it did twice in the 20th century. In the 21st century, oceans

provide no security. Nor do walls along borders. Nor would cutting off the United States from the international economy by trashing trade agreements and erecting barriers to commerce.

Instead of following the irresponsible counsel of demagogues, we need to restore a bipartisan foreign policy consensus around renewing U.S. global leadership. Despite predictions of a “post-American world,” U.S. capacities remain considerable. The U.S. economy remains the most dynamic in the world. The widely touted “rise of the rest” — the idea that the United States was being overtaken by the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China — has proved to be a myth. The dollar remains the world’s reserve currency, and people across the globe seek U.S. investment and entrepreneurial skills to help their flagging economies. U.S. institutions of higher learning remain the world’s best and attract students from every corner of the globe. The political values that the United States stands for remain potent forces for change. Even at a time of resurgent autocracy, popular demands for greater freedom can be heard in Russia, China, Iran and elsewhere, and those peoples look to the United States for support, both moral and material. And our strategic position remains strong. The United States has more than 50 allies and partners around the world. Russia and China between them have no more than a handful.

The task ahead is to play on these strengths and provide the kind of leadership that many around the world seek and that the American public can support. For the past two years, under the auspices of the World Economic Forum, we have worked with a diverse, bipartisan group of Americans and representatives from other countries to put together the broad outlines of a strategy for renewed U.S. leadership. There is nothing magical about our proposals. The strategies to sustain the present international order are much the same as the strategies that created it. But they need to be adapted and updated to meet new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

For instance, one prime task today is to strengthen the international economy, from which the American people derive so many benefits. This means passing trade agreements that strengthen ties between the United States and the vast economies of East Asia and Europe. Contrary to what demagogues in both parties claim, ordinary Americans stand to gain significantly from the recently negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the agreement will increase annual real incomes in the United States by \$131 billion. The United States also needs to work to reform existing international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, so that rising economic powers such as China feel a greater stake in them, while also working with new institutions such as the

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to ensure that they reinforce rather than undermine liberal economic norms.

The revolution in energy, which has made the United States one of the world’s leading suppliers, offers another powerful advantage. With the right mix of policies, the United States could help allies in Europe and Asia diversify their sources of supply and thus reduce their vulnerability to Russian manipulation. Nations such as Russia and Iran that rely heavily on hydrocarbon exports would be weakened, as would the OPEC oil cartel. The overall result would be a relative increase in our power and ability to sustain the order.

The world has come to recognize that education, creativity and innovation are key to prosperity, and most see the United States as a leader in these areas. Other nations want access to the American market, American finance and American innovation. Businesspeople around the world seek to build up their own Silicon Valleys and other U.S.-style centers of entrepreneurship. The U.S. government can do a better job of working with the private sector in collaborating with developing countries. And Americans need to be more, not less, welcoming to immigrants. Students studying at our world-class universities, entrepreneurs innovating in our high-tech incubators and immigrants searching for new opportunities for their families strengthen the United States and show the world the opportunities offered by democracy.

Finally, the United States needs to do more to reassure allies that it will be there to back them up if they face aggression. Would-be adversaries need to know that they would do better by integrating themselves into the present international order than by trying to undermine it. Accomplishing this, however, requires ending budget sequestration and increasing spending on defense and on all the other tools of international affairs. This investment would be more than paid for by the global security it would provide.

All these efforts are interrelated, and, indeed, a key task for responsible political leaders will be to show how the pieces fit together: how trade enhances security, how military power undergirds prosperity and how providing access to American education strengthens the forces dedicated to a more open and freer world.

Above all, Americans need to be reminded what is at stake. Many millions around the world have benefited from an international order that has raised standards of living, opened political systems and preserved the general peace. But no nation and no people have benefited more than Americans. And no nation has a greater role to play in preserving this system for future generations.

NATIONAL NEWS

Obama Urges States To Overturn Laws On Bathroom Restrictions

By Justin Sink

[Bloomberg Politics](#), April 22, 2016

Laws recently passed in two states that restrict rights for gay and transgender people “are wrong and should be overturned,” President Barack Obama said, weighing in on an issue that has stirred a nationwide debate.

The president said restrictions put in place in North Carolina and Mississippi that would limit transgender people to using gender-segregated bathrooms matching their birth gender deliver a message that the law doesn’t treat all people equally.

Obama spoke at a news conference Friday in the U.K., which has issued a travel advisory warning British citizens who are gay or transgender about the new laws. Obama said British visitors to the U.S. shouldn’t have to avoid those states.

“The people of North Carolina and Mississippi are wonderful people,” Obama said. “I also think that the laws that have been passed there are wrong and should be overturned.”

Obama’s remarks, a response to a question, came amid a roiling debate about the rights of gay and transgender citizens in the U.S. While the Supreme Court in 2015 gave same-sex couples the right to marry across the U.S., other forms of discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation or gender status endure in many places.

The North Carolina law, signed by Governor Pat McCrory, requires that people use public bathrooms correlating with their gender at birth. A new Mississippi law allows some businesses to deny service to same-sex couples, and for the businesses to decide who may use which bathrooms.

Obama: Bathroom Laws In MS And NC ‘Should Be Overturned’

By Julian Hatter

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama on Friday condemned state laws in North Carolina and Mississippi that have been criticized as discriminatory and are threatening to undermine the states’ tourism industries.

The laws “are wrong,” Obama said during a press conference in London, days after the United Kingdom issued a warning to travelers about the legislation.

“They should be overturned, and they were in response to politics in part, in part some strong emotions that are generated by people, some of whom are good people, but I just disagree with them.”

At the same time, however, Obama insisted that the pair of new laws should not discourage tourists from visiting the two states.

“I want everybody here in the United Kingdom to know that the people of North Carolina and Mississippi are wonderful people,” Obama added. “If you guys come to North Carolina or Mississippi, everybody will be treated well.”

The laws have been condemned as discriminatory by LGBT-rights advocates. In response, major entertainers have abandoned planned events in the states, and officials have worried that tourism dollars could dwindle.

The North Carolina law would bar local municipalities from passing nondiscrimination laws and would also require that people use the bathroom that corresponds to their biological sex assigned at birth. The law in Mississippi allows people and businesses to deny service to customers who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender on religious grounds.

Earlier this week, the U.K. Foreign Office issued a notice that “LGBT travellers may be affected by legislation passed recently in the states of North Carolina and Mississippi,” in an advisory that critics of the laws called a remarkable show of opposition.

The Foreign Office advisories are designed to give advice to travelers “dispassionately” and “impartially,” U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron said, standing alongside Obama on Friday.

“Our view on any of these things is that we believe we ought to use law to try to end discrimination, rather than try to embed it or enhance it,” he added. “The laws people pass is a matter for their own legislatures. We make view clear our own views about the importance of trying to end discrimination.”

Cameron said that he had never been to Mississippi but had been to North Carolina once “and enjoyed it.”

This story was updated at 1:17 p.m.

Obama Says North Carolina Law Should Be Overturned

By Darlene Superville And Kevin Freking

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

LONDON (AP) – President Barack Obama called on Friday for the overturning of a North Carolina law that requires transgender people to use public bathrooms conforming to the sex on their birth certificates and restricts protections for LGBT people.

Obama criticized the state law and others targeting LGBT people during a news conference Friday in London. The United Kingdom had put out a travel advisory Friday warning British citizens about possible discrimination if they travel to certain U.S. states.

Obama said he wanted the British to know that people in North Carolina and other states that have pursued similar legislation are “wonderful people” and that British citizens should feel free to come and enjoy themselves. He said he believes they’ll be treated with “extraordinary hospitality.”

"I also think the laws that have been passed there are wrong and should be overturned," Obama said.

The president explained that he believed the laws were in response to "politics, in part," as well as to "some strong emotions that are generated by people."

Obama also emphasized that some of the law's proponents are "good people."

"Although I respect their different viewpoints, I think it's very important for us not to send signals that anybody is treated differently," Obama said.

North Carolina's so-called bathroom law, among other things, requires transgender people to use bathrooms corresponding to the gender on their birth certificate in state government buildings as well as public schools and universities.

North Carolina state Senate leader Phil Berger, a Republican, and one of the most vocal supporters of the law, responded to Obama's comments in a press release stating that "not every father has the luxury of secret service agents protecting his daughters' right to privacy in the girls' bathroom."

Berger has said the law protects women and girls from men using the false pretense of being transgender to enter women's restrooms and locker rooms.

Freking reported from Washington.

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Obama: North Carolina, Mississippi Laws Limiting LGBT Protections Are 'Wrong' And 'Should Be Overturned'

By Juliet Eilperin

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama said Friday that North Carolina and Mississippi's laws limiting protections for transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual people are "wrong" and "should be overturned."

Speaking at a news conference in London with British Prime Minister David Cameron, Obama praised Americans living in states that have recently taken steps to single out individuals based on their gender identity or sexual orientation, even as he criticized their approach to the issue. The North Carolina bill requires individuals to use the bathroom that matches the gender listed on their birth certificate and restricts local governments from providing specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender

identity. Mississippi's law allows people to withhold services from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals on religious grounds.

The U.K. Foreign Office issued a recent advisory warning British citizens they could face discrimination in parts of the United States based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

"The U.S. is an extremely diverse society and attitudes towards LGBT people differ hugely across the country," the advisory on its website says. "LGBT travelers may be affected by legislation passed recently in the states of North Carolina and Mississippi."

Obama assured Britons they should feel free to travel throughout America, even though he criticized laws targeting members of the LGBT community.

"I want everybody here in the United Kingdom to know that the people of North Carolina and Mississippi are wonderful people," he said, adding of the laws, "They should be overturned, and they were in response to politics in part, in part some strong emotions that are generated by people, some of whom are good people, but I just disagree."

In recent weeks White House officials have criticized the North Carolina law, as well as similar measures in other states. But this marked the first time the president has spoken out on the subject.

At least five federal agencies, including the Education Department, are examining whether they can withhold money from North Carolina in response to its new law. The Republican sponsor of a similar law in Tennessee withdrew it after the state's GOP governor joined business groups and others in criticizing it, and the Tennessee attorney general issued an opinion saying that the state risked losing as much as \$1.3 billion in federal funds for education if the bill became law.

"When it comes to respecting the equal rights of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, whether they're transgender or gay or lesbian — although I respect their different viewpoints — I think it's very important for us not to send signals that anybody is treated differently," Obama said Friday.

Britain Warns LGBT People Against U.S. Travel

By Emma Henderson

[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

The British government warned gay people about traveling to parts of the United States after two states introduced anti-gay laws.

The Foreign Office issued the new advice for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in the wake of new legislation in North Carolina and Mississippi.

Previously, the Foreign Office had only issued general advice for LGBT people to “take care abroad,” but lacked specific information about the U.S.

It follows the introduction last month of new legislation passed in North Carolina that allows businesses to “turn away” LGBT people on religious grounds.

The state’s bathroom law, which has been described as “anti-trans,” says people must use the public toilet designated for the biological sex they were born with, rather than the gender they identify with. Virginia and Tennessee have recently overturned a similar law.

In Mississippi, critics have branded a bill passed three weeks ago that allows people to deny services to gay couples on religious grounds the most sweeping anti-LGBT legislation in the U.S.

Supporters have said it will protect religious freedom, but others have condemned it as a free pass to discrimination. It is scheduled to become law on 1 July.

The new Foreign Office advice states: “The U.S. is an extremely diverse society and attitudes toward LGBT people differ hugely across the country. Laws vary from state to state. When you are physically present in a state, even temporarily, you are subject to that state’s laws. You must carry a passport showing that you have leave to enter or remain with you at all times.

“LGBT travelers may be affected by legislation passed recently in the states of North Carolina and Mississippi.”

“Before traveling please read our general travel advice for the LGBT community. You can find more detail on LGBT issues in the U.S. on the website of the Human Rights Campaign.”

The bill in North Carolina, known as House Bill 1523, also protects people who do not recognize the gender identity of transgender people.

Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam and Ringo Starr have all cancelled concerts in North Carolina over the bill in that state, while Bryan Adams has done the same in Mississippi.

Felicity Daly, director of the LGBT Kaleidoscope Trust, said: “It is heartening the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is becoming more LGBT responsive in their work, it’s a good sign as it is an important issue in the U.K., but most people who identify as LGBT in the U.K. will already be aware of the nature of certain states.”

Matt Horwood of Stonewall charity said: “What’s happened in Mississippi and North Carolina proves that equality is never secure. It’s positive to see the U.K. government recognize this need and update its travel advice pages accordingly.”

The Foreign Office’s advice comes amid President Obama’s visit to the U.K.

This article originally appeared on the website of The Independent. Its content was created separately from USA TODAY.

MORE FROM THE INDEPENDENT

UK PM Says Laws Should End Discrimination When Asked About U.S. States’ LGBT Laws

By Costas Pitas

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Obama Reassures British Tourists Over LGBT Laws

By Gregory Korte

[USA Today](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama found himself trying to reassure British tourists planning to visit North Carolina and Mississippi Friday, in response to the British Foreign Office issuing an advisory warning of the southern states’ recently passed laws limiting gay rights.

In a press conference after meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron in London, Obama seemed to put himself on record as opposing any travel boycott of the states, while also making clear he opposes their policies limiting local anti-discrimination ordinances and the use of public restrooms by transgender people.

“I want everybody here in the United Kingdom to know that the people of North Carolina and Mississippi are wonderful people,” Obama said. “They are beautiful states and you are welcome and you should come and enjoy yourselves. And I think you’ll be treated with extraordinary hospitality.”

He quickly added, “I also think that the laws that have been passed there are wrong and should be overturned.”

Obama seemed to try to tamp down the strong emotions over the issue, suggesting that the move to pass the laws was part politics and part sincere conviction. “Although I respect their different viewpoints, it’s important for us not to send signals that anyone is treated differently,” he said.

The issue was just one of many domestic political issues that crossed the Atlantic as Obama met with Cameron Friday. Obama weighed in on British politics, giving a strong argument in favor of a referendum on whether the U.K. should remain in the European Union. Similarly, Cameron was asked to give an opinion on GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump. (He demurred).

But Cameron did defend the Foreign Office guidance warning lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender British subjects that they “may be affected by legislation passed recently” and warning them that they should know about those laws. “The U.S. is an extremely diverse society and

attitudes towards LGBT people differ hugely across the country,” says the new travel guidance, issued Tuesday.

“The Foreign Office gives advice on travel, and it obviously deals with laws and situations as they are, and it tries to give that advice dispassionately, impartially,” Cameron said.

“Our view on any of these kinds of things is that we should use law to end discrimination, rather than embed it or enhance it,” he said. “And that’s something we’re comfortable saying to countries and friends anywhere in the world.”

But Cameron also suggested it’s nothing personal: “I’ve been to North Carolina many years ago, and enjoyed it. I’ve not been to Mississippi, but one day I hope to,” Cameron said.

Obama: Mississippi And North Carolina Anti-LGBT Laws ‘Should Be Overturned’

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

Mississippi and North Carolina ought to rethink their laws affecting the rights of its LGBT citizens, President Barack Obama said Friday, while inviting all Britons to visit the states nonetheless.

Before ending a news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron, Obama fielded a question about the United Kingdom issuing travel advice to its citizens on Friday about the new laws in Mississippi and North Carolina that affect the rights of British LGBT travelers.

Attempting to assuage concerns and not offend the citizens of those states, Obama told the British people that they should come visit North Carolina and Mississippi, noting their “wonderful” and “hospitable people.”

“And you should come and enjoy yourselves, and I think you’ll be treated with extraordinary hospitality,” the president said. “I also think that the laws that have been passed there are wrong and should be overturned, and they’re in response to politics in part — in part to some strong emotions that are generated by people, some of whom are good people but I just disagree with them when it comes to respecting the equal rights of all people regardless of sexual orientation, whether they’re transgender or gay or lesbian.”

Obama said that while he respects the “different viewpoints, I think it’s very important for us not to send signals that anybody is treated differently.”

He then pointed to the United States’ federal system as a reason for the trans-Atlantic warning.

“And I think it’s fair to say that we’re not unique among countries, where particularly under a federal system in which power’s dispersed that there are going to be some localities or local officials that put forward laws that aren’t necessarily reflective of a national consensus,” he said, before promising,

“But if you guys come to North Carolina or Mississippi, everybody will be treated well.”

Obama Says Britons Should Visit U.S. States Despite LGBT Laws

By Roberta Rampton

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Obama Urges Tourists To Visit North Carolina And Mississippi Despite New Laws Seen As Anti-Gay

By Michael A. Memoli And Christi Parsons

[Los Angeles Times](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama joined the chorus of those condemning new laws in North Carolina and Mississippi as anti-gay but reassured would-be tourists Friday that they were still welcome and would be treated warmly in the South.

Obama’s remarks, made alongside British Prime Minister David Cameron at a news conference in London, came amid an uproar over the laws that included an advisory from the British Foreign Office pointing out the laws to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender travelers who might be planning to travel to the southern U.S.

“You are welcome and you should come and enjoy yourselves,” Obama said. “I think you’ll be treated with extraordinary hospitality.”

Both states have seen hotel and other travel cancellations in recent weeks after the laws were enacted. The singer Bryan Adams canceled a concert and actress Sharon Stone decided not to film a movie in Mississippi because of that state’s law allowing people to discriminate against LGBT people on religious grounds.

Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam and other artists have canceled shows in North Carolina following passage of a law regulating access to bathrooms by transgender people.

The laws are wrong and should be overturned, Obama said. When it comes to respecting the rights of everyone, he said, “it’s very important for us not to send signals that anybody is treated differently.”

Even so, he said, the states still welcome visitors.

“The people of North Carolina and Mississippi,” he said, “are wonderful people.”

Economy Chief Defends Record In Obama’s Final Year

By Sylvan Lane

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

President Obama's chief economic adviser said Friday that global economic issues, not domestic, were the biggest challenges to the United States.

Despite sluggish wage growth and tepid consumer spending, the United States economy is in enviable shape compared to other countries, said Jason Furman, chief of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, at a breakfast with reporters.

As Republican presidential candidates and lawmakers rail against what they see as overzealous financial regulation hamstringing U.S. businesses and growth, Furman defended the American economy and the White House's policy as a model in tumultuous times.

"The U.S. has been the biggest success story of any the economies in the world in rebounding from the financial crisis," said Furman, "and our growth continues to be considered by people around the world as one of the bright spots in the global economy."

"The biggest concern I face for our economy is the impact the rest of the world will have on the U.S. economy," said Furman, pointing to a slowdown in U.S. exports tied to lower global demand as "a persistent drag" on American growth.

Slow economic and wage growth has been a constant target for Republicans and even some Democratic critics. Furman defended the post-recession White House's financial regulations, which Republicans often blame for unsatisfactory growth despite more than 70 months of consecutive private-sector job creation.

"When people go through all the different concerns about the global economy, I think it's encouraging that the United States banking system is not on anyone's list, and for good reason, because we've undertaken reforms that put it in much better shape than it had been in for a long time," said Furman.

"But the productivity growth slowdown is something you're seeing across a range of economies, some of which did reform their financial systems and some of which didn't. So I think something else is going on."

Furman cited consumer spending and business investment as areas with room for improvement, but attributed the lag in part to a financial crisis hangover.

"Part of it is being through a very traumatic economic experience which is only eight years past us," said Furman. "Those effects can last for decades — it can affect the way you think."

A major aspect of ramping up the economy, Furman said, is an aggressive agenda for Obama's final year in office. Beyond pushing to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), administrative agencies have released rules on Wall Street executive pay and retirement adviser conflicts of interests, and will soon release a rule on payday lending.

Obama also expressed openness to working with Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) on anti-poverty legislation and tax reform.

Even though passing the first major tax code overhaul since the Reagan administration would be almost impossible in an election year, Ryan and congressional leaders are working on a package that could move in 2017.

"I think it's always good when people put out policy ideas and are specific about those policy ideas. In some cases those policy ideas help advance an issue," said Furman. "The big question is are we addressing a legitimate economic problem ... or are we trying to cut taxes for high-income individuals and raise their after-tax income?"

How Regulators Plan To Use Pay Rules To Rein In Risk-Taking By Big Banks

By James Rufus Koren

[Los Angeles Times](#), April 22, 2016

Federal financial regulators moved forward this week on new rules for how banks pay their executives.

No, they're not aimed at addressing the wealth gap or cutting bankers' multimillion dollar salaries. Rather, the proposed rules, tied to the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act of 2010, aim to rein in the kind of excessive risk-taking that helped lead to the financial crisis.

Here's what you need to know.

Who does this affect?

The key elements of the proposed rules would apply to executives and some key employees of all banks, credit unions or wealth-management firms with more than \$50 billion in assets. That means thousands of small banks and credit unions would be exempt, but the rules would affect all of the nation's major banks, including Wells Fargo, Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase. Also affected by the rules: Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two firms that buy and securitize many of the nation's mortgage loans.

Does it cap salaries?

No. In fact, the rules don't have to do with salaries at all. Rather, they would apply only to incentive pay — compensation based on performance. The notion is that performance-based bonuses and other types of incentive pay, if structured in the wrong way, can encourage executives to take unnecessary or improper risks. For instance, during the subprime mortgage boom, many banks had pay plans that gave loan officers and mortgage brokers an incentive to write more loans and more high-interest loans, regardless of the likelihood that those loans would default. What's the goal?

To make banks and other financial firms more stable — that is, less likely to fail or to need a government bailout — by getting them to take less risk or cut down on overly generous compensation. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. found that, among a group of 65 banks that failed between 2007

and 2015, more than one-quarter of them had problems with their incentive-pay packages. What will change?

Under the proposed rules, the nation's biggest banks would have to set aside 60% of their executives' incentive pay for at least four years. Many already wait three years. Smaller banks would have to set aside 40% to 50% of incentive pay for three years. During those years, banks could cut the incentives, holding executives accountable if financial results go south. What's more, even after those waiting periods, executives could have to repay some bonuses if they're found to have committed fraud or other misconduct.

When will these rules take effect?

Financial regulators were mandated to create rules on incentive pay by the Dodd-Frank Act, but they're at least months away from becoming a reality. The current proposal must be approved by a handful of regulatory agencies. So far, only one, the National Credit Union Administration – the equivalent of the FDIC for credit unions – has done so.

Enough With The Earnings: SEC May Reduce Company Reports

By Marley Jay

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

Four times a year there's a kind of parade on Wall Street: companies announce their quarterly earnings, all in a row, with the banks first, then the tech companies, and the retailers bringing up the rear. Stocks can rise or plunge based on the results. And three months later it all happens again.

But regulators are wondering if it's time for a change.

For about 40 years, companies have had to make four yearly reports of basic financial information, including how much money they earned or lost, how much revenue they took in and what their expenses were. It's supposed to help investors make informed decisions. But the Securities and Exchange Commission said Wednesday that it may change those rules. It noted there are drawbacks to the requirements, like the time and money companies have to spend to prepare the reports, and the possibility that important information gets lost in the flood of stuff companies have to disclose.

The SEC didn't propose any specific new rules or commit to making changes. It's really asking some philosophical questions: what do investors need to know? What's the balance between transparency, which investors need, and burdening companies with regulations?

Some observers think quarterly reports are bad for companies. BlackRock CEO Laurence Fink said in February that the constant reports encourage short-term thinking, and push companies to spend gobs of money on stock repurchases or big dividends, or repeatedly slashing costs instead of making longer-term investments that would help their business or the economy in the years to come. Last year

Hillary Clinton criticized "quarterly capitalism" and made some of the same points.

"Quarterly numbers force short term thinking on the part of investors and on the part of management," said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at BMO Private Bank. Still, Ablin said he opposed a change.

"I think more information is better," he said.

If the SEC decides to make a change, the simplest option might be making companies report their results twice a year instead of four times. That's how the European Union handles earnings, although some countries within the EU have more stringent requirements. If companies wanted to give quarterly updates, they could still do so.

Erik Gordon, professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, said companies may want to spend less on earnings filings, but even a change to semi-annual reports would be bad for many investors.

"When you cut down on required public disclosure, you favor institutional investors over individual investors," he said. That's because big investment firms like BlackRock or giant pension funds have the ability to do far more analysis and research of companies. Gordon says smaller investors might have a lot less data to work with.

"An individual person can't call IBM's customers and find out what's going on," he said. "It will hurt individual investors and put them at a bigger disadvantage to institutional investors."

Regardless of how many times companies report or what those reports look like, Ablin said it's vital that investors look at company results closely and be skeptical.

"My frustration is, there's a fair amount of latitude that investors give management in reported earnings," he said. "In many respects I think investors tend to take reported earnings at face value."

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As Obama's 'My Brother's Keeper' Turns Two, Officials Believe It Will Endure

By Emma Brown

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Noah McQueen attended 10 different middle schools, then transferred among high schools three different times during his freshman year. He was struggling.

But then he was paired with a mentor who helped him find his path. Now 19 and a student at Morehouse College, McQueen has become one of the faces of My Brother's Keeper, President Obama's initiative to improve the lives and prospects of boys and young men of color.

Now two years old, the initiative has helped galvanize \$600 million in private donations, according to a progress

report the administration released Friday. More than 240 communities, including one in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Puerto Rico, have signed on, creating local teams to identify opportunity gaps for males of color and come up with plans to address them.

Federal agencies have continued their efforts to give underserved minorities a better chance at success: In July, the Justice and Education departments announced the "Second-Chance Pell" program that will allow incarcerated people to receive federal aid to take college courses. In the wake of the Obama administration's call for schools to reduce suspensions and expulsions, 40 school districts have revamped their approach to discipline.

And in February, the White House announced an ambitious effort to pair 1 million students with mentors to reduce chronic absenteeism, including 250,000 students in grades six through nine during the next two years.

My Brother's Keeper has helped shine a light on race and gender disparities in America, and has helped create a movement of people who are "committed to ensuring all youth know they matter and have every opportunity to achieve their dreams," according to the initiative's progress report.

Administration officials say they believe that the work of My Brother's Keeper will outlive the Obama presidency.

"There's strong bipartisan consensus around, for example, the issue of criminal justice reform," Education Secretary John King said in an interview. "I think we'll continue to see progress in the next administration to try to create better alternatives to the pattern of mass incarceration that we've seen."

Broderick Johnson, chairman of the My Brother's Keeper Task Force, said that the initiative has resulted in changes within the government — including new cross-agency partnerships — that will endure. Local officials have created their own plans to close race and gender gaps that are not tied to who's in the White House, he said.

And Obama has said that he will remain committed to the goals of My Brother's Keeper long after leaving 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

"The president has made clear this is work that is lifetime work," Johnson said.

Report Finds Hundreds Of Meetings Between White House And Google

By Mario Trujillo
[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

Google and its affiliates have had at least 427 meetings at the White House during President Obama's tenure, according data from the Campaign for Accountability and The Intercept.

The data, gleaned from White House meeting logs, showed that in all, 169 Google employees have met in the White House with 182 government officials. Not surprisingly, Google's head of public policy, Johanna Shelton, had the most White House meetings of any Google employee with 128.

The report highlights the access enjoyed by Google, which has a expansive lobbying operation in Washington and consistently ranks among the highest spenders. In just the first quarter of this year, Google spent \$3.8 million to lobby the government.

The meetings data spans from the first month of Obama's presidency in 2009 to October 2015. Aside from Google staff and lobbyists, the data also takes into account White House meetings with companies Tomorrow Ventures and Civis Analytics.

Tomorrow Ventures is the investment vehicle of Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Google's parent company Alphabet, and the other is a company in which he is the sole investor.

The numbers also show 55 times in which Google employees took jobs in the federal government, and 197 times when government employees went to work for Google.

Google responded to similar reports last year from the Wall Street Journal about the company's visits during an antitrust probe led by the Federal Trade Commission.

In a post last March, Google wrote, "Of course we've had many meetings at the White House over the years." The company said the meetings were on a range of topics, including self driving cars, advertising, internet censorship, trade, cybersecurity, civic innovation, help with Healthcare.gov, and other issues.

It said Microsoft had made 270 visits in that same time and Comcast made 150.

Friday's report comes as many in the cable industry are blasting the Federal Communications Commission over a new plan to open up the set-top box market, which is currently dominated by the cable and satellite industry. The change could benefit Google and other tech companies and many have branded it the "Google proposal."

President Obama just recently endorsed it.

The Presidential Election Has Obama Explaining It To Concerned Foreign Leaders

By Michael A. Memoli
[Los Angeles Times](#), April 22, 2016

The American presidency is often called the most powerful job in the world. And perhaps in this election, more than most, many outside the U.S. would like a say in its outcome.

Concern about Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric, and its apparent resonance among large swaths of the American

public, has become a regular feature of President Obama's interactions with foreign counterparts and appears likely to trail him as he began something of a farewell tour of Europe on Friday.

"It's fascinating the degree to which the single most important question I'm asked these days from other world leaders is, 'What's going on with your elections?'" Obama told interviewer Charlie Rose this week, calling the drama of the Republican race "the tip of a broader iceberg of dysfunction that we've seen."

White House aides at times seem weary of questions about the extent to which the campaign is figuring in to Obama's conversations with foreign leaders. But Obama and Vice President Joe Biden often have acknowledged the frequency of the inquiries, sometimes in jest. Toasting Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at a state dinner, he credited Canadians who "have, so far, rejected the idea of building a wall to keep out your southern neighbors."

A more immediate campaign has dominated voters' attention here — the June referendum over whether the United Kingdom should remain part of the European Union — but U.S. politics are also front of mind. After the New York primary this week, the anchor of the BBC's evening news program dissected the latest delegate counts with the wonky precision of an MSNBC correspondent, albeit in a tailored suit rather than professorial sweater.

At a news conference here Friday after Obama met with Prime Minister David Cameron, an American reporter asked Cameron whether he might want to advise American voters what to do when it comes to Trump.

"That was so predictable!" Obama admonished. Cameron deflected the question but acknowledged he has commented before. In December, after Trump called for a ban on Muslim immigration to the U.S., Cameron said his remarks "were divisive, stupid and wrong."

The uproar over Trump's proposed immigration ban was but one that attracted notice beyond U.S. borders. Foreign diplomats have been spotted on the campaign trail, scouting out early primary states and attending debates and campaigns to document other potential thorny policy pronouncements for dispatches back home.

"Europeans watch and analyze America politics extremely closely," said Heather Conley, director of the Europe Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "I think their evolution in our presidential election has been, 'What is this? This will settle down,' to, 'Oh, dear God, what is happening?'"

The British Parliament debated over whether to allow Trump to enter the country, Conley noted. A December survey conducted by Ipsos-MORI found that 74% of British adults had an unfavorable view of the billionaire. Fifty-six percent viewed Hillary Clinton favorably.

Clinton, a former secretary of State, said last month that the concern among foreign leaders over a Trump presidency was so pronounced that some had asked her whether it would help if they publicly endorsed her.

"I am like, 'No, this is up to Americans, thank you very much,'" she said at an Ohio town hall.

As much as any particular issue, Obama has focused on U.S. foreign policy most when discussing the stakes of the election.

In February, after hosting a summit of southeast Asian leaders at Sunnylands in California, Obama focused on his role as commander-in-chief in explaining why he was confident Trump could not win.

The job requires someone who has the nuclear launch codes and "is often responsible for not just the United States of America but 20 other countries that are having big problems or falling apart," he said in explaining why he was confident Trump could not win.

"The American people are pretty sensible, and I think they'll make a sensible choice in the end," he said.

For Obama, sharing the curiosity and concern of foreign leaders over the state of the campaign could be a useful political device for a president who would prefer a fellow Democrat succeed him. And Clinton, as Obama's former chief diplomat, could benefit if the country ultimately views his foreign policy legacy favorably enough to vote for her to continue a version of it.

But the uncertainty over what course his successor might take also could have immediate consequences for Obama's ability to conduct foreign policy.

It could worsen his odds of gaining new commitments for any long-term strategies to target Islamic State, for instance, said James Carafano, vice president of foreign and defense policy studies for the conservative Heritage Foundation.

"There's a lot of uncertainty in the region about, 'What next?' What next from President Trump, what next from President Cruz, what next from President Clinton?" he said. "There's a reluctance for people to sign up for something on a campaign that may last the next couple of months with no clear picture of what's going to happen after that."

This story was updated with comments from British Prime Minister David Cameron.

This story was originally published at 7:27 a.m.

Obama On A Trump Presidency: 'Fortunately We're Term Limited'

By Caitlin Yilek

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

President Barack Obama praised terms limits on United States presidents during a news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron on Friday.

Cameron dodged a question about his opinion on Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump's campaign, instead saying he was "in awe" of the American election process.

"Fortunately we're term limited," Obama said with a smirk. "So I too can look in awe at the process."

Make No Mistake: Puerto Rico Will Default On May 2, Moody's Says

By Brian Chappatta

[Bloomberg News](#), April 22, 2016

Make no mistake about it: Puerto Rico will default in May on some of the \$470 million it owes, according to Moody's Investors Service.

The cash-strapped commonwealth is expected to fall short of paying \$422 million to holders of bonds from the Government Development Bank, the credit rater said Friday in a report. It may also default on debt from the Employees Retirement System, Industrial Development Co. and Highways and Transportation Authority because the GDB has just \$562 million in liquidity as of April 1, Moody's said.

"These impending defaults would follow the government's efforts to emphasize its severe cash depletion during the past year," Moody's analysts led by Ted Hampton and Emily Raimés wrote. "Even if federal oversight legislation is passed by the end of next week, Puerto Rico will still default because the commonwealth treasury and the GDB, which has long been the government's fiscal agent, have insufficient liquidity for upcoming debt payments."

Moody's expects Puerto Rico to pay the less than \$3 million owed to holders of general-obligation bonds and securities guaranteed by the commonwealth's constitution to "avoid the almost certain litigation that would quickly follow." Sales-tax backed debt, known by the Spanish acronym Cofina, will pay with funds already deposited with the trustee.

Appropriation debt from the Public Finance Corp., which accounts for 75 percent of all Puerto Rico defaults so far, will fail to pay yet again, Moody's said.

Puerto Rico At The Brink

The GOP may muff a chance to clean up the island's debt mess.

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

The Environmental Campaign That Punishes Free Speech

By Sam Kazman

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

With seven state attorneys general and Al Gore sharing a New York City stage, there was no doubt about it: It was

showtime for a whodunit. The crime being investigated? Dissent.

The March 29 news conference unveiled, according to New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman, an "unprecedented" coalition to fight not only climate change but also allegedly deceptive speech about climate change. The group, which dubbed itself AGs United for Clean Power, promised to "use all the tools at our disposal" to battle for progress on "the most consequential issue of our time."

Schneiderman was blunt about his goal of shutting down debate: "You have to tell the truth. You can't make misrepresentations of the kinds we've seen here."

This isn't a law-and-order drama. It's politics clothed in messianic garb, and its primary tools are censorship and intimidation.

The AGs are following a familiar script here: target an unpopular, deep-pocketed business, harass that business's potential allies with overly broad investigations, run roughshod over the target's First Amendment protections and settle once the politically weakened company tires of fighting the endless resources of the state.

ExxonMobil was singled out by name at the news conference, but the coalition appears to be following the script perfectly. Now it's on to the fishing-expedition stage.

On April 7, our organization, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, was subpoenaed by coalition member and U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General Claude Walker for all CEI material on climate change and energy policy, as well as information on our supporters, over 10 years beginning in 1997. The subpoena's purported focus is on our contacts with ExxonMobil, a former CEI donor that publicly ended its support for us after 2005. Nonetheless, the subpoena calls for practically all of our material on climate change and energy policy, as well as information on any donors who directly or indirectly supported that work.

That's one hell of a burden to slap on a nonprofit. The coalition's purported justification is that the risks of global warming are so important and the scientific basis for them so settled that disputing them constitutes fraud. But the rhetoric of the AGs is blissfully oblivious to the First Amendment.

Court rulings make it clear that broad subpoenas aimed at restricting speech, especially in the context of policy debates, are invalid. Time and again, the Supreme Court has held that the remedy for unwanted speech is more speech in response. The chief law-enforcement officers of several states should know better, but their reaction to a dissenting policy position is punitive, coercive and unconstitutional.

As for breaching donor confidentiality, the obvious aims here are intimidation and to limit future use of the constitutionally protected right of anonymous donation. In 1958, in NAACP v. Patterson, the Supreme Court held that such attempts were illegal under the First Amendment's right of association.

You might think that if the law is that clear, we have nothing to worry about. But fighting a subpoena is incredibly costly and time-consuming, especially when the attorneys general behind them have promised to “use all the tools” at their disposal, courtesy of their states’ taxpayers.

Regardless of where you stand on global warming policy, the notion of a multi-state campaign to end the debate ought to make you worry. After all, there are many science-driven policy debates out there, on topics ranging from genetically modified food to population control. It is not as if the government has a sterling reputation when it comes to science. From Galileo to today’s food plate, we know government politicizes science. It ought not to punish dissent, too.

The Feds Get Back Into The Stealing Business

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

THE JUSTICE Department calls it a tool to crack down on terrorists, kleptocrats and fugitives. So why did it result in the seizure of money and other assets from law-abiding people? Welcome to the weird world of civil asset forfeiture, in which the government can take property without charging its owner with a crime. There are some legitimate reasons for the practice, such as cracking down on sophisticated organized-crime rings, that manage to separate criminals from tainted assets. But even after years of criticism and reports of abuse, the federal government still has not reformed its piece of the system enough to keep its application narrow and fair.

The use of civil forfeiture has boomed over the past decade, in part because of the Justice Department’s “equitable sharing” policy, which gives local law enforcement a cut of the proceeds from seizures they turn over to the federal government. Federal seizure rules are sometimes looser than state rules. If local police can put seized assets into the federal system and still get a slice of the pot, the federal government is giving local police departments a financial interest in using the federal system to maximize seizures.

The result has been stories such as that of Mandrel Stuart, a barbecue restaurant owner from whom Fairfax County police took \$17,550 in 2012. Police pulled Mr. Stuart over for having tinted windows and a video playing in his line of sight — and ultimately released him without charge. But they kept the money, which Mr. Stuart said was for buying restaurant supplies, and had a Drug Enforcement Administration officer process it. Mr. Stuart got his money back — but it took a year, and he lost his business in the meantime.

Responding to reports such as these, the Justice Department has over the past two years placed stronger limits on equitable sharing, requiring that seizures be processed under the program only if the feds were involved

before police took the assets and requiring that federal prosecutors quickly vet them. These new rules are helpful but not enough.

The point of equitable sharing should be to fight major crimes, not pad police budgets. Any link between the volume of seizures and the windfall to police departments must be broken. Otherwise police departments will be tempted to push the rules as far as they can. For a time, the Justice Department seemed poised to end equitable sharing, suspending the scheme. But the department recently announced that it is restarting the program. It should reconsider, cordoning off seized assets for other purposes and finding other ways to encourage local police to assist in federal investigations.

Even if the feds reform fully, they cannot touch state civil seizure rules, which in many locales continue to encourage abuse. These, too, should be reformed so that innocent people cannot be deprived unfairly of their hard-earned cash.

Poll: Clinton, Sanders Nearly Tied In Indiana

By Jessie Hellmann

[The Hill](#), April 22, 2016

Democratic presidential rivals Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are locked in a virtual tie in Indiana’s primary, according to a survey released Friday.

Clinton leads the Vermont senator by three points, 48 percent to 45 percent, within the margin of error for the WTHR/HPI poll.

Clinton holds increasing leads over Sanders in both pledged delegates and superdelegates and has been moving to put the race away and pivot to the general election.

Neither candidate has campaigned in the Hoosier State yet as they focus on the five primaries on the East Coast Tuesday.

WTHR says its poll is the first statewide look at Indiana before the state’s May 3 primary, which has 92 delegates at stake. The poll surveyed 500 likely voters from April 18 to 21 and has a 4-point margin of error.

Priebus: Nominee Must Earn Delegate Majority

By Steve Peoples

[Associated Press](#), April 22, 2016

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (AP) — The Republican Party won’t “hand the nomination” to any presidential candidate who fails to win a majority of delegates in the coming weeks, the head of the GOP said Friday.

In a speech Friday to Republican National Committee members in Florida, Chairman Reince Priebus said it doesn’t matter how close a candidate comes, if he doesn’t claim the necessary 1,237 delegates. Front-runner Donald Trump has said he should be the nominee as long as he has the most

delegates after the state-by-state primary process ends – even if he falls short, which appears quite possible.

“If we don’t abide by the majority, we don’t honor one of the bedrock values of American government,” Priebus said. “Majority rule is as American as apple pie or Opening Day.”

Priebus said that without a clear majority, the party will pick its nominee at a contested convention, which will be held in July in Cleveland, Ohio.

In another remark that seemed aimed at Trump, Priebus called for his party, including the current crop of contenders, to rally behind the eventual nominee. Trump at different times has declined to rule out a third-party candidacy, should his bid for the Republican nomination fall short.

“No one is forcing them to wear our jersey, Priebus said of the Republican contenders. “We expect our candidates to support our party and our eventual nominee.”

Also Friday, the maverick RNC member who tried altering his party’s rules for picking a presidential candidate said he now believes there is no need for a change because the bylaws are tougher than he realized.

A day earlier, the party’s rules committee easily rejected a bid by Oregon RNC committeeman Solomon Yue aimed at making it harder for a new presidential candidate to emerge from this July’s gathering in Cleveland.

Yue’s proposal would have allowed the 2,472 delegates, by majority vote, to prevent the convention’s presiding officer from allowing new nominees. Supporters of Trump and contender Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and many grassroots conservatives have worried that party leaders will try dumping Trump and Cruz in hopes that an outside candidate will emerge.

On Friday, Yue cited little-noticed remarks that RNC general counsel John Ryder made at Thursday’s rules committee meeting. Ryder said existing rules already require the presiding officer to get a two-thirds majority vote to permit new nominations. That’s a steeper hurdle than what Yue had proposed.

“We went through this for nothing,” Yue said Friday in an interview. “I believe this two-thirds deal is better.”

An internal GOP battle of emails erupted last weekend, with RNC Arizona committeeman Bruce Ash, who chairs the party rules committee, accusing Republican leaders of “a breach of our trust” by trying to improperly sideline Yue’s proposal. Ryder responded at the time that there had been a misunderstanding about how Yue’s proposal had been handled, but said it was a bad idea to change the rules mid-campaign.

It remained unclear Friday why party leaders hadn’t said right away that current rules already require the two-thirds threshold, remarks that could have defused the showdown days earlier.

Asked why that point hadn’t been made earlier, Ryder said Friday, “We had a lot of conversations with Mr. Yue.”

Priebus and other party leaders have argued that any rules change would leave grassroots voters suspicious that leaders were trying to help a particular candidate. Convention delegates will have to approve the rules that will govern their July sessions.

Associated Press writer Alan Fram contributed to this report.

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Priebus To GOP: America Is Watching

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 22, 2016

Americans won’t vote until November, but Republicans should be aware that undecided voters are watching the party’s primary and unite accordingly, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus suggested Friday during his address the RNC’s annual spring meeting in Hollywood, Florida.

Priebus also the party will not have a nominee who does not earn the necessary number of 1,237 delegates at the party’s convention. Donald Trump has repeatedly called the RNC’s delegate selection process “rigged” against him in favor of the establishment.

“Our candidates are running for the nomination of the Republican Party. They’re trying out for our team. No one is forcing them to wear our jersey. We expect our candidates to support our party and our eventual nominee,” Priebus said.

While not naming any candidates in particular, Priebus commented, “our candidates are going to say some things to attract attention,” calling that “part of politics.”

“But we all need to get behind the nominee. Unity makes the impossible, possible. Division makes the possible, impossible,” Priebus said, going on to invoke the Bible. “Scripture warns us about how the ‘root of bitterness’ can easily damage unity in the church. But the Psalms also describe how ‘good and pleasant it is when God’s people dwell in unity.’”

The same principle applies to the Republican Party, Priebus asserted, noting that while millions of Americans will not vote until November, “they are making decisions right now about who they will vote for down the line.”

“The sooner Republicans unite, the sooner we will show America we are the only party ready to lead the course

correction America is waiting for,” Priebus said, according to his prepared remarks.

Priebus vowed that the party would not “hand the nomination to anyone with a plurality, no matter how close they are to 1,237.”

“You need a majority. Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades,” the chairman said, referring to the fight over the Affordable Care Act in 2009 when it looked like Obama was going to fall just votes short. “We didn’t say, ‘Oh he’s almost there, let’s give it to him.’ He had to get a majority.”

By failing to do that, Priebus said, the party does a disservice to majority rule, “one of the bedrock values of American government” and “as American as apple pie or Opening Day.”

“If no candidate reaches a majority of bound delegates during the primary process, we will go to an open or contested convention,” Priebus said.

Reince Priebus Calls On G.O.P. To Back Nominee, Even If It’s You-Know-Who

By Jonathan Martin

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — The head of the Republican National Committee implored leaders of his sharply divided party on Friday to rally behind their eventual presidential nominee, suggesting that they ignore Donald J. Trump’s assault on the nominating process.

Reince Priebus, the committee’s chairman, did not mention Mr. Trump by name when addressing the group’s members at the party’s spring meeting here, but he devoted much of his speech to the tensions created by the Republican front-runner.

“Now I know our candidates are going to say some things to attract attention,” Mr. Priebus said, in a barely veiled reference to Mr. Trump’s attacks on what he has called “a rigged” and “corrupt” nominating process.

“That’s part of politics,” Mr. Priebus said. “But we all need to get behind the nominee.”

Mr. Trump is not the nominee yet, but his considerable advantage in delegates and lead in overall votes has prompted some mainstream Republicans to come to terms with the likelihood that he is the favorite, however unthinkable it may once have been, to become their standard-bearer this fall.

Yet the lingering split between those Republicans willing to accept Mr. Trump, however reluctantly, and those ferociously opposed to his nomination was on vivid display at the beachside resort where the party gathered.

While Mr. Priebus was speaking to state chairmen and chairwomen and committee members in a second-floor ballroom, officials from the best-funded anti-Trump group

were briefing reporters a floor below about its efforts to deny Mr. Trump delegates in the remaining contests and keep him from clinching a majority before the party’s convention in Cleveland in July.

More to the point, Katie Packer, the chairwoman of the group, Our Principles PAC, rejected Mr. Priebus’s implicit suggestion that Mr. Trump was worthy of carrying the party’s banner.

“We’re selling our soul as a party for what?” asked Ms. Packer, arguing that nominating Mr. Trump could imperil Republican control of Congress. “To lose our majorities for a generation?”

Ms. Packer added, “I think it’s very clear he doesn’t live up to our standards as a party.”

To drive that point home, she came to the meeting with reporters brandishing the group’s latest mailing: a pamphlet featuring an image of a buxom blonde, a pug and a pig that read: “Bimbo. Dog. Fat Pig. This is how Donald Trump publicly refers to women.”

Whether the shock value of such language still has any resonance this deep into the nominating fight is an open question, however. Mr. Trump’s commanding victory in New York this week and his expected successes in a series of mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states this Tuesday has put a damper on the effort to stop him.

It has also stoked concern among some that, if Mr. Trump falls just short of a delegate majority but comes close, the small universe of unbound delegates, wanting to end the party’s long and ugly nomination fight, will come his way to hand him the nomination on the first ballot.

Some of these political free agents were at the party meeting, and Our Principles PAC distributed a three-and-a-half page memo to them and the rest of the committee members, who are all delegates, making the case against Mr. Trump and arguing that it was not too late to stop him.

“We believe they’ll follow their heart before they follow the herd and the pressure,” Ms. Packer said, adding that Mr. Priebus should not “make the decision, ‘Well, he got close, so we’re going to go ahead and give him the touchdown.’ “

But the party chairman, while pleading with Republicans to “rally around whoever becomes our nominee,” made clear in his remarks that the R.N.C. would be steadfast in not getting behind a candidate until they receive the needed 1,237 delegates.

“We aren’t going to hand the nomination to anyone with a plurality, no matter how close they are to 1,237,” Mr. Priebus said. “You need a majority. ‘Almost’ only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.”

Trying to put the best face on a campaign that some Republicans say has been disastrous for the party, Mr. Priebus invoked Abraham Lincoln to note that Lincoln’s intraparty opponents in the election of 1860 joined his

administration. "They didn't just take their marbles and go home," he said.

But while some of Mr. Trump's rivals for the nomination may endorse him, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, should he become the nominee, many in the party most likely will not.

Many of the party's strategists and staff members, as well as some its elected officials, have said publicly that they will not support Mr. Trump if he wins the nomination. And it was difficult to stroll through the lobby here without encountering Republicans who said privately that they were unlikely to vote for the candidate most likely to be their nominee.

Some, but not all, of these feelings could subside should Republicans be faced with a choice between Mr. Trump and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic front-runner.

But for now many of the committee members to whom Mr. Priebus was preaching unity remain uneasy with a candidate who is waging war against the party and its nominating process.

"The proof will be in the pudding in the next couple of weeks," said Matt Moore, the South Carolina Republican chairman, after meeting with Mr. Trump's top campaign officials, who offered assurances that the candidate is not running against the R.N.C.

"Thus far, Trump is attacking the party and Reince often," Mr. Moore said, "and I'd like to see that significantly decrease."

Donald Trump And GOP Grope Toward Unity

Front-runner's team and RNC take steps to make peace, but some party insiders remain wary

By Janet Hook

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Some GOP Elites Aren't Quite Convinced By Trump Charm Offensive

By Philip Rucker, Robert Costa And Dan Balz

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — Out on the campaign trail, Donald Trump relishes his feud with his own party. He threatened to sue to Republican National Committee. He called its nominating system "rigged," "deceptive" and "a disgrace." And he has suggested he might try to depose the party chairman.

But as RNC members gathered at a palatial beach resort here this week, Trump's aides launched an urgent effort aimed at rebranding the mogul's persona and thawing hostilities with the skittish party elite.

"We need unity as soon as possible," said Ed Cox, the New York party chairman and a Trump supporter.

Yet while the charm offensive has made some progress, interviews with dozens of GOP officials here showed that the celebrity billionaire still has to overcome a host of lingering concerns — both about his loyalty to the party as well as his discipline and electability as a candidate.

"We're the ones that built this party," said Jonathan Barnett, a national committeeman from Arkansas. "You see so many states where they have never reached out or built an organization. . . Remember, we're good people. We're the grassroots. We've been around a long time. And Trump needs us."

Trump's top campaign aide, Paul Manafort, assured RNC members here that Trump views the party leadership as "partners," both in raising money and crafting a state-by-state strategy, and that his hot rhetoric has been "a part that he's been playing" and will soon give way to a more presidential demeanor.

"He gets it," Manafort told RNC members in a closed-door briefing Thursday.

Some members were skeptical of Manafort's pitch.

"Trump keeps saying that he's going to be so presidential that he'll put you to sleep," said Jose Cunningham, chairman of the District of Columbia GOP. "He loves to say that. His people say he'll do that, have that demeanor. I'd still like to see that because, well, we haven't."

Trump himself is taking steps to repair relations. RNC Chairman Reince Priebus called the billionaire mogul on Wednesday to congratulate him on his blow-out victory in the New York primary.

"We had a great talk, no problem," Priebus said in an interview. "Donald Trump is conciliatory. You notice he hasn't been saying 'RNC' lately. He hasn't been saying that lately. He certainly hasn't been talking about me lately."

Priebus acknowledged that there likely are political benefits for Trump to rail against the process and use the RNC as a foil.

"They've made a calculation somehow that it works, ginning people up over accusations that the delegate selection process is 'rigged,'" Priebus said. "I don't think they would be doing it on a lark."

Priebus said that the process is not skewed against Trump: "Nothing's rigged, just like nothing was rigged in New York when the top vote getter got 60 percent of the vote but received 90 percent of the delegates."

Indeed, Trump's rhetoric fits into his broader playbook to run against what he sees as corruption across the economic and political spectrums. Manafort said in an interview that Trump's portrayal of the GOP nominating rules "is no different than the rigged economy, the rigged banking system."

"It fits into the whole narrative of the system is broken and certain types of establishment situations don't meet the expectations of people," he said.

For much of the campaign, the Trump operation seemed to alienate, even shun party officials who are accustomed to courtship by candidates.

Many officials took particular umbrage at Trump's on-and-off public flirtation with ousting Priebus.

"Stop the attacks on Reince and the RNC leadership," South Carolina GOP Chairman Matt Moore said. "Reince is the best chairman, I think, in the party's history, and there is no question that he is the guy to lead us into the general election. Any discussion about a new chairman is completely stupid."

On that point, Manafort said, "This discussion over the last few weeks has not been an anti-Reince campaign."

Trump has been outfoxed by his chief rival, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, at state conventions and other gatherings where delegates to the national convention are selected. Manafort said Trump is not seeking to upend the existing rules, but believes the system lacks transparency and is trying to lay the groundwork for changes in future years.

Cruz as well as Ohio Gov. John Kasich addressed the RNC this week. Also present were leaders of Our Principles PAC, an anti-Trump super PAC, who huddled privately with some members on Friday. The group's chairwoman, Katie Packer, distributed a memorandum urging party leaders to do everything possible to stop Trump from locking up the nomination.

"It is not too late," Packer wrote. "You are under no obligation to wrap your arms around a candidate who has not won a majority of GOP votes, or a majority of delegates, and perhaps wouldn't even be the frontrunner had the original field been much smaller."

Yet in hallway chatter here, there was a growing sense of resignation about Trump as the nominee.

"I sense that everybody has come around to the position that what we choose is what we choose, and that to have an opponent to Hillary Clinton, you take what you got and you run with it as fast as you can," said David Norcross, a former RNC general counsel.

The conversations in Florida come amid a revamping of Trump's campaign. Manafort said Trump is assembling teams of communications specialists, schedulers, policy advisers, speechwriters, researchers and liaisons to Capitol Hill, think tanks and other GOP power centers — all traditional campaign elements that had been lacking in Trump's shoestring structure.

"We couldn't run a general election with eight people," Manafort said.

Manafort suggested that the individuals who have been appearing on cable television shows as Trump representatives will begin playing smaller roles as he asserts control over what he called "the narrative."

"Now we're transitioning," Manafort said. "He's trying to be the nominee and people want to see the entire package."

Among the newest members of Trump's team is Rick Wiley, who is well known to RNC members as he served as the committee's political director in 2012. When he addressed RNC members on Thursday, Wiley sought to emphasize those connections and went out of his way to praise the work of the committee's staff under Priebus.

Wiley said the party and its nominee would be fully committed to waging a successful fall national campaign. Arguing that the RNC had adapted the organizing model developed by the 2008 Obama campaign, he added, "We are going to inherit a field program second to none."

In his presentation, Wiley addressed worries among many Republicans that Trump as nominee could lead the party to a catastrophic defeat in the fall, one that could put the Senate majority at risk and cost Republicans House seats.

"You're going to see this map expand," he said, contending that Trump's potential appeal to Reagan Democrats — working-class white voters — could make states in the upper and industrial Midwest that long have been in the Democrats' column competitive in the fall.

"If we're playing in these states and we're winning in some of these states and the Democrats are playing and having to spend money in those states," he said, "it's a good thing for us, it's a good thing for the party."

Trump Plans Foreign Policy Speech To Project 'Presidential' Image

By Steve Holland And Emily Stephenson

[Reuters](#), April 22, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Don't Be Fooled By The 'new' Donald Trump

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

DO YOU remember when Donald Trump crudely mocked the disability of a New York Times reporter, and then lied about having done so?

No? That's just as the Republican candidate might hope. Now that he is nearing the Republican nomination, he says he will become more "presidential." After winning the New York primary, he referred to "Senator Cruz" instead of "Lyn' Ted." You can expect multitudes of office-seekers and sycophants to follow Chris Christie's craven path to believing, or pretending to believe, in a presidential Trump.

So it is important to remember.

Remember that Mr. Trump said that Mexicans crossing the border are rapists, though "some, I assume, are good people."

Remember that Mr. Trump falsely claimed that thousands of American Muslims had celebrated the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Remember that Mr. Trump insulted Carly Fiorina for her appearance: "Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that?"

Remember, now that Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly has sought to make peace with Mr. Trump, that he insinuated that she had asked him a tough question because she was menstruating: "You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever."

Remember that he called her a bimbo, sick, overrated and crazy.

Remember that Mr. Trump lashed out at Ms. Kelly in the first place because she had recited some of the other names he has used for women he disliked: " 'fat pigs,' 'dogs,' 'slobs' and 'disgusting animals.' . . . You once told a contestant on 'Celebrity Apprentice' it would be a pretty picture to see her on her knees."

Remember that Mr. Trump, who never served in the armed forces, said that Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) was "not a war hero." Mr. McCain, after being shot down over North Vietnam, endured 5½ years of torture and solitary confinement as he repeatedly refused offers of liberation unless all of his fellow prisoners would also be freed. "I like people who weren't captured," Mr. Trump said.

Remember how Mr. Trump threatened a Chicago family who donated to a PAC opposing his candidacy: "They better be careful, they have a lot to hide!"

Remember that Mr. Trump threatened and disparaged not just reporters who angered him but freedom of the press overall with a vow to "open up" the libel laws.

Remember that Mr. Trump vowed to ban Muslims from entering the country, though he never explained how he would enforce this edict.

Remember that Mr. Trump promised to round up 11 million undocumented immigrants and deport them, in what would be the largest forced population movement since Pol Pot's genocide of the Cambodian people, though he never explained how he would go about doing so.

Remember that he cited "Operation Wetback" as a humane model for such a roundup.

Remember that Mr. Trump promised to order American soldiers and intelligence officers to torture their prisoners.

Remember that Mr. Trump, unlike virtually every scientist in the world, is "not a great believer in man-made climate change."

Remember Mr. Trump's answer when asked whether there are racial disparities in law enforcement: "I've read where there are and I've read where there aren't. I mean, I've read both. And, you know, I have no opinion on that."

Remember that Mr. Trump said he would like to punch a protester in the face.

Remember that Mr. Trump waxed nostalgic for "the old days," when protesters would be "carried out on stretchers."

Remember that Mr. Trump said he would consider paying the legal fees for supporters who attacked protesters at his rally.

Remember that Mr. Trump defended his campaign manager after the campaign manager roughly grabbed a reporter and then denied having touched her and called her "delusional" when she complained.

Remember that Mr. Trump threatened to "spill the beans" on Mr. Cruz's wife to retaliate for an independent PAC ad that angered him.

Remember that Mr. Trump lied about President Obama's birth certificate. Remember that he lied about Mr. Obama planning to admit 200,000 Syrian refugees. Remember that he lied about President George W. Bush trying to silence him because he supposedly opposed the Iraq War. Remember that he lied about the unemployment rate, the cost of building a border wall, the amount he could save by changing Medicare's drug plan and many other things.

Remember that Mr. Trump vowed to kill the innocent children of suspected terrorists.

"Winning is the antidote to a lot of things," Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said a earlier this year. As Mr. Trump marches toward 1,237 delegates, others will emulate that amoral embrace.

So remember. Winning is not an antidote to bigotry, violence, ignorance, insults and lies.

Donald Trump: Roles Of A Lifetime

Changing political personas, mid-campaign, is harder than it used to be.

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

Donald Trump's More Accepting Views On Gay Issues Set Him Apart In G.O.P.

By Maggie Haberman

[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

Elton John and his longtime boyfriend, David Furnish, entered a civil partnership on Dec. 21, 2005, in England under a law the country had just enacted granting recognition to same-sex couples. The congratulations poured in as the two men appeared at a joyous ceremony at Windsor Guildhall, amid a crush of paparazzi. Donald J. Trump, who had known the couple for years, took to his blog to express his excitement.

"I know both of them, and they get along wonderfully. It's a marriage that's going to work," Mr. Trump wrote, adding: "I'm very happy for them. If two people dig each other, they dig each other."

Mr. Trump is now the leading candidate for president in the Republican primary, which has traditionally been

dominated by hopefuls eager to show how deeply conservative they are on social issues like gay rights and marriage.

But Mr. Trump is far more accepting of sexual minorities than his party's leaders have been. On Thursday, he startled some Republicans by saying on NBC's "Today" show that he opposed a recently passed North Carolina law that prohibits people from using public bathrooms that do not correspond to the gender they were born with, striking down a Charlotte ordinance.

Transgender people should "use the bathroom they feel is appropriate," Mr. Trump said, putting him at odds with a majority of Republicans in North Carolina.

But it is his views on gay rights and gay people that most distinguish Mr. Trump from previous Republican standard-bearers. He has nurtured long friendships with gay people, employed gay workers in prominent positions, and moved with ease in industries where gays have long exerted influence, like entertainment.

"He will be the most gay-friendly Republican nominee for president ever," said Gregory T. Angelo, the president of the Log Cabin Republicans, a group that supports gay rights.

Of course, Mr. Trump is not as embracing of gay rights as the Democratic candidates are; he said during this campaign that he believes that marriage is between a man and a woman, a position he has held since at least 2000, when he briefly flirted with a bid for the presidency. But he does not emphasize marriage as an issue, and he makes no mention of it, for example, on his campaign website, which focuses on issues like immigration and trade.

And Mr. Trump, who has inflamed tensions with almost every group, from Hispanics to women to African-Americans, has avoided attacking or offending gay men and lesbians during the campaign.

His history with the gay community is a long one. He donated to charities focused on the AIDS crisis in the late 1980s and early '90s. In 2000, when he briefly considered running for president, he gave an interview to *The Advocate*, a gay magazine, in which he supported amending the 1964 Civil Rights Act to "include a ban of discrimination based on sexual orientation."

"It would be simple. It would be straightforward," Mr. Trump said in the interview, adding, "It's only fair."

Sixteen years later, gay rights advocates are still trying to persuade Congress to pass a similar measure, but they have struggled to win support, especially from Republicans. The last Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, opposed similar legislation in 2012.

Mr. Trump declined to be interviewed for this article.

His ease with gay people does not seem to be the result of deep soul searching, but, rather, the product of the Manhattan social and political world he has inhabited the past five decades.

"I live in New York. I know many, many gay people. Tremendous people," Mr. Trump said in an interview in 2011.

He has been playful at times, such as in 2000, when he and Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani appeared in a skit for a political roast, during which Mr. Trump nuzzled and caressed the mayor, who was dressed in drag.

Friends say he also views gay rights through the lens of a bottom line-minded businessman.

"His key concern is, Are you capable and able to do the job I hired you for? And if you are, very little else matters," said Abe Wallach, an openly gay executive at the Trump Organization in the 1990s. "Very little on a social level will make Donald excited — if it was money or something else, he might get excited."

Mr. Trump was believed to be the first private club owner in Palm Beach, Fla., to admit an openly gay couple, according to Laurence Leamer, the author of "Madness Under the Royal Palms," a book about Palm Beach society. Mr. Trump made his club, Mar-a-Lago, more open partly out of disdain for the restrictions that barred Jews and African-Americans from joining exclusive clubs in Palm Beach.

"It's one of the best things he's done in my view in his life," Mr. Leamer said. "He really changed the nature of Palm Beach."

Rand Hoch, a gay activist who founded the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council in 1988, recalled bringing dates to Mar-a-Lago on two occasions. Both times, he said, Mr. Trump, who loves to play the role of greeter as guests arrive at his club, was pleasant and approached the two for chitchat.

"He treated us no differently than everyone else who was going through that door," Mr. Hoch said, adding that it was not possible that Mr. Trump was unaware they were gay. "He's perceptive, so I'm pretty sure he didn't think we were brothers."

Mr. Wallach said that he and his husband would fly on Mr. Trump's jet to Florida or Atlantic City on weekends. "I found him to be very friendly to my spouse," he said. "He would often ask about my spouse, how his dental practice was doing."

Mr. Trump's foundation has given over the years to groups like the AIDS Service Center and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Some of those donations came more recently in connection with his reality television show "The Celebrity Apprentice," whose winners got to select the recipient charities. But as early as 1987, Mr. Trump made a \$25,000 contribution to the Gay Men's Health Crisis, from profits generated by his company's operation of the Wollman Memorial Rink in Central Park. And in 1992, the Trump Taj Mahal held an event that raised \$60,000 for AIDS research.

Mr. Trump's recent alliances with social conservatives such as Jerry Falwell Jr. and Pat Robertson have alarmed people like Mr. Angelo, whose group, the Log Cabin

Republicans, is eager to meet with the real estate mogul to discuss his positions in detail.

And some gay acquaintances of Mr. Trump find it puzzling that he cannot support same-sex marriage, given his comfort with gay relationships.

In 2012, Mr. Trump attended the wedding of Jordan Roth, a Broadway producer, and Richie Jackson, in a ceremony at the Al Hirschfeld Theater.

Months later, Mr. Trump went to lunch with the actor George Takei, who is openly gay and was fired by Mr. Trump from "The Celebrity Apprentice." Mr. Takei approached Mr. Trump at a news conference for the show, saying he would like to try to change his views on letting gay people marry. "He said, 'George, maybe I could learn something from you,'" Mr. Takei said in a telephone interview this week from his home in California.

The lunch, at Trump Tower, opened with Mr. Trump mentioning the wedding he had attended, which Mr. Takei later learned was that of Mr. Roth and Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Takei walked Mr. Trump through the benefits of supporting same-sex marriage, particularly for a business owner. Gay couples would celebrate in his hotels, and their guests would dine in his restaurants, Mr. Takei said. Mr. Trump agreed with that view, Mr. Takei said, but he would not budge, saying he supported "traditional marriage."

"I was tempted to say, marrying multiple times is not traditional marriage," Mr. Takei said of Mr. Trump, who has been married three times. "He's a chameleon or a hypocrite, whichever word you like."

Trump Institute Fired Veteran For 'Absences' After He Was Deployed To Afghanistan

By Christina Wilkie

[Huffington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump has been vocal about the need to take care of U.S. veterans. He's said that if elected, he'll "put our service men and women on a path to success as they leave active duty."

But that's not what the Trump Institute, a get-rich-quick real estate seminar, did for Richard Wright, a senior master sergeant in the Air Force reserves who worked for the company in 2006 and 2007. Wright was deployed to Afghanistan in the spring of 2007. When he came home to his job, the Trump Institute fired him. "All of your absences," Wright's boss at the Trump Institute told him, had forced the company to "reevaluate your position with the Trump Institute." It is a violation of federal law to penalize an employee for absences caused by military service.

When Wright accepted a job at the Trump Institute in December 2006, he thought he'd be working directly with Trump.

"Having a chance to work with him was a dream come true," Wright, now 48, said of Trump in an email to The Huffington Post.

Dozens of former customers of the Trump Institute and Trump University, a real estate instruction program, have also described being told that Donald Trump was personally overseeing the programs that bore his name, and that instructors were "hand-picked by Mr. Trump."

Judging from the information on the Trump Institute's (now defunct) website, it's easy to see why:

The Trump Institute

It was only after Wright started the job that he realized Trump had little to do with the day-to-day operations of the Trump Institute.

Trump provided his name, along with his image, his reputation, his video endorsements and his promises to help the Trump Institute lure potential customers and employees.

But like many of the hundreds of businesses and real estate projects that have borne Trump's name, the Trump Institute was actually a joint venture between Trump and an outside company – in this case, a Florida-based business called National Grants Conferences. Trump was paid franchise fees, but the details of his profits from the schools are a well-guarded secret.

Michael and Irene Milin, NGC's founders, spent decades in the get-rich-quick business before linking up with Trump. NGC promised to teach its clients how to access millions of dollars in "free money" from the government. In reality, NGC seminars were little more than elaborate sales pitches for yet more NGC events, and the company, which has since been dissolved, had a long history of legal troubles and fraud investigations that spanned multiple states.

NGC's free-money seminars provided the framework for the Trump Institute's signature offering, the Donald Trump Way to Wealth Seminar. Trump Institute clients paid as much as \$35,000 to learn the "Donald Trump Way To Wealth," and to receive coaching from mentors like Wright.

In the clip below, from an infomercial that appears to date to 2006, Trump tells potential customers how important it is that they enroll in the Trump Institute. He also hits on the woman interviewing him.

That same year, the Trump Institute hired Wright as a tele-consultant (or "mentor," in Trump parlance). His job was to speak on the phone with clients who had purchased "memberships" in the Trump Institute, and give them advice about investing in real estate.

On paper, Wright and his fellow mentors were technically employed by Xylophone, LLC, a foreign limited liability company controlled by Irene Milin. But to the outside world, they were working for the Trump Institute.

Two months into the job, Wright was called up for active duty, and in early February 2007, he wrote to his boss, Jay

Shavin, to say he would be deployed to Afghanistan starting around March 1.

In Afghanistan, Wright was assigned to the 451st Air Expeditionary Group at Kandahar Airfield, near the country's southern border with Pakistan. Wright was awarded three different medals for outstanding service in the six weeks he was overseas.

United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida

Wright arrived home to Florida on Monday, April 16, 2007. He asked his boss to approve two personal days for him to get his bearings, do laundry and so on.

Before Wright left for Afghanistan, he had approximately 40 different clients whom he was advising on how to buy real estate "the Trump Way." Like the other Trump Institute mentors, Wright was promised commissions on his clients' deals – \$250 each time a client bought property and rented it out "using Trump methods," and \$750 each time a client bought and then sold a property, a process known as "flipping."

In his first week back home, Wright emailed some of his clients to let them know he was "back safe and sound," according to court documents.

On Monday, April 23, Wright got this note from Shavin: I specifically told you NOT to contact your old clients. Jeff was in the office when we had the discussion. I also emphatically stated that you were not to contact your old clients. You are so concerned about your closings that do not exist, that your employment is in jeopardy. I told you that I put your former client into a deal that has not closed and would give it to you.

It is apparent that you do not listen to instructions. You are to report to my office tomorrow before you do anything. You have been here less than three months (deducting your time off for the Air Force Reserve). I find it insulting that you would make a request to be paid for time you did not work and/or personal time you did not earn.

You are still on probation. With all of your absences and inability to adhere to specific instructions, you force me to reevaluate your position with the Trump Institute.

Wright replied, in part: "I don't think your previous comments were called for or appropriate. I am a good mentor & have always been a team player & do not appreciate being spoken to that way."

"You needn't be offended by my remarks," Shavin wrote back. "Your employment is hereby terminated."

In subsequent emails, Shavin denied that Wright was fired because of his time in Afghanistan. He also said that any further emails from Wright would be considered "harassment."

United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida In this email from April 23, 2007, Jay Shavin tells Richard Wright not to "distort the issues at hand."

A year later, Wright sued the Trump Institute and its parent company, Xylophone, for wrongful termination under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. That law, passed in 1972, requires that military service members called up to active duty from civilian jobs "be restored to the job and benefits you would have attained if you had not been absent due to military service." Under the law, the burden falls on the employer to prove that it did not fire a service member for absences related to his or her military service.

The Trump Institute ultimately reached a settlement with Wright that forbids him from talking about the case. Shavin died in 2014. Lyn Miller, another former Trump Institute employee, said Shavin was "a knowledgeable and awesome guy."

United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida In an email, Shavin warns Wright that "there is to be no further communication between us."

Alan Garten, executive vice president and general counsel of the Trump Organization, provided a statement to HuffPost when asked about Wright's experience.

"The Trump Institute was a licensee of Trump University and was not owned or controlled by Mr. Trump or any of his companies," Garten said. "As such, Mr. Trump had nothing whatsoever to do with the employment of any of the Trump Institute's employees or mentors, had no involvement in the development or enforcement of any of the Trump Institute's employment policies and has no knowledge of this matter. Mr. Trump has always been a great supporter of the men and women who have served in this country's armed forces and has devoted much of his campaign to improving the lives of veterans."

Trump's attempts to distance himself from the companies that paid him money and bore his name haven't shielded him from lawsuits over their conduct.

In 2013, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman sued Trump and Trump University for civil fraud. Included in his case filings were scores of complaints from Trump Institute clients. In California and New York, Trump University is facing allegations of fraud, and in the California case, the company faces a class action lawsuit with more than 5,000 plaintiffs.

HuffPost attempted to contact the Milins multiple times at the number listed for their charitable organization, the Milin Family Foundation, but there was never any answer.

The Trump Institute

Wright doesn't blame Trump for his firing, even though the Trump Institute bore Trump's name, benefited from Trump's endorsement and paid money to Trump in franchise and licensing fees.

"He was really just the name on the box & had nothing to do with the inner workings of the company," Wright said in

an email to HuffPost. “At the time I really needed a job & I loved what I was doing.”

This fall, Wright, who still invests in real estate, hopes to vote for Donald Trump for president.

“I am a HUGE Trump fan and supporter and think he would make an excellent leader,” he said. Trump “is saying all the things that politicians have been afraid to say over the years. That is why they are nervous and siding against him. He threatens what they have worked so hard to build. As a veteran, I LOVE that he is wanting to make America great again.”

Editor’s note: Donald Trump regularly incites political violence and is a serial liar, rampant xenophobe, racist, misogynist and birther who has repeatedly pledged to ban all Muslims – 1.6 billion members of an entire religion – from entering the U.S.

In Pennsylvania, Delegates May Have The Power To Swing GOP Presidential Race

By Ed O’Keefe

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

WEST CHESTER, Pa. — Among the candidates on the Republican primary ballot here Tuesday are a local congressman, the woman who succeeded him on the county commission, a part-time mayor and the chairman of a local historical society. There is also a husband and wife running separately.

All are aspiring to represent Pennsylvania at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, where they could turn out to be some of the most influential delegates in the nation.

The bitter contest between Donald Trump, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Ohio Gov. John Kasich could come down to the final few undecided delegates from places such as Pennsylvania. If Trump falls short of the 1,237 delegates needed to win the nomination outright, his team has vowed to launch a full-scale pressure campaign to win over dozens of the delegates elected in the state’s unusual primary.

While most states award convention delegates on a winner-take-all or proportional basis, 54 of Pennsylvania’s 71 delegates — three for each of 18 congressional districts — are officially unbound to a candidate and do not have to announce their intentions before Tuesday’s vote. The winners can vote for whomever they want at the convention.

“I picked a very interesting year to run,” said Larry Stohler, 71, a former Lebanon County commissioner who says he would vote at the convention for whichever candidate wins here in the 6th Congressional District — at least on the first ballot.

With Pennsylvania the next biggest prize on the calendar, Kasich huddled this past week with some delegate candidates in the Pittsburgh area but declined to name one

supporting him. Trump has a full-time Pennsylvania director who has been recruiting potential delegate candidates since January.

But Cruz is the most organized here in wooing delegates, just as he has been in other states with complex selection rules. Even if Cruz loses to Trump here Tuesday, there is a chance that the 26 delegate candidates who say they support the senator could win and cast votes for him at the convention.

Lowman Henry, Cruz’s Pennsylvania director, is urging supporters to “vote four times for Ted Cruz” — once for the senator and three more times for Cruz-supporting delegate candidates.

“We’re going to have a bloc that’s committed to us, Donald will have a bloc that’s committed to him, but there will still be a large uncommitted bloc,” he told reporters at a Cruz event in Philadelphia Tuesday. “That’s why the system was designed the way it is in Pennsylvania.”

The Cruz campaign began circulating fliers to supporters this past week with a list of the candidates supporting him in 17 of the 18 congressional districts. Voters in two of the districts would have to write in the names of Cruz supporters to help him get his 26 delegates, according to the flier.

The complexities of the process mean Trump could once again come up short on delegates despite winning the popular vote. Campaign manager Corey Lewandowski told reporters after Trump’s victory in New York on Tuesday that Pennsylvania has “a very difficult process” of selecting delegates.

“I don’t want to get into the intricacies of our Pennsylvania strategy, but I think we’ll make sure people know who the Trump delegates are,” he said.

Kasich said while campaigning in Pennsylvania that nobody will earn the 1,237 delegates needed before the convention — and that some of the best-known Republican presidents won after contested conventions.

“[Dwight D.] Eisenhower is a perfect example,” he told voters in Media, Pa., on Thursday, noting that the 34th president won after multiple ballots. The same thing happened to Abraham Lincoln, he said: “He even printed up some phony ballots for the delegates — we’re not going to do that.”

Here in the 6th Congressional District — nicknamed “the Dragon District” for its curving, elongated shape — most of the contenders say that if elected, they would cast ballots for whoever wins the district or the state.

“Delegate candidates, particularly on the first ballot, should reflect the will of their voters,” said Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Pa.), the best-known local delegate candidate.

Costello served as a delegate in 2012 and decided to run again this year because “I didn’t want a delegate to basically say, ‘I’m for Candidate A only, and I won’t be for

anyone else.' Particularly if that person hasn't won any states or didn't perform well in the congressional district."

Michelle Kichline, a Chester County council member, also plans to vote for whoever wins the district. If the convention goes to multiple ballots, she said, "I will not make a decision speaking to just one of the candidates."

Costello says he has spent "zilch" on the race. A few delegate candidates emailed information to local Republicans, but mostly they are relying on word of mouth, interviews on talk radio shows and interviews in local newspapers.

And in a race that requires few qualifications beyond being a registered Republican, candidates are struggling to distinguish themselves.

Kichline pointed to her gender: "There's not as many women running for this position, and I think it's important that women be represented in the Republican Party," she said.

Stohler touted his public service. In addition to being a county commissioner and Vietnam War veteran, "I've been a volunteer firefighter since I was 16," he said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

Moments later, he got a fire call.

The husband-and-wife team of Robert and Mary Elizabeth Wert signed up with Cruz in January.

The senator's campaign team "walked us through how to do this. They helped us every step of the way," Robert Wert said. "So we appreciate that, and we're loyal to him."

The couple thinks they will win because "we have a lot of good friends in the area to help us," Mary Elizabeth Wert said. Plus, she said they are popular on the local charity circuit, so "we're getting out to different fundraisers and seeing people."

"You're allowed to vote for three delegates," her husband added, "but we're encouraging people to vote just for us."

Wayne Buckwalter, a trust and states attorney, said he would vote for Trump "on every ballot."

"I think that at least one out of three people in my district will vote for Trump, and I want to be that delegate," Buckwalter said.

He met Trump's state director, Ted Christian, in January and agreed to sign a document stating that "I pledge to cast ALL of my ballots to elect Donald J. Trump on every round of balloting at the 2016 Republican National Convention so that we can MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

Other Trump supporters running for delegate slots across the state have signed similar documents. But it is unclear what penalty the Trump supporters would face if they broke the pledge. Christian did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Douglas Hager, who sits on the board of a local historical society, also plans to vote for whoever wins the

district. But he has heard nothing from the presidential contenders.

"I must have leprosy," he said. "I haven't been contacted by anybody."

Instead, Hager has been inundated by potential constituents pleading with him to vote for Trump.

"I just deleted them because it was getting a little out of hand," he said. "I got so tired of it."

Jenna Johnson in New York City and Sean Sullivan in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Kentucky Delegate Selection To Offer Clues On Mitch McConnell's Stance

Majority leader's allies control selection of 25 GOP delegates to national convention

By Reid J. Epstein And Kristina Peterson

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 22, 2016

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

White Man Or Black Woman? Senate Race Tears At Maryland Democrats

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg

[New York Times](#), April 23, 2016

So as Ms. Edwards was greeting voters Tuesday night, Mr. Van Hollen was at a restaurant across town, mingling with an enthusiastic, and racially mixed, group of supporters over a dinner of chicken and mashed potatoes. Older black women cooed over him. His host, a Baltimore County councilwoman, Cathy Bevins, who is white, said she had just sent Emily's List "a nasty little email, telling them, 'Take me off your list.'"

The congressman, doing his best to avoid race and gender questions, reminded the crowd that he has Baltimore ties (his father grew up here) and of his attention to constituent service. He stiffened slightly when asked if the Senate needs a black woman's voice.

Those who endorsed him, he said, can speak for themselves: "They want somebody with a track record of delivering real results."

There has not been a black woman in the Senate since Carol Moseley Braun, the nation's first and only black female senator, left in 1999. In California, Emily's List is also backing Kamala Harris, who is black and Asian-American, for a Senate seat this year. Here in Maryland, a Monmouth University poll released on Thursday showed Mr. Van Hollen pulling ahead in what has been a tight race with voters, especially women, and starkly divided along racial lines.

"This is the state that Harriet Tubman ran away from twice and Frederick Douglass ran away from at least once, and we've never had a black woman elected statewide," said Benjamin Jealous, the former president and chief executive of

the N.A.A.C.P., who supports Ms. Edwards, though he insisted it was for policy reasons, not her race.

Maryland, a heavily Democratic state, is no stranger to rough primary campaigns, especially when there is a rare open seat. Ms. Mikulski, a gruff former social worker from East Baltimore, ran one herself 30 years ago. Then a congresswoman, she reached the Senate by beating a seasoned colleague, Michael D. Barnes, and a sitting governor, Harry Hughes, with the help of a new group: Emily's List.

Ms. Mikulski, known on Capitol Hill as the "dean of Senate women," is staying out of the fight over who should carry on her legacy; she calls herself "studiously neutral." That has not stopped some of her admirers — high-powered Van Hollen backers like Jamie S. Gorelick, a former deputy attorney general — from accusing Emily's List of wasting its money by going after a rising Democratic star with a good record on women's rights.

"I used to give money to Emily's List," Ms. Gorelick said. "I never will again."

Stephanie Schriock, the president of Emily's List, said the group was "doing what we have always done": leveling the playing field for women who run against better-funded men. "We have an opportunity here to change the face of power in the Senate just as we did in 1986," she said.

In some ways, Mr. Van Hollen and Ms. Edwards are mirror images of one another. Both are 57 years old. Both are lawyers. Both represent affluent districts in the suburbs of Washington — his largely white, hers largely black. The race is being fought around the margins, over slight differences in policy, dueling endorsements and sharp contrasts in personal style.

On the campaign trail, there have been nasty ads, insults and slights, filtered through the delicate prism of gender and race. When the Maryland Senate president, Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr., who is white, called Mr. Van Hollen "a leader who has been born to the job" (a reference, an aide said, to his years in the Maryland legislature and childhood growing up overseas), it sounded to the congresswoman like talk from the old-boy's network.

"Maybe the first generation to go to college, whose parents lived the American dream," Ms. Edwards said, referring to herself, "maybe that person is appropriate for the job." Still, Ms. Edwards has been disappointed that only four of 46 members of the Congressional Black Caucus have publicly endorsed her, though aides say 18 have donated to her campaign.

With Mr. Van Hollen expected to win his district, and Ms. Edwards expected to win hers, Baltimore is a central battleground. Earlier this month, the congressman, in blue blazer and open-collar shirt, was in a poor neighborhood, walking through a fruit and vegetable market trailed by a

coterie of black women — members of a health care workers union that supports him.

Rena Kenely, 59, a volunteer at a community center that helps the poor, had stopped in for coffee that day. She said that she had never met Mr. Van Hollen, but that she knew of him and liked his policies on education.

"People think we vote by color, but we don't," Ms. Kenely said.

Yet as Ms. Edwards was shaking hands outside the early voting center, it was clear that for some African-American women, it is an agonizing choice. Sharon Green Middleton, a member of the Baltimore City Council, was there. She knows Ms. Mikulski well, likes and respects Mr. Van Hollen, and is "struggling, but leaning" toward Ms. Edwards.

"This is 2016," Ms. Middleton finally said. "African-American women need a voice." Continue reading the main story

Virginia Governor Restores Voting Rights To Felons

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg And Erik Eckholm
[New York Times](#), April 22, 2016

WASHINGTON — Gov. Terry McAuliffe of Virginia used his executive power on Friday to restore voting rights to more than 200,000 convicted felons, circumventing the Republican-run legislature. The action overturns a Civil War-era provision in the state's Constitution aimed, he said, at disenfranchising African-Americans.

The sweeping order, in a swing state that could play a role in deciding the November presidential election, will enable all felons who have served their prison time and finished parole or probation to register to vote. Most are African-Americans, a core constituency of Democrats, Mr. McAuliffe's political party.

Amid intensifying national attention over harsh sentencing policies that have disproportionately affected African-Americans, governors and legislatures around the nation have been debating — and often fighting over — moves to restore voting rights for convicted felons.

In Kentucky, Gov. Matt Bevin, a newly elected Republican, recently overturned an order enacted by his Democratic predecessor that was similar to the one Mr. McAuliffe signed Friday. In Maryland, Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, vetoed a measure to restore voting rights to convicted felons, but Democrats in the state legislature overrode him in February and an estimated 44,000 former prisoners who are on probation are now eligible to register for voting.

"There's no question that we've had a horrible history in voting rights as relates to African-Americans — we should remedy it," Mr. McAuliffe said in an interview Thursday,

previewing the announcement he made on the steps of Virginia's Capitol, just yards from where President Abraham Lincoln once addressed freed slaves. "We should do it as soon as we possibly can."

The action, which Mr. McAuliffe said was justified under an expansive legal interpretation of his executive clemency authority, provoked an immediate backlash from Virginia Republicans. They issued a statement Friday accusing the governor of "political opportunism" and "a transparent effort to win votes."

"Those who have paid their debts to society should be allowed full participation in society," said the statement from the party chairman, John Whitbeck. "But there are limits." He said Mr. McAuliffe was wrong to issue a blanket restoration of rights, even to those who "committed heinous acts of violence."

There is no way to know how many of the newly eligible voters in Virginia will register. "My message is going to be that I have now done my part," Mr. McAuliffe said.

Friday's shift in Virginia is part of a national trend toward restoring voter rights to felons, based in part on the hope that it will aid former prisoners' re-entry into society. Over the last two decades about 20 states have acted to ease their restrictions, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

Only two states — Maine and Vermont — have no voting restrictions on felons.

Virginia has been one of four states — the others are Kentucky, Florida and Iowa — that impose the harshest restrictions, a lifetime ban on voting for felons. The Sentencing Project says one in five African-Americans in Virginia cannot vote.

In Kentucky, Mr. Bevin, who took office in November, promptly overturned an executive order issued by his predecessor, Steven L. Beshear, just before he left office. Then, last week, Mr. Bevin signed into law a less expansive measure, allowing felons to petition judges to vacate their convictions, which would enable them to vote.

Previous governors in Florida and Iowa took executive action to ease their lifetime bans, but in each case, a subsequent governor restored the tough rules.

Marc Mauer said Mr. McAuliffe's decision would have lasting consequences because it will remain in effect at least until January 2018, when the governor leaves office. It covers those convicted of violent crimes, including murder and rape.

"This will be the single most significant action on disenfranchisement that we've ever seen from a governor," Mr. Mauer said, "and it's noteworthy that it's coming in the middle of this term, not the day before he leaves office. So there may be some political heat but clearly he's willing to take that on, which is quite admirable."

Myrna Pérez, director of a voting rights project at the Brennan Center, said Mr. McAuliffe's move was particularly

important because Virginia has had such restrictive laws on voting by felons. Still, she said, "Compared to the rest of the country, this is a very middle of the road policy."

Ms. Pérez said almost half of all states already had less restrictive policies than the one announced by Mr. McAuliffe, allowing felons to vote after their prison terms are completed even while they remain on parole or probation.

Advocates who have been working with the Virginia governor say they are planning to fan out into Richmond communities Friday afternoon to start registering people.

Experts say that with the stroke of his pen, Mr. McAuliffe has allowed convicted felons to begin registering to vote, and that their voting rights cannot be revoked — even if a new governor rescinds the order for future released prisoners.

But the move quickly led to accusations that the governor was playing politics; he is a longtime friend of — and top fund-raiser for — Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee for president, and former President Bill Clinton.

In the interview, Mr. McAuliffe said that he was not acting for political reasons, and that few people outside his immediate staff had known of his plans. He said he had not consulted with Mrs. Clinton or her campaign before making the decision.

The executive order builds on steps the governor had already taken to restore voting rights to 18,000 Virginians since the beginning of his term, and he said he believed his authority to issue the decision was "ironclad."

Prof. A. E. Dick Howard of the University of Virginia School of Law, the principal draftsman of a revised Constitution adopted by Virginia in 1971, agreed, and said the governor had "ample authority." But Professor Howard, who advised Mr. McAuliffe on the issue, said the move might well be challenged in court. The most likely argument, he said, is that the governor cannot restore voting rights to an entire class of people all at once.

Virginia's Constitution has prohibited felons from voting since the Civil War; the restrictions were expanded in 1902, as part of a package that included poll taxes and literacy tests.

In researching the provisions, advisers to the governor turned up a 1906 report that quoted Carter Glass, a Virginia state senator, as saying they would "eliminate the darkey as a political factor in this State in less than five years, so that in no single county of the Commonwealth will there be the least concern felt for the complete supremacy of the white race in the affairs of government."

Mr. McAuliffe, who took office in 2014 and campaigned to restore voting rights to felons, said that he viewed disenfranchisement as "a remnant of the poll tax" and that he had been "trying to figure out what more I can possibly do."

The governor's action Friday will not apply to felons released in the future; his aides say Mr. McAuliffe intends to

issue similar orders on a monthly basis to cover people as they are released.

"People have served their time and done their probation," Mr. McAuliffe said. "I want you back in society. I want you feeling good about yourself. I want you voting, getting a job, paying taxes."

Sheryl Gay Stolberg reported from Washington and Erik Eckholm from New York

About 200,000 Convicted Felons In Virginia Will Now Have The Right To Vote In November

By Sari Horwitz And Jenna Portnoy

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) will make all ex-felons in Virginia eligible to vote in the upcoming presidential election, part of a years-long effort to restore full voting rights to former convicts.

McAuliffe's announcement in Richmond on Friday will allow an estimated 180,000 to 210,000 former felons who are not in prison or on probation or parole to register to vote this year in Virginia, a battleground state, according to a coalition of civil rights groups that had pushed for the restoration of voting rights.

Advocates said McAuliffe's move was the biggest-ever single action taken to restore voting rights in this country.

"It is a historic day for democracy in Virginia and across our nation," said Tram Nguyen, co-executive director of the New Virginia Majority, a progressive activist group. "The disenfranchisement of people who have served their sentences was an outdated, discriminatory vestige of our nation's Jim Crow past."

Across the country, state laws vary on the right to vote for ex-offenders. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, about 5.85 million Americans with felony convictions (and misdemeanors in several states) are prevented from casting a ballot. The Sentencing Project estimates that one of every 13 African Americans is prohibited from voting. The map below by the ACLU shows how different states handle these rules.

Three states — Kentucky, Iowa and Florida — permanently revoke voting rights for people with prior felony convictions. Virginia has also been one of those states that revoked the right to vote. But in recent years, both McAuliffe and former governor Robert F. McDonnell (R) have used their executive authority to try to restore voting rights to ex-offenders.

"While we celebrate today in Virginia, we know the work continues in states like Florida, where people remain denied the restoration of their fundamental right to vote," said Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of the Advancement Project.

But many Republicans viewed McAuliffe's action as a blatant favor to his longtime friend Hillary Clinton, for whom

he and his wife recently raised \$2 million at their McLean home.

"It is hard to describe how transparent the Governor's motives are," House Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford) said in a statement. "The singular purpose of Terry McAuliffe's governorship is to elect Hillary Clinton President of the United States. This office has always been a stepping stone to a job in Hillary Clinton's cabinet."

Republicans were particularly outraged that the policy doesn't take into account the violence of the crime, whether the person committed serial crimes, whether they've committed crimes since completing their sentence or whether they've paid their victims back for medical bills.

"Murder victims don't get to sit on juries but now the man that killed them will," said Del. Robert B. Bell (R-Albemarle), who running for attorney general. "A murder victim won't get to vote, but the man that killed them will. You will have child pornographers, human traffickers, robbers, rapists, murderers eligible to sit on juries and hear criminal cases of people who commit similar crimes."

Each state that allows ex-felons to vote has its own process. In 38 states and the District of Columbia, most ex-felons automatically gain the right to vote when they complete their sentence, according to the National Conference of State Legislators. In other states, an ex-felon has to apply to have voting rights restored.

McAuliffe's restoration of voting rights will apply to former nonviolent and violent offenders. Anyone who has been convicted of a felony and has completed his sentence and been released from supervised probation or parole is eligible. The new voting rights apply to felons convicted in another state and living in Virginia.

But McAuliffe's April 22 proclamation will not automatically restore the voting rights of all felons going forward. In the future, the Virginia governor will review eligibility and restore voting rights to ex-offenders on an ongoing basis.

McAuliffe's spokesman, Brian Coy, declined comment.

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law says that Virginia is one of 11 states where former felons cannot vote unless the state gives them an individual exemption.

The system is part of what Ohio State University law professor Michelle Alexander has called "the New Jim Crow."

"Typically the restoration process is a bureaucratic maze that requires the payment of fines or court costs," Alexander wrote in her book "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness." "The process is so cumbersome, confusing and onerous that many ex-offenders who are theoretically eligible to vote never manage to get their voting rights back."

In 2013, then-Gov. McDonnell, a former prosecutor, made sweeping changes to the process felons had to

complete to regain their rights, which in Virginia includes the ability to vote, run for and hold public office and serve on juries. His administration waived the requirement that nonviolent offenders who had completed their sentences had to wait two years before applying, and streamlined the process with an online form and a toll-free information hotline.

The following year McAuliffe picked up where McDonnell left off by reclassifying a series of serious drug crimes and by turning a 13-page document that had to be notarized into a one-page form.

Last year, McAuliffe announced that Virginia would no longer require ex-felons to pay outstanding court costs and fees before they could vote. He also said he had restored voting rights to more than 8,250 people.

“We have forced these men and women to battle a complicated and bewildering tangle of red tape to reach the voting booth, and too often we still turn them away,” McAuliffe said last June.

McAuliffe’s effort to restore voting rights in Virginia comes as residents heading to the polls in November will face rules that didn’t exist during the last presidential race. A 2013 law, signed by McDonnell, requires voters to present photo IDs at the polls. The Democratic Party of Virginia sued the state, arguing that the law makes it harder for voters who are minorities or poor. A court decision is expected in mid-May, with possible appeals before the election.

Virginia residents can check to see if they are on the list of people with restored voting rights at this site.

The Prominent People Who Still Support Dennis Hastert

By Matt Zapotosky

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

Ex-CIA director Porter Goss, former House majority leader Tom DeLay and three other former Republican congressmen are among those who still support disgraced former U.S. House speaker J. Dennis Hastert — at least enough to write a federal judge on his behalf.

The men were among 41 people to write U.S. District Judge Thomas Durkin as he prepares to sentence Hastert next week in a sordid criminal case that brought to light allegations that Hastert sexually abused teenagers while working as a high school teacher and wrestling coach decades ago. None of the writers delved into those accusations, instead focusing on the good that Hastert had accomplished in his life.

“Perhaps, the Speakers greatest gift to the House was trust,” Goss wrote in his letter. “My belief is that Members found him very approachable and took him at his word.”

Goss is a former Republican congressman from Florida who served as CIA director under George W. Bush. DeLay is a Texas Republican who worked alongside Hastert in the

House leadership and who himself was accused in a criminal case of influencing state elections with corporate money — although his conviction was ultimately tossed. The three other former congressman writing letters on Hastert’s behalf were John T. Doolittle (R-Calif.), David Dreier (R-Calif.) and Thomas W. Ewing (R-Ill.).

Hastert, 74, pleaded guilty last year to withdrawing money in amounts meant to dodge federal reporting requirements — itself a crime that prosecutors have since said belied something more sinister. By their telling, Hastert was withdrawing the money to pay off a man he had abused as a teenager. And after FBI agents began investigating the case, they found four other men — all affiliated with the wrestling team that Hastert once coached as a high school teacher in Yorkville, Ill. — who had leveled similar allegations of abuse.

Hastert is scheduled to be sentenced in the case on Wednesday. His attorneys submitted the letters to the U.S. Probation Office in hopes of influencing its recommendation on the penalty he should face, but Durkin said he would not consider them unless they were filed publicly. The attorneys made 41 of them public late Friday and wrote in a filing that those represented the people who were okay with making their sentiments public.

Based on the letters, it would seem that Hastert enjoys broad support from his family and many of those he taught and coached or those who worked with him. Jean Hastert, his wife of 43 years, wrote she had “never known a more honorable and devoted man.”

“If one of his students or wrestlers ever needed anything of him, he would be there for them, and he was never happier than when he could watch someone he helped succeed,” she wrote.

Three retired Capitol Police officers who worked on Hastert’s security detail and a retired sheriff of Kendall County, Ill., wrote about their respect for him.

“Wherever he traveled in this country, he would never leave an event without personally thanking each law enforcement person who helped support the Capitol Police, wrote John DeWolfe, who worked as the agent-in-charge of the speaker of the House. “This is why I was so surprised to learn that he had been charged with lying to the FBI, it’s not the Denny I knew. I cannot comment on the specific charges, all I ask is when sentencing Speaker Hastert you take into account all the good he has done for his community and for his country.”

Prosecutors have painted a different portrait of Hastert, arguing that he rose to the highest levels of American politics, confident his dark secrets would never emerge, while his victims struggled. As part of an agreement with defense attorneys, they recommended a sentence between zero and six months in prison. Hastert is seeking only probation. Durkin could go as high as five years.

At Schools With Sub-par Internet, Kids Face A Poor Connection With Modern Life

By Chico Harlan

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

LOWER PEACH TREE, Ala. — Toward the end of a potholed country road, in the computer lab of a one-story school, the Internet one morning choked out a final quiz question about melting icebergs and then sputtered to a halt. The image of a spinning wheel popped onto Tatiana Flowers' computer screen. Then Cedric Garner Jr.'s. Within 30 seconds, the problem had spread across the room, and 11 eighth-graders were again practicing the one skill their computer class seemed actually good for: patience.

"Miss Washington, my Learning.com buffering," Flowers, 14, said.

"Mine buffering, too," Garner, 13, said.

Another student tried to refresh his screen. "There is no Internet connection," his Web browser said, and just above the type, there was a picture of a dinosaur.

Monroe Intermediate, a K-8 school in rural Alabama, is a tech dinosaur only because it has little choice, sitting in an impoverished community of churches and trailer homes that telecom companies have little financial incentive to wire. Over the last decade and a half, corporations including AT&T, Comcast and Verizon have laid cabling that is capable of transmitting high-speed Internet across much of urban and suburban America. But educators say there is a problem: The companies have essentially finished building in every area where they believe they can profit. And several thousand of America's schools sit outside these zones, according to EducationSuperHighway, a nonprofit organization that measures Internet access in classrooms.

The experience of students at Monroe Intermediate shows how the financial decisions of telecom companies have put rural students at a disadvantage, leaving some without basic digital abilities that many in America take for granted. Federal regulators are working toward a fix for these out-of-reach of schools, but it's unclear to what extent these efforts will solve the problem.

The schools with sub-par Internet are scattered around the country, spanning from the far-flung communities of Alaska to the desert towns of New Mexico. The danger is that students who attend these schools will struggle for years with the critical tasks that now require online fluency: applying to colleges, researching papers, looking for jobs.

"This is essentially the definition of the digital divide in education," said Evan Marwell, the EducationSuperHighway founder and chief executive. "Students on the wrong side don't have the same opportunity to compete."

Marwell added that "the providers are kind of done building to all the areas they can rationalize on their own. So we need to figure out how to get it to those last places."

While having only one provider in a region might mean higher cable or Internet bills in cities, in rural areas it can have profound consequences. For Internet access, Monroe depends on a nearly two-decade-old T1 line that, by the time it reaches dozens of individual computers, delivers speeds comparable to dial-up service. The school district's administrators have tried for nearly two years to persuade AT&T to upgrade its service in the area, to no avail.

"I thought, in my little naive head, if I could just talk to them, explain to them that we have these 60-odd children in the middle of nowhere, they would understand," said Devlynne Barnes, the technology director for Monroe County Schools.

Instead, Monroe has daily computer classes that start and stall; students sometimes need 30 minutes just to log in. It has 29 iPads, purchased with federal funding, that often go unused because of the hapless Wi-Fi. It has students who talk about the Internet not as a reliable tool, but as a temperamental one. It works better in the mornings, they say. It works better on this side of the room. It works better when the sun is out.

Garner, in his morning computer class, groaned and stared at his idled Asus desktop computer. The room was made of cinder blocks, and on the wall was an antiquated poster defining 1990s computer terms: Boot, Click, CD/DVD, Cursor, Crash.

He opened Microsoft Word — a program that didn't need the Internet — and whispered to Flowers, "I'm gonna type out my own book." But he had only made it one sentence ("This is the story of George Washington," he had written) when he got bored. He placed his keyboard atop the computer tower and dropped his head on the desk.

Stuck in a corner

Lower Peach Tree is one of the hardest-to-reach places in Alabama, at the far western edge of a county most famous for being the home of late author Harper Lee. In much of the county, including at six other schools, Frontier Communications provides good broadband Internet. But Lower Peach Tree sits on the other side of the Alabama River, AT&T's territory, and is reachable from Monroeville — the county seat — only by intermittent ferry service or a looping, one-hour drive. Many who live in Lower Peach Tree work as loggers or truck drivers. The town of less than a thousand residents has no restaurants or gas stations.

As one enters Lower Peach Tree, thick trees and ramshackle homes line the road, and but for an occasional flicker, cellphone service dies off. Only about one-third of students at Monroe Intermediate have Internet at home; to get even that, their families subscribe to a satellite-based service that malfunctions during bad weather. During his one-hour morning route along the community's snaking red dirt roads, the school's bus driver, Raymond McConnell, doesn't even bother carrying a cellphone.

"If there's some kind of accident," he said, "I'm just supposed to go up to the closest house and ask to use a land line. That's what my boss told me."

Educators say that rural areas, with limited curriculums and resources, in particular could benefit from digital advances that allow students to reach far beyond their towns. Spanish classes could Skype with students in Mexico City. Advanced students could take high school classes remotely. The problem is that such small towns also provide a limited pool of customers for any company thinking about making an investment.

"[Monroe Intermediate] is a really, really small school in a precarious area," said Jerome Browning, a coordinator at Alabama's department of education. "It doesn't make any sense for vendors to come to that area."

The copper lines that currently run to the Lower Peach Tree school were placed in the ground in the late 1990s by BellSouth, a company that merged with AT&T in 2006. Since then, the district has encountered a problem facing other rural schools: There is little competition to provide services. Some 7 percent of schools nationwide fail to find bidders when looking to upgrade Internet — according to the Consortium for School Networking, a Washington-based group that advocates for technology in the classroom — and in the case of Monroe Intermediate, district officials had no choice but to deal with the one company operating in that area: AT&T.

Beginning in 2014, Barnes said she grew frustrated enough with AT&T's reluctance to wire Monroe Intermediate that she tried to contact a senior decision-maker. She was passed around from one contact to another, she said, and left "15 to 20" voice mails with four or five people. She also, for months, exchanged e-mails in which AT&T officials sound encouraging but don't follow up.

Barnes, in one e-mail, said she was looking to find "the best solution for the most rural school in Alabama."

"I can begin to take a look at capacity in the area," one AT&T account manager wrote.

The district's request was complicated. It needed AT&T to cooperate with the neighboring telecom company, Frontier. If AT&T was to build new lines, they would have to connect with Frontier's, allowing Monroe Intermediate to receive data from the hub in Frontier territory — and remain on the district server, so information could be shared across all schools. At one point last October, Barnes said, AT&T brought up the possibility of building new lines — but not ones that would connect with Frontier. The district wasn't interested.

AT&T, in a statement, said it tries to provide strong service to its customers, but "in this instance our communication with this school fell short."

"This in no way reflects the significant work we do to connect rural America and thousands of schools, including those in hard-to-reach remote areas," the company said. AT&T noted that 92 percent of schools in Alabama have high-

speed Internet. It also said that, over the last six years, AT&T had invested more than "any other public company" to expand high-speed Internet availability.

Starting July 1, the Federal Communications Commission will provide a new option for schools that feel stuck: Those schools can hire their own outside companies to build their fiber connections, partially using federal funding, if the local telecom company won't. The goal is to provide more leverage to schools than before.

But there are doubts from local educators that the proposal will actually be the cure they need. Monroe administrators, after talking recently with other telecom companies, estimate that it will cost \$1 million to run fiber to Monroe Intermediate. U.S. taxpayers will pay for 80 percent, but that leaves the district on the hook for \$200,000 — something it still can't afford. Barnes, the technology coordinator, said the district might solicit donations.

Teachers at Monroe Intermediate say the lack of a strong Internet connection creates everyday obstacles. The school must upload emergency planning documents to a state portal. Daily attendance records are sent to the district office. Even when the Internet is working, bandwidth is so taxed during the school day that administrators wait until after-hours to perform some of their computer tasks.

For students, the tech limitations can breed some cleverness. Garner, an easy-to-smile eighth grader, calls himself the community's top "hacker," in part because he has learned that he can make calls with his smartphone by placing it on a ceiling fan — one place where it gets occasional service — and connecting it with Bluetooth headphones. But he also said he has some anxiety about what happens when he enters ninth grade — a point when students from Monroe Intermediate head off to high school in a neighboring and more populous county and tend to realize that they are farther behind than they expected.

"The rest of the world has this," Garner said of the Internet.

Even though Monroe Intermediate was named in 2013-14 by the state as one of six "torchbearer" schools that was beating the odds and "educating students of poverty," few students who grow up in Little Peach Tree move beyond high school, Monroe Intermediate principal Betty Madison said. Some are bewildered by the assignments or too ashamed to admit what they don't know, Barnes said. What is a Google Doc? What is a jump drive? How do I do my homework if I don't have Internet at home?

"This is just the real world now," Barnes said. "These are expected skills. And they are drowning."

'We're down'

The Internet outages at Monroe Intermediate can last from minutes to weeks, and when they start, an administrator from the principal's office speaks up over the intercom.

"We're down," a scratchy voice said on a recent morning, and Shirley Pate, the school's technology coordinator, told her fourth-grade students to power off their devices — anything that might be sucking up bandwidth. She asked them to wait for a moment while she did some troubleshooting.

"Can I get a book out of the library?" one of the students asked.

Another opened his backpack and removed a stack of plastic dinosaurs.

Pate walked over to a computer and ran a speed test.

Behind her, students spent the last 10 minutes before the bell recreating the Jurassic era.

"You bit my tail, get out of here," said Tomquarious Morrisette, 10.

"Mmm, fresh ankylosaurus," said Jarqueis McCaskey, 10. "Bones and all."

They debated for a moment about the fate of the ankylosaur and decided it had died. Morrisette slowly raised the plant-eater from the table.

"He's going up to heaven," Morrisette said.

The speed test finished: The download speed was 0.76 megabits per second, less than one-fiftieth of what Verizon or Comcast offers residential customers in the District.

Pate took a closer look at the screen.

"Oh, look now!" she said. "Not bad."

Illinois Lawmakers Pass \$600 Million In Funding For Higher Ed

By Tina Sfondeles

[Chicago Sun-Times](#), April 22, 2016

Illinois lawmakers on Friday approved a big short-time fix to fund the state's public universities and community colleges in what a prominent Senate Republican is calling a "reset" button needed to solve the state's budget impasse.

Illinois State Comptroller Leslie Munger on Friday said payments to universities, community colleges and to students with Monetary Award Program grants will start immediately.

The House on Friday voted 106-2, while the Senate unanimously passed the bill which will send \$600 million to help stem the financial crises at the state's public universities and community colleges. It also includes \$160 million in tuition grants for low-income students.

The Senate also unanimously advanced a Senate bill that will bridge funding for higher education and critical human services.

Democrats and Republicans had previously split the vote on several higher education bills, with some Republicans stressing there was no source of revenue to pay for the emergency funding.

But Illinois Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno, on the Senate floor, stressed that the bill had bipartisan support because it had a revenue source.

"Every bit of spending in this bill is paid for — both Higher Ed and Human Services. That is the model we are trying to achieve. That is the sort of reset in budgeting we need for this state," Radogno said.

Money from the bill will come from a specialized education fund supported by income tax revenue.

Munger said there is \$354 million on hand in the state's Education Assistance Fund, and the \$600 million approved by the General Assembly will allow the state to immediately pay student MAP grants and work closely with state universities and community colleges to ensure they have resources to avoid further cuts and closings.

"We will continue disbursing funds as they become available, with final payments being made in July," Munger said in a statement. "Our students and schools have paid a heavy price for this budget impasse, and we will do everything possible to provide long-overdue relief."

Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration on Friday said there's a hope that the bipartisan agreement on higher education funding will help spark a solution for the state's budget impasse.

"By passing this bipartisan agreement, lawmakers in both chambers put aside political differences to provide emergency assistance for higher education, ensuring universities and community colleges remain open and low-income students can pay for school," Rauner spokeswoman Catherine Kelly said in a statement. "We are hopeful the General Assembly will build on this bipartisan momentum in the weeks ahead as we negotiate a balanced budget with reform for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017."

But Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan on Friday while Rauner has said he'll approve the funding for higher education, "it's unfortunate he was unwilling to approve any further funding for human services."

"If he continues his unwillingness to assist our human service providers, he will be successful in destroying the safety net for those most in need for critical state services, including services for women who need breast cancer screenings, victims of child abuse and victims of sexual assault," Madigan said in a statement.

Madigan said he hopes Rauner sees the funding for higher education not as a solution, but as emergency assistance.

"Time will tell if Gov. Rauner has further intentions of destroying our state institutions and human service providers, or if he will begin working with us to craft a full-year budget that is not contingent on passage of his demands that will destroy the middle class," Madigan said.

The Illinois Federation of Teachers on Friday called the bill's approval "a critical stopgap measure that will prevent

immediate college closures, help our students plan for their future and begin to address the crisis Gov. Rauner created.”

“For almost a year, the governor has made unreasonable political demands a condition of passing a state budget and vetoed funding for higher education and students in need,” IFT President Dan Montgomery said in a statement. “We urge Gov. Rauner to sign the bill into law and then refocus his priorities. It’s time to fully fund education. It’s time to fully fund social services. And it’s time to pass a full and sufficient budget for the current and upcoming fiscal years.”

‘Cash For Criminals’? Not So Fast.

[Washington Post](#), April 22, 2016

AN ESTIMATED 8,000 people per year return to the District after serving a sentence in prison or jail. About half will end up behind bars again within three years. Some will commit — or themselves become victims of — violent crimes. The D.C. Council is right to want alternatives to traditional programs that have failed at re-integrating ex-offenders into society. But before it commits public dollars to a controversial program that uses cash stipends to motivate lawful behavior, it should undertake a more rigorous review.

The council has gone on record in favor of establishing a program modeled after one in Richmond, Calif., that would identify at-risk violent offenders and pay them annual stipends, perhaps \$9,000 or more, to participate in programs aimed at turning their lives around. But Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) is opposed and hasn’t funded the program in her proposed budget. That’s likely to be a flashpoint in upcoming budget deliberations with council member Kenyan R. McDuffie (D-Ward 5) promising to shift money from the mayor’s other law enforcement priorities. Chief Financial Officer Jeffrey S. DeWitt has placed the crime bill’s cost at \$3.9 million for fiscal 2016 and \$25.6 million over four years.

It is an unfair simplification to characterize, as some critics have done, the program as “cash for criminals.” Participants in the program would receive intensive counseling, mentorship and workforce development, and payment of stipends would be contingent on successful participation. Mr. McDuffie points out that the District already pays stipends for numerous programs, so that shouldn’t be a novel concept. “It has been said,” he told us, “that changing your life should be treated like a job. This program lends credence to this belief.”

But there are aspects of Richmond’s experience with the unconventional method that should give pause. An examination of the program by The Post’s Aaron C. Davis showed that its insistence on operating at a distance from police might have allowed suspected killers receiving stipends to evade responsibility for homicides. Also, evidence that the program produces results is more anecdotal than data-driven. The reduction in crime that supporters claim was a result of the program may well have been the result of a

shift to community policing methods by a new police chief or part of the nationwide dip in crime. In any event, as Mr. Davis reported, homicides in Richmond are again on the rise, raising questions about the long-term effectiveness of the program, which notably is financed with private donations, not tax dollars.

A clear-eyed look at these issues is needed as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of money already being spent on programs to help released prisoners. Would the money better be spent on improving these programs? If not, why continue them? If the council is determined to give the program a try, we would urge it be set up as a pilot with buy-in from the administration, clear goals and guidelines, and a rigorous means of weighing its effectiveness.

From: [Bulletin Intelligence](#)
To: DHS@BulletinIntelligence.com
Subject: The Homeland Security News Briefing for Sunday, April 10, 2016
Date: Sunday, April 10, 2016 7:01:20 AM
Attachments: [dhscips160410.doc](#)

The Homeland Security News Briefing

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2016 7:00 AM EDT

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Leading DHS News:

KERRY CALLS FOR UNITY AMONG AFGHAN LEADERS, RENEWS OFFER OF TALKS WITH TALIBAN. Secretary of State Kerry's unannounced visit to Kabul was not mentioned on the two network newscasts that aired last night, and generated muted coverage on print and online outlets. What coverage there was highlighted the Secretary's call on Afghan leaders to overcome divisions and work "for the common good," and his renewed offer for talks with the Taliban. The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Sukhanyar, Mashal, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) notes that it was Kerry's "first visit to the Afghan capital since he helped broker the coalition government in 2014, after a bitterly contested election

threatened to unravel the country.” President Ashraf Ghani and “his rival Abdullah Abdullah, who serves as the government’s chief executive, have failed to put aside their hard feelings, even as the Taliban have seized more territory and a bleak economic outlook has prompted an exodus of young people to Europe.”

[PBS NewsHour](#) (4/9, Sreenivasan, 154K) reported last night that Kerry also met with Abdullah. Kerry later tweeted, “The US continues to support sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of self-reliant, democratic Afghanistan.” [Reuters](#) (4/9, Mohammed, Mackenzie), quotes Kerry as also telling a news conference in Kabul, “Democracy requires credible institutions. ... Even more than that, it requires a willingness of people...from different political and ethnic and geographic factions to be able to come together and work for a common good.”

The [AP](#) (4/9) says the “unwieldy arrangement” between Ghani and Abdullah “has left interim ministers in critical positions while the US ally struggles to confront lawlessness, corruption and the Taliban’s resilient and perhaps expanding insurgency.” [BBC News \(UK\)](#) (4/9, 2.09M) indicated that “the assumption had been that the national unity government formed by Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah would finish in September,” but [Reuters](#) (4/9, Mohammed, Mackenzie) notes that Kerry said yesterday, “Let me make this very, very clear because I brokered the agreement. ... There is no end to this agreement at the end of two years, or in six months from now. ... This is an agreement for a unity government the duration of which is five years.”

[Xinhua \(CHN\)](#) (4/10, 13K) reported that back in February, “a quadrilateral group of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States had invited the Taliban groups to take part in direct talks with Kabul by the first week of March.” The Taliban, however, “rejected the offer.” Kerry said yesterday, “So again, today, we call on Taliban to enter into a peace process, legitimate process, the real process, that provides equal rights protection for all Afghans and brings to an end to [the] violence...that the people of this country have endured for so many years.” The [AP](#) (4/9) also notes that Kerry also “called on the Taliban to re-engage in peace talks dormant for almost a year, and said there was no change now in President Barack Obama’s plans for troop levels in Afghanistan.” However, added Kerry, Obama “always has said he will listen to his commanders on the ground.” The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Sukhanyar, Mashal, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) says that “Ghani, later appearing in a news conference with Mr. Kerry, thanked Mr. Obama for his flexibility on troop levels, and reaffirmed his government’s commitment to making reforms and fighting corruption.”

[PBS NewsHour](#) (4/9, Sreenivasan, 154K) noted that Kerry “visited troops serving at Camp Resolute Support in Kabul to thank them for their service,” and the [Kuwait News Agency](#) (4/9) reported that he also met with “his counterpart Salahuddin Rabbani” to discuss “a range of bilateral concerns including defense, security, and economic support, it has been revealed.” The two “convened the third meeting of the US-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission in Kabul ‘to review progress...and chart a course for future cooperation,’ the Department of State said.” The Commission “‘welcomed’ the Obama Administration’s continuing financial support for the ANDSF through the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and the UN Development Program-managed Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).” The US also “announced that 14 MD-530 attack helicopters and eight A-29 aircraft have been successfully integrated into the Afghan security forces, and the addition of 14 more MD-530s before August 2016.”

[Vice](#) (4/9, Owen, 1.65M), meanwhile, noted that Kerry and Rabbani “acknowledged last year’s violence, which resulted in over 11,000 civilian casualties.” Nonetheless, the [Washington Post](#) (4/9, Morello, 8.98M) reports that “US officials maintain that Afghanistan has made strides since the U.S. invasion in 2001.” US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson said, “If we look at the sort of experience the international community, and specifically our country, has had in Afghanistan over the past 15 years, we want to take account of the advances that have been made in development, particularly health and education, electricity, communications. ... It really is a very changed society.”

[Voice of America](#) (4/9, Dockins, 60K) reported that “shortly after Kerry left the Afghan capital, witnesses in central Kabul reported hearing at least two explosions.” [AFP](#) (4/9) reports that while “authorities were not immediately able to comment on the nature of the blasts nor on whether they had claimed any casualties...Taliban insurgents frequently attack government and military installations in the city.”

NYTimes Analysis: Taliban Continues To Advance Into Helmand Province. A 1,346-word [New York Times](#) (4/9, Nordland, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) analysis reports since Maj. Gen. M. Moein Faqir assumed command of the 215th Corps of the Afghan army in Helmand Province, Taliban forces have continued to make advances into more than half of the province. According to the Times, this includes the districts of Zad and Musa Qula, both of which are critical agricultural zones and “major sources of opium poppy,” with Musa Qula serving as “a center of opium refining and heroin production.” While Faqir indicated the “districts change hands all the time,” the article highlights how an unspecified number of American soldiers from the Army’s 87th Infantry Division have been assigned as reinforcements in Helmand Province.

Transportation Security Administration:

NEFFENGER WARNS PASSENGERS TO EXPECT INCREASE IN AIRPORT SECURITY MEASURES.

The [Washington Post](#) (4/9, Halsey, 8.98M) reports on Federal efforts to boost airline security. The story quotes TSA head Peter Neffenger as telling reporters after his Congressional testimony this week, “There’s some things you have to do after Brussels, and one of them is to realize that public areas of the world are vulnerable, by definition. ... It helps that we have a vast national intelligence network. ... If you’ve made a reservation, your name is automatically bounced against databases.” The Post adds that Neffenger also “said that travelers will see a much more visible police presence at airports in the months to come and an increase in bomb-sniffing dogs as rapidly as they can be trained,” and that “passengers should expect more random searches both as they enter airports and after they pass through checkpoints into secure boarding areas.”

Immigration:

WPOST BLASTS TRUMP’S PLAN TO PAY FOR BORDER WALL. The [Washington Post](#) (4/9, 8.98M) writes in an editorial that if Donald Trump ever “carried out his threat” to cut off “billions of dollars in annual money transfers as a means of coercing Mexico to pay for his famous border wall,” it would lead to disaster for both Mexico and the US, boosting “hunger, disease and crime rates,” with “children...among the most obviously and severely affected.” To the Post, “Trump’s plan to extort Mexico in the vain hope that a white elephant of a wall would ‘solve’ illegal immigration is fanciful, naive and reckless, aimed more at exciting his base than grappling seriously with problems. But then, so is Mr. Trump’s entire campaign.”

Office of Health Affairs:

WPOST A1: PREMATURE DEATHS OF WORKING-AGE WHITE WOMEN CONFOUND

POLICYMAKERS. The [Washington Post](#) (4/8, Saslow, 8.98M), in a nearly 4,000-word piece, described a trend in which white US women – particularly those of lower incomes in the rural Midwest – between ages 25 and 55 “have been dying at accelerating rates over the past decade, a spike in mortality not seen since the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s.” The story cited research studies of death certificates as showing that rates of drug and alcohol overdoses for “working-age white women have quadrupled,” while suicides have increased by up to 50%. In reviewing public officials’ reactions to the trend, the Post quoted President Obama as saying, “What we’re seeing is the strain of inequality on the middle class.”

Terrorism Investigations:

US CONSULATE WARNS OF “CREDIBLE THREATS” IN TURKEY. The [Washington Times](#) (4/9, Howell, 285K) reports that “the US Mission in Turkey issued an emergency warning to Americans traveling in the country on Saturday, informing them of ‘credible threats’ to tourist areas.” The Times adds that “the emergency message said there had been credible threats to public squares and docks in Istanbul and Antalya.”

BRUSSELS BOMBING SUSPECT CONFESSES TO BEING THE “MAN IN THE HAT.” [NBC Nightly News](#) (4/9, lead story, 3:10, Roberts, 16.61M) correspondent Bill Neely reported last night that Mohamed

Abrini, arrested by Belgian officials yesterday for his alleged involvement in the Brussels Airport bombings, told prosecutors that he was the “man in the hat” captured in surveillance video footage. Investigators have not discounted the possibility, however, that Abrini is “lying to cover for someone else.” Belgian police are still searching for more ISIL suspects as well as potential ISIL safe houses and bomb-making facilities in the Brussels apartment block linked to the Brussels suicide bombers. Neely also reported Belgian prosecutors charged Swedish citizen Osama K., also arrested yesterday, with mass murder for his role in the Brussels metro station bombing.

On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (4/9, story 5, 1:50, Vega, 14.63M), correspondent Alex Marquardt reported surveillance video footage showed Mohamed Abrini leaving a bag of explosives and then fleeing from the Brussels Airport. Authorities also released audio recordings today of one of the airport bombers calling for the taxi. When investigators challenged Abrini with the video footage of him wearing the hat, Marquardt reported, “Abrini had no choice but to confess.”

The [Washington Post](#) (4/9, Mcauley, 8.98M) notes that “according to European investigative files obtained by The Washington Post, Abrini ferried fellow terrorists back and forth across the French-Belgian border in the days leading up to the attacks.” Documents also “suggest that Abrini probably traveled from Europe to Syria and back, via Turkey, in the months before the November attacks.”

[Bloomberg News](#) (4/9, Neuger, 2.92M) reports that “two other people detained Friday were released.” The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Rubin, Subscription Publication, 12.03M), [Politico Europe](#) (4/9, Oliveira, 31K), [Reuters](#) (4/9, Bartunek) and the [AP](#) (4/10, Satter, Cook), among other news outlets, run similar stories on Abrini this morning. CBS Evening News coverage was preempted on Saturday night.

NYTIMES A1: PARENTS HAVE FEW OPTIONS IN TRYING TO DETER CHILDREN FROM TERRORIST GROUPS. The [New York Times](#) (4/9, A1, Apuzzo, Subscription Publication, 12.03M), in a front-page story profiling the father of Adam Shafi, a Californian accused of trying to join an al Qaeda-affiliated group in Syria, calls the Administration’s effort to combat radicalization by young Americans a “nascent” strategy that “remains largely built on persuading people to call the F.B.I. when they first suspect a problem.” Deciding to make that call, however, “can be agonizing” for parents, “particularly those who see their children as misguided but not dangerous,” the Times asserts. Sal Shafi, Adam’s father, and experts interviewed by the Times said the government doesn’t provide “alternatives” for dealing with family members who have been recruited by radical groups.

AT LUXURIOUS SAUDI “PRISON,” THOSE WHO COMMITTED TERRORISM ABROAD NOT SEVERELY PUNISHED. The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Hubbard, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) reports on “one of Saudi Arabia’s high-security prisons for jihadists,” called the Family House, which “feels like a boutique hotel” where inmates “receive three catered meals per day and sleep in luxury suites outfitted with big-screen TVs, king-size beds and shiny wallpaper.” The Times adds that the facility “is designed to give jihadists who behave well a respite from inmate life and help them reconnect with their wives and children, and perhaps even conceive new ones.” This approach “would not translate well to the West,” as “those who have done their misdeeds abroad and have not participated in attacks at home are generally regarded as misled Saudi sons who need to have their thinking corrected so they can return to society as good, obedient subjects.”

National Security News:

US AIR FORCE DEPLOYS B52S TO QATAR TO AID FIGHT AGAINST ISIL. [Reuters](#) (4/9, Shalal) reports that, for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War, the US Air Force has deployed B-52s in Qatar to help fight ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Air Force Lieutenant General Charles Brown, commander of US Air Forces Central Command, said in a statement, “The B-52 demonstrates our continued resolve to apply persistent pressure on Daesh and defend the region in any future contingency.” The [Christian Science Monitor](#) (4/9, Banchiri, 442K) indicated that “an unknown number of B-52s will be based at Al Udeid air base in Qatar, replacing the B-1 Lancer bombers that were withdrawn from the fight in Syria in February, to undergo maintenance and upgrading.”

The [Washington Times](#) (4/9, Howell, 285K) notes “the announcement comes a day after Secretary of State John Kerry said the US would ‘turn up the pressure further’ against the Islamic State during a surprise visit to Baghdad.”

SYRIAN FORCES BATTLING AL QAEDA NEAR ALEPPO. [Reuters](#) (4/9, Davison) reports Syrian army forces battled Al Qaeda-affiliated fighters south of Aleppo, with Russian planes providing air support.

US NAVY LEADS 30-NATION MILITARY EXERCISE IN ARABIAN GULF. [Reuters](#) (4/9) reports the US Navy is leading the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise, involving 30 nations, in the Arabian Gulf. Vice Adm. Kevin Donegan, commander of US Naval Forces Central Command, said Saturday that the exercise is designed to prevent militants from disrupting trade lines, adding that, “The region provides a strong training opportunity for nations worldwide as three of the six major maritime chokepoints in the world are here: the Suez Canal, the Strait of Bab Al Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz.”

UKRAINE, REBELS BOTH CITE INCREASE IN FIGHTING IN EASTERN UKRAINE. The [AP](#) (4/9) reports both Kiev and pro-Russian rebels reported an increase in fighting in eastern Ukraine on Saturday, just days after the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe “expressed concern about what it called the highest level of cease-fire violations since September.” According to the Ukrainian military, there has been “a sharp increase” in attacks around the government-held town of Avdiivka, where it says the rebels have been using tanks, mortars, and artillery, causing the death of at least one civilian.

SOME IN WHITE HOUSE WANT OBAMA TO DELIVER SPEECH IN HIROSHIMA. The [Washington Post](#) (4/9, Nakamura, 8.98M) reports that “no sitting US president has ever visited Hiroshima, out of concern that such a trip might be interpreted as an apology.” However, “there is growing sentiment inside the White House that President Obama, who in his first year envisioned a world without nuclear weapons, should cap his final year with a grand symbolic gesture in service of a goal that remains well out of reach.” The Post cautions that “no final decision has been made, but aides have begun exploring the possibility of Obama spending several hours in Hiroshima in May, after attending the Group of Seven Summit in Ise-Shima.” An unnamed “Obama administration official, in an interview, suggested that the president could potentially deliver a speech there that evokes the nonproliferation themes of his address in Prague in 2009.”

Kerry Arrives In Hiroshima For G7 Meeting. [AFP](#) (4/9) reports Secretary of State Kerry landed at a US military base near Hiroshima on Sunday for a two-day Group of Seven meeting focused on the Middle East, the South China Sea dispute, North Korea, the migration crisis, and other “global hotspot issues.” Kerry and the other six attending diplomats will also visit the atomic bomb-struck Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

AL QAEDA MILITANTS EXECUTE 17 YEMENI SOLDIERS. [Reuters](#) (4/9, Mukhashaf) reports that Al Qaeda-affiliated fighters captured and executed 17 Yemeni soldiers yesterday while they traveled through area under militant control.

SAUDI KING VISITS EGYPT, UNVEILS \$16 BILLION INVESTMENT FUND. [AFP](#) (4/9) reports that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Saudi King Salman yesterday “oversaw the signing of several agreements, including a \$16 billion investment fund, as the monarch visited Egypt for a third day.” Salman’s visit “has been seen as an overwhelming show of support for Sisi.” Since his arrival, “Salman and his delegation have announced a string of investments in Egypt, as well as a lavish plan to build a bridge over the Red Sea to connect the two countries.”

MEMBER STATES WILL GET CHANCE TO QUESTION CANDIDATES TO HEAD UN. The [AP](#) (4/10, Lederer) reports that “for the first time in the 70-year history of the United Nations, all the member states will get a chance to question the candidates for Secretary-General, in a move to make the usually secret selection process for the world’s top diplomatic post more transparent.” For now, “four women and four men who have thrown their hats in the ring – six from Eastern Europe, one from Western Europe and one from the Asia-Pacific region.” They are: former Macedonian Foreign Minister Srgjan Kerim; former Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pucic; former Montenegro Prime Minister and current Foreign Minister Igor Luksic; former Slovenian President Danilo Turk; UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova from

Bulgaria; former Moldovan Foreign Minister Natalia Gherman; former U.N. refugee chief and ex-Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres; and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who heads the UN Development Program.

The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) hails the more open nature of “the race to replace Ban Ki-moon” at the head of the UN, which will give “diplomats from the United Nations’ 193 states...an opportunity to meet and question the four women and four men who are vying for the job.” The Times adds “those vying for the job will need to clearly outline their priorities and vision for a job that becomes ever more daunting in a conflict-ridden world.”

WPOST ANALYSIS: PANAMA’S ORIGINAL CORPORATE LAWS BASED ON DELAWARE’S. In the aftermath of the recent financial leak, the [Washington Post](#) (4/9, Partlow, Swanson, 8.98M) this morning examines the development of Panama as a “tax haven,” noting that the country’s “corporate law in 1927 was modeled after Delaware,” and that “US cargo ships as far back as Prohibition were registering under Panamanian flags to transport booze or avoid taxes on oil shipments.” The Post adds that “the industry gained more notoriety in the 1980s under military dictator Manuel Noriega,” and with all tax havens touting their own “specialties,” Panama “has a reputation for secrecy, incorporating companies and forming foundations.”

The [Washington Post](#) (4/9, 8.98M) editorializes that the Panama Papers “have made an important contribution to accountability.” While “in democratic societies, this means that leaders answer for their actions,” the governments of China and Russia are instead trying “to conceal the truth.”

TRANSCANADA TO RESTART KEYSTONE PIPELINE. [Reuters](#) (4/9, Ngai) reports TransCanada Corp is expecting to restart the Keystone Pipeline, having received approval on Saturday to do so by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration on Saturday. The company will begin with a controlled start at reduced pressure, though it is not clear if operations have yet been restarted.

FORMER ARGENTINE PRESIDENT COULD FACE CHARGES OF MONEY LAUNDERING. [Reuters](#) (4/9, O'Brien, Otaola) reports that according to Argentine media, former president Cristina Fernandez has been indicted for money laundering. [AFP](#) (4/9), meanwhile, says Fernandez “could be investigated for alleged money laundering.”

The [New York Times](#) (4/9, Gilbert, Subscription Publication, 12.03M) says prosecutor Guillermo Mirijuan “is seeking to include...Fernández de Kirchner in a widening investigation into money laundering, according to news media reports on Saturday.” The judge “overseeing the investigation, Sebastián Casanello, must decide how to proceed with the recommendation.”

MEXICAN POLICE ARREST AMERICAN FUGITIVE BRENDA DELGADO. [NBC Nightly News](#) (4/9, story 4, 2:05, Roberts, 16.61M) correspondent Steve Patterson reported Mexican officials announced the arrest of Brenda Delgado, suspected of organizing Dallas dentist Kendra Hatcher’s murder in September, 2015. Delgado faces capital murder charges for allegedly hiring Christopher Love to kill Hatcher. Crystal Cortez, the accomplice who drove Love to the scene, has also been charged with capital murder. If extradited from Mexico to the US, Delgado will not face the death penalty but potentially faces life in prison.

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