

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

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TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

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TODAY'S EDITION

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LEADING DHS NEWS

U.S. Anti-Gang Sweep Yields Over 1,100 Arrests

[New York Times](#), March 29, 2016

Federal authorities have arrested more than 1,100 people since February as part of an enforcement campaign against gangs that traffic guns, drugs and people across United States borders, officials said.

The gangs caught in the dragnet were not small-time operators, said Sarah Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"We are talking about sophisticated organizations who are involved in human trafficking, who are involved in drug smuggling, gun smuggling," she said.

Of the 1,133 people arrested during the five-week operation, more than 900 were members or associates of gangs, including MS-13, the Sureños, the Norteños, the Bloods and several others based in prisons, the immigration agency said in a statement.

A majority of the enforcement actions took place in and around Los Angeles; San Francisco; Houston; El Paso, Tex.; Atlanta; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, the authorities said.

There were also arrests along the East Coast. The Newark area had more than 20, while New York City, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington each had more than 10.

Called Project Shadowfire, the operation was conducted under the banner of Operation Community Shield, an initiative begun in 2005 by the immigration agency to target violent gangs. Regular sweeps over the past 11 years have resulted in more than 40,000 gang-related arrests and the seizure of more than 8,000 firearms, officials said.

In the latest campaign, conducted in tandem with local and state law enforcement agencies, officials seized more than 20 kilograms of narcotics — including marijuana, cocaine, heroin — illicit cash and weapons, Ms. Rodriguez of I.C.E. said.

Some experts have observed a shifting emphasis by drug smugglers away from marijuana as the drug has been decriminalized across the United States in recent years. Data released by the United States Border Patrol showed that marijuana seizures along the southwest border with Mexico

fell to their lowest level in 2015, even as other data suggested a rise in methamphetamine imports.

Most of those arrested in the immigration agency's sweep were American nationals, but about 240 were natives of countries in Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean, officials said. More than 130 people were accused of immigration violations, and about 80 were arrested because of open warrants.

Agents seized 150 firearms and more than \$70,000 in American currency, officials said.

U.S. Immigration Agents Bust 1,100 Suspects In Gang Sweep

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

ICE Operation Nets More Than 1,100 Arrests In Five Weeks

[Fox News](#), March 28, 2016

Federal agents announced Monday they swept up nearly 1,000 suspected drug traffickers, human smugglers, sex traffickers and murderers during a widespread five-week operation aimed at landing a punishing blow against transnational criminal gangs.

The operation, dubbed Project Shadowfire, drew on cooperation between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents as well as other state, local and federal law enforcement officers.

The resulting 1,133 arrests included: 1,001 criminal arrests; 915 gang members and associates; 239 foreign nationals from 13 countries in Central America, Asia, Europe and the Caribbean; 132 immigration violations.

"This operation is the latest example of ICE's ongoing efforts, begun more than a decade ago under Operation Community Shield, to target violent gang members and their associates, to eradicate the violence they inflict upon our communities and to stop the cash flow to transnational organized crime groups operating overseas," ICE Director Sarah R. Saldana said in a statement.

Agents also seized 150 firearms, more than 20 kilos of narcotics and more than \$70,000, according to an ICE news release.

Feds Arrest Hundreds Of Gang Members In 'Project Shadowfire' Raids

By Andrea Noble

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

More than 900 people associated with gangs like MS-13 and the Bloods were arrested across the country as part of a five-week U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement-led operation, officials announced Monday.

The operation was meant to target gang members involved in criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and human smuggling, and comes at a time that law enforcement officials in the D.C. area have become concerned about an increasing level of violence in the region they associate with the MS-13 gang.

But gang experts question the degree to which the busts will tamp down on gang-related crime in the long term.

Law enforcement officials arrested a total of 1,133 people and reported that 915 of them were "gang members and associates," with the majority affiliated with MS-13, the Surenos, the Nortenos, the Bloods and several prison-based gangs, according to a statement from ICE.

ICE officials declined to provide any names of those arrested or to detail the exact charges lodged against each suspect.

Without specific information about those arrested, gang expert Richard Valdemar said it's tough to say whether such an operation will have success curbing gang crime.

Such federal sweeps often pick up foot soldiers and other low-level gang members, who are ultimately not the ones calling the shots within the criminal enterprises, said Mr. Valdemar, a retired Los Angeles County Sheriff's sergeant who specializes in gang investigations. As a result, he said, they aren't effective tactics in the long term.

"The sweeps are like band aids, they look good on the 5 o'clock news but they have no effect on the actual gangs," Mr. Valdemar said.

More successful are operations that charge gang leadership through Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations statutes, which can help to disassemble the organizations by ensnaring gang leaders who may not be the ones actually carrying out the most violent crimes, he said.

ICE spokeswoman Sarah Rodriguez said some of those arrested are being charged as part of RICO investigations but she declined to say how many or where the investigations were centered because they are ongoing.

The majority of the gang members or affiliates — 1,001 people — were charged with criminal offenses ranging from attempted murder to tampering with a witness and narcotics-related charges. The remaining 132 people were arrested administratively for immigration violations.

Some of those who were criminally charged are also immigrants, as ICE officials indicated that 239 of the 1,133 people arrested as part of the operation are foreign nationals.

Another gang researcher, Alex Alonso of Cal State University, was critical of the sweeps, calling them "rhetoric and propaganda" meant to build support for law enforcement programs and deportation policies.

The operation, dubbed Project Shadowfire, was meant to crack down on gang activity across the country but officials said that enforcement action was most active in the Los Angeles, San Juan, Atlanta, San Francisco, Houston, and El Paso areas. In the greater Los Angeles area, a total of 185 people were arrested.

A handful of gang arrests were also made in the D.C. region, where local law enforcement have been on the lookout for an uptick in MS-13 activity. In the last year, police in Maryland and Northern Virginia have linked at least eight homicides to MS-13.

The sweeps netted 13 suspects in Northern Virginia, all identified as either members of MS-13 or the 18th Street Gang. Another 16 people were arrested in Maryland, with the majority affiliated with MS-13.

ICE officials declined to provide the names of those arrested locally but were able to provide some information about charges they face.

In Maryland, one person was suspected of rape of a minor, two were wanted for attempted murder and another is accused of tampering with a witness.

"Transnational criminal gang members and their associates not only bring violence to our community, they also deal in human trafficking and drug smuggling," said Andre R. Watson, special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Baltimore. "These organizations find the vulnerable and the weak in our neighborhoods and exploit them for personal gain."

In Virginia, two of those arrested face narcotics charges, six face firearms charges, three face immigration-related violations, one was charged in a mob assault and another was arrested on a probation violation. All 13 suspects were arrested in either Loudoun, Fairfax or Prince William counties.

Massive ICE Operation Nabs More Than 1,000 Gang Members

By Henry Gass

[Christian Science Monitor](#), March 29, 2016

US immigration agents have arrested more than 1,000 people after a five-week operation targeting international gangs, officials announced on Monday.

The suspects were arrested on charges ranging from drug and sex trafficking to murder and racketeering. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement headed the

operation, dubbed Project Shadowfire, between Feb. 15 and March 21, the agency said in a statement.

The majority of the 1,113 arrestees were US citizens, but 239 were foreign nationals from countries in Central America, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean. A majority of those arrested also had links with gangs like MS-13, Sureños, Norteños, Bloods, and several prison-based gangs.

Recommended: A series on human trafficking: How to free Modern Slaves

The operation was nationwide, but the greatest activity took place in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, Houston, El Paso, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Authorities also seized 150 firearms, over 20 kg of narcotics, and more than \$70,000 in US currency.

ICE has been targeting transnational gangs with similar operations since 2005, but regularly participates in operations involving US citizens and non-citizens due to its expertise on international gangs. According to ICE, Homeland Security Investigation agents have apprehended more than 40,000 gang members and seized more than 8,000 firearms in the past ten years.

"This operation is the latest example of ICE's ongoing efforts, begun more than a decade ago under Operation Community Shield, to target violent gang members and their associates, to eradicate the violence they inflict upon our communities and to stop the cash flow to transnational organized crime groups operating overseas," said ICE Director Sarah R. Saldaña in an ICE press release.

The agency has been the focus of criticism in North Carolina recently, after it was accused of using schools and bus stops to arrest teenagers who came into the country amidst the wave of unaccompanied minors fleeing violence in Central America in 2014.

US Interagency Team To Arrive Tuesday

[PROTHOMALO](#), March 28, 2016

A delegation, led by US Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) assistant secretary for international affairs Alan Bersin, arrives here on Tuesday to discuss potential areas of collaboration, especially aviation security and law enforcement.

The 'interagency delegation' includes officials from the DHS, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the US Department of State, reports news agency UNB.

They will hold a series of meetings with Bangladesh government officials to engage on security issues during their three-day stay in Dhaka.

"We welcome this visit by officials from the US Department of State, Federal Aviation Administration and the US Department of Homeland," US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat was quoted in a statement issued by the Embassy on Monday.

Security as an opportunity to exchange ideas about enhancing security for the wellbeing of citizens of both the countries, the envoy said.

Earlier on 21 March, the government signed an agreement with a British firm, Redline Aviation Security Ltd, to improve the security system at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The Redline Aviation Security Ltd is now assigned to provide consultancy services, supervise airport security, and guide and train the airport manpower.

Redline Aviation Security Ltd won the contract, involving Tk 732.5 million, to provide the three types of service for the next two years.

US Delegation Due Today | The Daily Star

[Daily Star \(BGD\)](#), March 28, 2016

The US Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Alan Bersin will lead an interagency delegation to Bangladesh that will include officials from DHS, the Federal Aviation Administration and the US Department of State, said a US embassy press release yesterday. The delegation will be in Dhaka till March 31.

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

Pregnant Woman, Husband Tell Of Being Shot While Fleeing Cuba On Raft To U.S.

[South Florida Sun Sentinel](#), March 28, 2016

A pregnant Cuban woman and her husband prepared to launch what they called "our American dream" with relatives in Cooper City on Monday after describing a harrowing departure from the island on a raft during which they and five others were wounded by gunfire.

"I was nervous and scared, but I had to go on, I couldn't go back," said Yarelys Rios Aguilera, 37, who is 16 weeks pregnant and was hit in the side just above the hip.

As the raft pulled away from the island, Rios did not know if her unborn child would survive, she said. But doctors in Miami have assured her the baby is fine, she said.

Rios, along with husband Denny Rumbaut Varona, 33, told their story at Jackson Memorial Hospital, where each was treated for gunshot wounds. The couple said they were shot before dawn Saturday in Matanzas province on Cuba's north coast as they and 24 other Cubans set sail for the U.S.

The makeshift raft was stopped by the U.S. Coast Guard Saturday afternoon south of Key West. Six of the seven wounded were brought ashore.

Rumbaut said he did not see the assailants, who he said came out of the woods near shore. He said he believes they were trying to steal the raft, which was equipped with a

Mercedes-Benz car engine and food and water for days, he said.

He said he heard eight or nine shots, and was bleeding profusely from a wound to the side as the raft motored away from shore.

"Even though we were injured, we decided to keep going," Rumbaut said. "We boarded the raft, and then decided to at least make it to American waters so the Coast Guard could help."

Two other rafters, among four who were released from Lower Keys Medical Center in Key West after treatment, have told similar stories to reporters who interviewed them at Church World Service, a resettlement agency in Doral.

Rumbaut, who had been driving a taxi in Havana, said he paid a total of about \$900 for his and his wife's passage. He said he did not know the organizers.

Asked why he wanted to flee Cuba, Rumbaut said, "There is only one reason: the economic situation there."

He said he has made 11 previous attempts to leave, and his wife three. All were unsuccessful, he said.

The Keynoter newspaper reported late Saturday that the wounds were "possibly self-inflicted." Neither the Coast Guard nor U.S. Customs and Border Protection could confirm that report, officials said Sunday.

Nonetheless, the relatively minor nature of the gunshot wounds, and the rarity of firearms in the hands of anyone but Cuban police left these rafters answering questions about their stories.

Rios, Rumbaut and a third Cuban, Yaser Cabrera Romero, also wounded in the left side, have all denied to news reporters that they caused their own injuries in order to be brought into the U.S.

Under current U.S. immigration policy, Cubans who reach U.S. shores are permitted to stay, while those picked up at sea are held aboard a Coast Guard ship until they are returned to the island. Cubans who are injured at sea and require treatment at a hospital are taken to shore, and therefore allowed to stay in the U.S.

Oscar Rivera, director of Church World Service in Doral, said he has interviewed two of the wounded Cubans, and has no reason to doubt their stories.

But, he said, "This is very unusual. In the 1990s [during the rafter crisis] I heard of shots being fired in Cuba, but never of anyone being wounded."

Frank Miller, of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, said, "These circumstances are certainly unusual. It is not every day that we see a group of Cubans that arrive with injuries such as these. There is no disputing that."

He said an investigation would be handled by his agency in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard. "The Border Patrol is concerned with all smuggling coming into Florida, not just from Cuba," he said.

Even if the Cubans' stories do not check out, it is likely they would be permitted to stay, Rivera said.

The other 20 Cubans picked up on this trip, including one person with a minor gunshot wound, were being held aboard a Coast Guard vessel until they are returned to Cuba, authorities said.

As Rios and Rumbaut prepared to leave the hospital Monday afternoon, his cousin Yrmary Rumbaut and her husband, residents of Cooper City, were there to meet them. "We did not know they were coming," said Yrmary Rumbaut. "It was a surprise. We are happy they're here."

The number of Cubans trying to reach the U.S. by sea has increased steadily since the U.S. announced the establishment of relations with Cuba in December 2014, according to the Coast Guard. More than 2,500 Cubans have attempted to enter the U.S. by crossing the Florida Straits since Oct. 1, 2015, officials said.

Among the most recent arrivals was a group of 24 Cubans found by a passing boater on Cook Island, offshore of Big Pine Key, according to the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. They were taken to shore at Little Torch Key and turned over to Customs and Border Protection.

They were reported all in good condition.

Rafters Deny Having Shot Themselves To Make It To The U.S.

[Miami Herald](#), March 29, 2016

Yarelys Ríos was 16 weeks pregnant and shot under her ribcage when she decided to get on a raft in Cuba with her husband and 24 others to try to make it to the United States.

Moments earlier, she says, gunmen had shot her, her husband and five other migrants in an attempt to steal their raft. After the Coast Guard intercepted them on Saturday afternoon about 50 miles from Key West, only six of the wounded — those requiring medical assistance — were brought to the United States. The others awaited deportation.

On Monday, Ríos and her husband, Denny Rumbaut, as well as two other rafters, denied rumors that they had shot themselves to avoid being returned to the island. In total, seven of the 26 rafters had gunshot wounds.

"I know that in American waters there are several boats that can assist you and at that moment I could not go back not knowing who were the people shooting at us and what could happen," said Ríos, 37, only 15 minutes after being released from Jackson Memorial Hospital. "That [to intentionally shoot yourself] would have been something very hard. I am pregnant and I'm not going to risk my baby to come to a country that, yes, where I want to be, but not that way."

The woman pointed to the left side of her torso, in the space between the ribs and the hip, as the place where the

bullet wounded her. Rumbaut pointed to a similar spot to show where he had been shot.

Jorge Luis Escalona, one of the two rafters in the office of the Church World Service, the Doral agency that helps resettle refugees, lifted his shirt to show a wound similar to that of the couple's.

Yaser Cabrera, another member of the group, spoke to the media on Sunday and showed his wound, similar to Escalona's, on the left side but a little closer to the abdomen. A fifth immigrant who spoke to el Nuevo Herald but asked to remain anonymous showed a bullet wound in his left shoulder. None of the gunshots impacted vital organs or arteries.

The seventh wounded rafter, who had been shot in the foot, was transferred with the other 19 to a Coast Guard vessel to await their return to Cuba, unless one or some of them declare they fear persecution upon their return, in which case they would be taken to the Guantánamo Naval Base to be processed and relocated to a third country.

In general, when the Coast Guard finds wounded or sick rafters, they are brought to shore for medical attention. This allows the rafters to stay in the United States and apply for permanent residence under the Cuban Adjustment Act.

According to the stories told by the rafters in Miami, most of the 26 lived in the neighborhood of Marianao in Havana. They were taken by truck early Saturday to a desolate swamp in the Bay of Matanzas, where a raft, nearly 23 feet long by eight feet wide, built on 55-gallon plastic barrels and propelled by a five-cylinder Mercedes-Benz engine, waited for them.

Nearly half of the travelers were already on the raft when several men surprised the remaining ones at about 3 a.m.

"They told us, 'Stop, we are the ones leaving and you're not going anywhere.' But we were already determined to do what it took. We jumped on them and they pulled a gun on us," said Escalona, 46, who worked in a car body shop in Cuba.

The passengers resisted and refused to give up the vessel. A fight broke out during which several were wounded by one of the alleged assailants' gun.

Some of the rafters said they heard three or four shots while others say there were nine shots. They do not believe the assailants were government officers.

"I'm sure they were not police officers or anything having to do with the government. In cases like this, the police do not shoot but try to catch the people," Rumbaut said.

With the help of the others, the wounded were able to board the raft, covered their wounds with rags and took off toward South Florida.

Asked about the rafters' story, Frank Miller, a spokesman for the Border Patrol, said that there is an

ongoing investigation and declined to elaborate "on the case or the wounds."

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY **ADMINISTRATION**

Homeland Security Subcommittee Finds TSA Needs To Refocus Budget Priorities

[Homeland Security Today](#), March 28, 2016

The House Committee on Homeland Security's Transportation Security Subcommittee recently held a hearing to examine the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2017.

In his opening statement, committee chairman, John Katko said, "Terrorists remain committed to attacking the West, and everyday these groups are recruiting new soldiers to their cause. As 9/11 fades from the memory of many Americans, it is incumbent upon Congress to look at tragic recent events and recognize just how committed our adversaries remain at attacking us. The harsh reality is that there are formidable new threats to the safety and security of the traveling public."

TSA's requested budget is \$7.6 billion. Broken down, it consists of the following:

\$3.0 billion to support appropriate staffing levels at checkpoints while minimizing wait times and maximizing effective screenings.

\$200 million for transportation screening technology, in particular enhanced x-ray units.

\$116.6 million to provide training for TSA frontline employees, as well as completing the construction of modular facilities to house a greater number of trainees.

\$83.5 million for TSA's intelligence operations, and to improve information sharing.

\$10 million to replace IT infrastructure, including network components and outdated operating systems that have become vulnerable to cybersecurity threats.

TSA's proposed budget spurred criticism in its request—or lack thereof—of additional funds to protect surface transportation. Despite the attempted attack on the high speed train in France last summer, TSA only asked for a \$12 million increase to improve the safety of the ten billion passengers that use surface transportation every year and the 800 thousand shipments of hazardous materials that occur daily.

The committee also scrutinized TSA for not cutting funding for their Behavior Detection Program, which uses behavior indicators to identify potential terrorists. According to a 2013 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, TSA expended a total of \$900 million on the program since it was

first deployed in 2007, despite the fact that available evidence does not support whether behavior indicators can be used to identify aviation security threats. This raises serious questions as to why TSA would want to use their resources and manpower on a program that has not yet proven effective.

In his statement to the committee, TSA Administrator Peter Neffenger defended the proposed amount, saying, "This budget provides funding to sustain and strengthen the critical mission of TSA, protecting the nation's transportation system and ensuring the freedom of movement of people and commerce...TSA's nearly 60,000 security professionals are dedicated to a demanding and challenging mission. They are our most important resource. They are incredibly patriotic and passionate about our counter-terrorism mission, and they will deliver excellence if properly trained, equipped, and led."

But as the threats towards travelers not only increase, but develop in sophistication, TSA has failed to keep pace. Homeland Security Today previously reported that covert testing uncovered that TSA screeners failed 67 out of 70 tests (or 96 percent of the time) where undercover investigators posing as legitimate airline passengers for TSA managed to smuggle fake explosives and other prohibited weapons through checkpoints.

These security failures, among others, have reinforced the belief that the hoops travelers are forced to jump through nowadays to board a one hour ten minute flight from New York to DC are just another example of security theater.

Security theater consists of the countermeasures intended to provide the feeling of improved security while doing little to nothing to actually achieve it. However, Neffenger maintains, "We have made great strides in addressing the challenges faced last summer to ensure that we do not repeat past mistakes, determining the root causes of the problems identified has been my main concern."

Neffenger claims that the main problems regarding past TSA failures were disproportionate focuses on efficiency, environmental influences, and gaps in system designs and processes. He also expresses his confidence that immediate problems have been resolved.

TSA's job is a difficult one. And while human empathy calls us to be sympathetic of the pressures and difficulties faced by TSA employees, our tax dollars demand accountability. As Chairman Katko put it, "TSA has to be right 100 percent of the time, the terrorists only need to be right once."

American Airlines Pilot Who Authorities Say Failed Breathalyzer Test Is Charged

[ABC News](#), March 28, 2016

An American Airlines pilot who was arrested Saturday after authorities say he failed a breathalyzer test on the

runway at Detroit's Metropolitan Airport was charged today with operating an aircraft under the influence of alcohol.

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office said John Francis Maguire, 50, has been charged with the misdemeanor and said a date for the arraignment has yet to be scheduled.

Maguire was in the cockpit and allegedly under the influence of alcohol around 6:30 a.m. Saturday, moments before his flight was due to leave for Philadelphia, according to the prosecutor's office.

He failed a field breathalyzer test and was then arrested and given another test, said Michael Conway, director of public affairs at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Maguire's blood alcohol content was not released, but Conway said it was over the limit for a pilot.

Federal Aviation Administration rules state that pilots cannot fly with a blood alcohol content of 0.04 percent or greater.

The airline said Flight 736 was cancelled and customers were put on other flights.

American Airlines previously said in a statement: "This is a serious matter and we are assisting local law enforcement and the Federal Aviation Administration with the investigation. We will handle this matter appropriately as the safety and care of our customers and employees is our highest priority."

Copilot Was In Cockpit Before OUI Arrest

[Detroit Free Press](#), March 28, 2016

The American Airlines copilot accused of being drunk before a scheduled flight to Philadelphia from Detroit Metro Airport is being charged with a misdemeanor.

John Francis Maguire, 50, of Pennsylvania faces an operating an aircraft under the influence charge, according to a news release from the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. Information on his arraignment was not immediately available.

Maria Miller, a spokeswoman for Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, said Maguire was seated in the cockpit of the plane when he was questioned and investigated before being arrested.

Airport authorities previously said Maguire failed two Breathalyzer tests administered by police who had been called to the airport's North Terminal about 6:40 a.m. Saturday.

Police were called after Transportation Security Administration personnel reported that he was acting as if he had been drinking when he passed through airline crew security screening before the flight, airport spokesman Michael Conway said Saturday.

Flight 736 had been expected to arrive in Philadelphia at 8:47 a.m., but it was canceled because of the arrest.

Conway called the situation "extremely unusual." Maguire was later released.

American Airlines spokeswoman Laura Nedbal said passengers were moved to other flights. She said no passenger count was taken because the flight never took off, but that particular aircraft holds 99 passengers when full.

Nedbal apologized for the situation.

"This is a serious matter, and we are assisting local law enforcement and the Federal Aviation Administration with the investigation," Nedbal said. "We will handle this matter appropriately as the safety and care of our customers and employees is our highest priority."

Authorities have not released Maguire's blood-alcohol level, but documents posted on the FAA Website titled, "Alcohol and Flying, a Deadly Combination," say the blood-alcohol limit for those operating or attempting to operate an aircraft is 0.04%.

Woman Bypasses TSA, Boards Plane At Nashville Airport

[Tennessean](#), March 28, 2016

A 24-year-old woman is facing criminal charges after Metro police say she bypassed Transportation Security Administration security without being screened and boarded a plane at the Nashville International Airport.

Naja Eva Haynes of Oak Grove, Ky., is facing misdemeanor charges of an airport and aircraft security violation and resisting arrest in connection with the March 24 incident.

According to an arrest affidavit, Hayes drove her car to the airport, parked and walked inside the terminal. She then walked through lane four of the airport's TSA security checkpoint without being screened.

From there she went to Gate B5, boarded a Delta airlines plane without identification and sat down in a seat in the back of the plane, the affidavit continues.

Delta airlines spokesman Morgan Durrant said Haynes was able to access the Boeing 737 because she pushed passed several airline agents to get on board.

When approached by a gate agent, police say Haynes refused to provide identification.

When police officers arrived, she again refused to provide ID and said, "My name and faith are my ID," the affidavit states.

After Haynes refused to vacate the seat, the affidavit continues, officers handcuffed her and forcibly removed her from the plane.

A TSA spokesman said Monday that its office opened an investigation after the incident and placed an employee on non-screening duty pending final determination of the investigation.

That employee, the spokesman said, has since resigned.

"TSA is taking this incident seriously and will retrain employees as necessary to ensure compliance with standard operating procedures," the statement continues.

Haynes was due in Davidson County General Sessions court Monday for a hearing on the matter, but the case was postponed until later in the week, a court clerk said.

As of Monday, she remained free on \$3,000 bond.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

4 Parishes Added To Flood-related La. Disaster Declaration

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Four more parishes have been added to a presidential disaster declaration that followed recent historic flooding in Louisiana.

Sen. David Vitter's office said Monday that the latest additions are Jackson, Rapides, Red River and Sabine parishes.

The disaster declaration makes public assistance available for people and small businesses.

Previously approved parishes are: Allen, Ascension, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Claiborne, DeSoto, Grant, LaSalle, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Richland, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Union, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Carroll, and Winn.

Online:

To register for disaster assistance:

www.DisasterAssistance.gov

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4 More Parishes Eligible For Federal Disaster Relief

[WVUE-TV New Orleans](#), March 28, 2016

BATON ROUGE, LA (WVUE) —

Jackson, Rapides, Red River and Sabine parishes are now eligible for federal disaster relief.

The federal disaster declaration issued on March 13 for seven Louisiana parishes has been expanded to include 23 additional parishes as a result of the severe storms and flooding that hit Louisiana in early March.

The parishes currently designated for assistance are: Allen, Ascension, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Caldwell, Calcasieu, Claiborne, De Soto, Grant, Jackson, La

Salle, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Union, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Carroll and Winn.

Individuals and business owners in any of the parishes designated eligible for federal disaster relief can register for assistance three ways.

Online at DisasterAssistance.gov

Over the phone by calling 1-800-621-FEMA(3362)

In person at a disaster recovery center. A full list of currently operating DRCs can be found [here](#).

Assistance provided by FEMA for homeowners and renters can include grants for rent, temporary housing and home repairs to their primary residence, as well as other serious disaster-related needs, such as medical and dental expenses or funeral and burial costs.

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US CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Utah Welcomes 150 New Americans

[Salt Lake \(UT\) Tribune](#), March 28, 2016

There were Afghans and Bosnians, Kenyans and Koreans, Czechs and Poles, Venezuelans and Vietnamese. They were all there Monday at Utah's Capitol to do the same thing: become Americans.

About 150 immigrants from more than 50 nations took their citizenship oaths at the naturalization ceremony, according to a news release from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Nearly 700,000 immigrants were naturalized in fiscal 2015, the release noted.

"Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon foreign citizens or nationals after they fulfill the requirements established by Congress," it said. "Naturalized citizens enjoy nearly all the same benefits, rights and responsibilities that the Constitution gives to native-born U.S. citizens, including the right to vote."

IMMIGRATION

Texas AG Files Supreme Court Brief Against Obama Immigration Plan

By Lomi Kriel

[Houston Chronicle](#), March 28, 2016

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court Monday arguing against President Barack Obama's plan to shield from deportation nearly 5 million people here illegally and give them temporary work permits.

"The Obama Administration has consistently demonstrated disregard for the rule of law in asserting that it has the legal authority to unilaterally change the immigration policy of the United States," Paxton said in a statement. "Rewriting national immigration law requires the full and careful consideration of Congress, not the political will and assertion of one person. As the president himself said numerous times, he alone does not have the authority to grant millions of unauthorized aliens a host of benefits, including work authorization."

Paxton's office, heading a coalition of 26 Republican-led states, is leading the legal charge against Obama's plan. U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in Brownsville blocked the program on the eve of its implementation in February 2015, starting a complicated legal process in the lower courts. In November, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld his ruling and the nation's highest court is set to hear the case on April 18.

Paxton's office has argued the program would place an unfair burden on Texas by forcing the state to issue hundreds of thousands of driver's licenses. At issue is also whether the president violated a little-known federal statute, the Administrative Procedure Act, in announcing a policy change without public input and if the executive branch can decide whether or not to enforce broad aspects of immigration law.

In deciding to take the case, the justices also specifically asked the parties to address the constitutional implications of the president's executive action and whether it violates the separation of powers.

In the brief Monday, Paxton's office reiterated its arguments, saying that at least 500,000 immigrants in the state would be eligible for the driver's licenses and, at a cost of \$130 a license, it could lose "millions of dollars" even if just a fraction of them applied. Advocates of the plan have argued that the state would also see millions of dollars in additional tax revenue as immigrants with work permits have to pay taxes and tend to be paid more.

In the brief, Paxton also argued that the president should have sought public comment because "public interest in providing input on one of the largest immigration policy changes in the nation's history is extraordinarily high." He also argued that the program in effect is a mandate and not discretionary according to each application and thus requires Congressional approval.

Dump Trump: Immigrants Rush To Seek Citizenship, Right To Vote

[Miami Herald](#), March 28, 2016

Ricardo Malagon's new U.S. citizenship offers stability and protection for his immigrant family.

The bonus? Now he can vote.

Malagon said he has not decided who will get his vote for president in November, but Republican front-runner Donald Trump is not among those he is considering.

"He is not right in the head," said Malagon, 31, who became a citizen in August as Trump pushed his anti-immigrant platform. "He just wants to deport the immigrants — especially the Mexicans."

Malagon and others say the political rhetoric about Mexicans motivates those involved in the "Donald Trump wave," an unprecedented get-out-the-vote effort among immigration advocates.

"We don't have a country if we don't have borders," Trump says on television, in his platform video and during rallies. "We will build a wall. It will be a great wall. It will do what it is supposed to do — keep illegal immigrants out."

While protesters are common at Trump campaign rallies — including one in downtown Fort Worth last month — other immigration advocates have moved beyond the name-calling and are participating in efforts help legal immigrants gain citizenship, in part so they can vote.

"Trump is a great incentive for Hispanics to become citizens and vote against that type of thinking — anti-immigrant, anti-woman, anti-American," said Juan Hernandez, a Fort Worth political consultant and co-founder of the Hispanic Republicans of Texas. "I say that as a Republican."

This is not controversial. We are not talking about undocumented immigrants. The people who are attending these clinics are people who did it the right way.

Rebecca Acuna, executive director of the Latino Center for Leadership Development in Dallas

A February citizenship workshop at the Mexican Consulate in Dallas drew more than 300 people, prompting officials to conduct another in March.

"This is not controversial. We are not talking about undocumented immigrants," said Rebecca Acuna, executive director of the Latino Center for Leadership Development in Dallas. "The people who are attending these clinics are people who did it the right way."

Trump's campaign did not return requests for comment.

Because the voter registration deadline for the presidential election is Oct. 1, legal immigrants seeking citizenship are up against a clock. It typically takes about six months for the citizenship paperwork to be processed, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Last year, between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, the Dallas field office received 5,304 naturalization applications, an increase of 16.5 percent from the same period in 2014, when the number of applicants was 4,553.

"People are paying close attention to what the candidates are saying," said Sandra Tovar of Fort Worth, DFW coordinator for Mi Familia Vota, a group that is helping Hispanics register to vote.

place_number1

Nationwide, 27.3 million Hispanics are eligible to vote this year, according to the Pew Research Center. Of those, 1.2 million became citizens between 2012 and 2016. 'Feelings are hurt'

While immigration reform has long been a big issue among Hispanics, state Rep. Ramon Romero Jr., D-Fort Worth, said Trump's popularity has served as a wake-up call that they need to vote.

In the past, many resident immigrants from Mexico — legal immigrants with green cards — trusted the U.S. government and felt valued, so they didn't rush in to apply for citizenship.

But now they see co-workers and neighbors supporting Trump and are fearful of what could happen if he becomes president.

"The immigrant community's feelings are hurt," Romero said, adding that many believe that citizenship will bring added protection for their families.

Hernandez said the Mexican consulates are encouraging immigrants who are U.S. citizens to practice their rights and vote.

Mexican leaders including former President Vicente Fox have also criticized Trump's plans via social media. Earlier this month, President Enrique Peña Nieto likened Trump to Hitler and Mussolini.

Many immigrants are also displeased that lawmakers — including President Barack Obama — have not passed laws that address immigration reform, Hernandez said.

The second-largest source of Hispanic voter growth is among adult Hispanic immigrants who are in this country legally and become U.S. citizens by naturalization, according to the Pew Research Center.

He said they are angry about a high number of deportations and the handling of Central American children who arrived here unaccompanied. In 2014, thousands of families and unaccompanied children from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador arrived at the nation's southern border. Central Americans cited high levels of crime as why they fled their homelands.

And, Hernandez said, many are worried about the future of Obama's immigration executive order, which goes before the U.S. Supreme Court next month.

Obama's order expanded a program that allows young people who were raised in the United States without status to live and work here temporarily. That program is called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Another program provides temporary protection for an estimated 4.1 million undocumented parents of U.S.-born children or legal immigrants.

"We are disappointed with the president because he didn't promote any of his promises to Hispanics," Hernandez said. 'Full of shock and fear'

Proyecto Inmigrante ICS, a immigration counseling service with offices in Fort Worth and Wichita Falls, has citizenship programs year round to help immigrants fill out their paperwork at low cost.

In Fort Worth, a citizenship clinic that typically draws about 50 people drew about 100 on March 12, immigration counselor Andy Beltran said.

"It was a surprise by 10 a.m., we already had 100," Beltran said.

Beltran said many people told her they want to vote in this election because "we don't want the person who is talking about immigrants a lot to be president of the United States."

Beltran said they are referring to Trump.

Hernandez said immigrants are alarmed by Trump's platform.

"We are full of fear and shock of what would become," Hernandez said.

Trump has said he is in favor of legal immigration and has promised to have a big door in his wall for legal immigrants.

"People are going to come into this country legally," Trump has said.

Paola Garza, 24, of Dallas, who is voting for president for the first time this year, said immigration reform is more complex than Trump is making it out to be.

"Truth is, there needs to be a reform in our immigration process and a more comprehensive approach," she said.

Garza's family is originally from Monterrey, Mexico. She became a U.S. citizen in April 2013. Her family came to the United States when she was 5 so her father could work in the auto industry in Michigan. She supported Democrat Bernie Sanders in the Texas primary.

Trump is not an option, she said.

"I cannot side with someone who has spoken negatively about immigrants, refugees, the pope, women and minorities," she said. "I believe this is not what the United States stands for; we are a nation of immigrants and diversity."

US COAST GUARD

Bay Area Coast Guard Crew Intercepts Cocaine Smuggling Sub

By Evan Sernoffsky

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), March 28, 2016

A Bay Area Coast Guard crew busted a group of smugglers piloting a covert submarine loaded with 6 tons of cocaine through the open waters off the coast of Central America, officials said Monday.

Four suspected transnational criminal drug runners were aboard the blow-laden submersible on March 3 about

300 miles southwest of Panama when the boat was spotted cruising just below the ocean surface.

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection airplane spotted the vessel and scrambled two interceptor boats with the crew from Alameda, Lt. Donnie Brzuska said.

Once on board, the Coast Guard team found 12,800 pounds of coke with an estimated street value of over \$200 million along with a loaded gun in the cockpit, Brzuska said.

The suspected smugglers were apprehended without incident. The Coast Guard released video of the dramatic open-ocean raid, showing armed officers storming the simplistic craft.

The boat, a self-propelled semi-submersible, is one of scores of makeshift vessels that glide just below the ocean surface to smuggle drugs into the United States.

The vessels have a mostly submerged hull with a cockpit and exhaust pipe that stick out just above water, making them hard to detect because of their low profile.

The Coast Guard busted a similar boat southwest of the Mexican-Guatemalan boarder in January.

Last year the Coast Guard seized more than 319,000 pounds of cocaine from semi-submersible boats and so far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, the agency has taken more than 200,000 pounds of drugs from such boats, officials said.

Coast Guard Cutter Busts Fifth Cocaine Sub In Less Than A Year

By Meghann Myers

[Navy Times](#), March 28, 2016

Smuggling submarines are the unicorns of the drug-busting world — or at least they were until the Coast Guard took down five of them in nine months.

The national security cutter Bertholf made the latest bust, seizing more than 6 tons of cocaine from a self-propelled semi-submersible off the coast of South America on March 3. It was the cutter's second sub bust in a year.

"It's an indication of the adaptability and the unlimited resources of these organizations that are moving these drugs and have the potential to move anything," Vice Adm. Charles Ray, head of Pacific Area Command, told reporters at a news conference Monday.

Bertholf last tracked down a drug sub in August, just weeks after the cutter Stratton picked up its second unicorn of that patrol. A bust by the cutter Northland in January made four, just as Alameda, California-based Bertholf was heading out for another deployment.

By comparison, the Coast Guard nabbed just one drug sub in 2014 after two years of no busts at all, PACAREA spokesman Lt. Donnie Brzuska told Navy Times.

The increased interdictions are a product of increased drug trafficking activity, Ray said, and the Coast Guard's surge of forces to the Eastern Pacific since 2014.

Fiscal 2015 saw 191 tons of cocaine seized and more than 700 smugglers detained, he said, with 100 tons and 270 smugglers racked up so far this fiscal year.

"What we've seen in the past couple of years as we've concentrated our resources is we're putting pressure on them," Ray said.

However, while the Coast Guard estimates they are able to get intelligence on 90 percent of drugs coming through the Pacific from South America, they are only able to interdict two in 10 of these vessels, he said.

"We've increased our intelligence capabilities and we understand the organizations better than we did just a few years ago," he added, but with resources stretched thin, they have to make decisions about which pursuits will come with the biggest hauls.

Drug kingpins pay builders to fabricate narco subs in the jungles of South America, out of wood, aluminum or steel and fiber glass, which can be loaded down with bales of cocaine and a few men to operate. These subs typically skirt along the coasts of South America and Central America, steaming near the surface with little of the sub's frame peeking out of the water to maximize their chances of being discovered by radar or aircraft. The drugs are often offloaded on Mexico's southern coast and then driven into the U.S., Brzuska said.

"It's pretty amazing — they have access to the same type of off-the-shelf GPS products that if you had a boat in Alameda and you were to sail down to San Diego," Ray said.

Catching them is a concerted effort. In the most recent bust, a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol aircraft spotted the sub March 1, according to Bertholf skipper Capt. Laura Collins, calling on her ship to chase it just northwest of the Galapagos Islands.

The cutter launched two small boat teams and a helicopter March 3. Video of the bust shows the first boat team boarding the sub at gunpoint, then a second boat coming alongside while the sub's crew stood on top with their hands raised.

It's a dangerous operation from start to finish, Collins said, even if the crew surrenders. Once inside, the boarding team found a loaded gun in the cockpit, according to a Coast Guard release.

"Semi-submersibles are extremely un-seaworthy," she said. "We treat each one as if it were a sinking vessel until we can complete our own safety evaluation."

With no way to tow the sub back to shore and no good way to get local law enforcement to come out and get it, the crew decided to weigh down and sink it. The whole operation took from 10 to 12 hours, Collins said.

Northern California Coast Guard Crew Seizes More Than 6 Tons Of Cocaine Worth \$203 Million

By Ruben Vives

[Los Angeles Times](#), March 28, 2016

A US Coast Guard crew based in Northern California seized more than six tons of cocaine after intercepting a semi-submersible vessel in the Pacific Ocean, the agency announced Monday.

The March 3 bust occurred 300 miles southwest of Panama after a Customs and Border Protection aircraft spotted the drug smuggling boat and alerted the Alameda-based crew of the Coast Guard cutter Bertholf, according to Lt. Donnie Brzuska.

The crew seized more than 12,800 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$203 million and a loaded gun. Four suspected drug smugglers were arrested, Brzuska said. It took the crew numerous times to retrieve the drugs.

It was the second time the Coast Guard has intercepted a self-propelled semi-submersible or SPSS in recent months. Such vessels are able to operate while partially underwater.

In January, the crew of the Coast Guard cutter Northland intercepted a similar craft 280 miles off the coast of the Mexican-Guatemalan border.

In all, the agency has intercepted five similar vessels since June 2015, Brzuska said.

"Transnational organized crime groups continue to adjust their tactics to avoid detection indicated by a recent rise of SPSS vessels," said Vice Adm. Charles Ray, commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area. "Despite these efforts, we will continue to execute an offensive strategy that targets, attacks and disrupts these dangerous criminal networks."

A New Titanic? US And Canada Prepare For Worst As Luxury Arctic Cruise Sets Sail

By Suzanne Goldenberg

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#), March 28, 2016

On 13 April, coast guard officials from the US and Canada will train for a cruise ship catastrophe: a mass rescue from a luxury liner on its maiden voyage through the remote and deathly cold waters between the Northwest Passage and the Bering Strait. The prospect of just such a disaster occurring amid the uncharted waters and capricious weather of the Arctic is becoming all too real. The loss of Arctic sea ice cover, due to climate change, has spurred a sharp rise in shipping traffic – as well as coast guard rescue missions – and increased the risks of oil spills, shipping accidents, and pollution, much to the apprehension of native communities who make their living on the ice. It's into these turbulent waters that the luxury cruise ship *Crystal Serenity* will set sail next August, departing from Seward, Alaska, and transiting

the Bering Strait and Northwest Passage, before docking in New York City 32 days later. The scale of the Crystal – 1,700 passengers and crew – and the potential for higher-volume traffic in the Arctic has commanded the attention of the coast guard, government officials and local communities, all trying to navigate an Arctic without year-round ice. “If something were to go wrong it would be very, very bad,” said Richard Beneville, the mayor of the coastal town of Nome, which the Crystal is due to visit. “Most cruise ships that get here have passenger manifests of 100, maybe 150. This is a very different ship.” A century after explorer Roald Amundsen transited the sea route connecting the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, officials and local communities are struggling to keep pace with the changes in the Arctic set in motion by the disappearing sea ice. Scientists expect the Arctic will be almost entirely ice free in the summer within 25 years – exposing profitable new year-round shipping routes. “The United States should be getting prepared by building infrastructure in the north,” Robert Papp, a former coast guard admiral and the State Department’s special envoy to the Arctic, said.

“Yes, we are concerned about this cruise ship going through but we have been concerned for a number of years because during the summer time Shell has been going up there to drill, other companies have been exploring, there has been an increase even in recreational sailors or adventure sailors going up there.” The Crystal is by far the biggest and most luxuriously appointed vessel to sail through the Northwest Passage since the crossing became accessible to ships without an icebreaker in 2007. Just 17 ships crossed through the passage last year, according to the US coast guard.

Prices for the journey aboard the 14-deck luxury liner start at nearly \$22,000 rising to \$120,000 for a deluxe stateroom – and this year’s cruise is sold out, according to the company. The 13 April table-top planning exercise, involving US and Canadian coast guard and government officials, will walk Crystal operators and rescue officials through the nightmarish scenario of rescuing hundreds of passengers up to 1,000 miles from the nearest coast guard base, officials said.

Communications in the Arctic are extremely challenging – cellphone reception is patchy, and there are no roads. Most of the towns along the Crystal’s route are tiny. Even Nome, which has a sizable population, has just 18 hospital beds. “We all have to be very proactive in trying to game out what we do in an emergency situation,” Lt Commander Jason Boyle, the coast guard’s prevention officer for the Alaska region, said in a telephone interview.

The Crystal will sail with an icebreaking escort vessel carrying two helicopters along its entire route, Paul Garcia, a company spokesman, wrote in an email. Ice pilots, polar bear researchers, and veterans of other Arctic expeditions will be

aboard to ensure passengers’ safety and to protect the local wildlife, environment and customs, the company said.

For the coastal town of Nome, and the other ports of call on the Crystal’s route, the cruise symbolises the economic possibilities of an ice-free Arctic in the summer. Nome, which saw just 35 dockings in the 1990s, had more than 730 last year. “I think tourism is good for Nome,” Beneville, the town’s indefatigable mayor, said. “In tourism there is a saying: ‘if people can get there, they will go’, and that is becoming possible.” He went on: “There is a lot at stake here. We want Nome to be a strategic point in the north.” But even before the Crystal Serenity began planning its voyage, the coast guard and local communities were raising concerns that the Arctic was not ready for the sharp rise in traffic through the Bering Strait.

The coast guard recorded 540 crossings through the narrow passage between the US and Russia last year – more than double the number in 2008. The vessels included Korean cargo ships, Russian tankers, supply barges, oil industry vessels and smaller cruise ships – and adventurers.

Commander Mark Wilcox, the Arctic planner for the US coast guard, falls back on the phrase “tyranny of distance” to describe the epic challenges of assuring safe passage through the northern waterways for an increasing number of independent tourists. On 4 March, two British adventurers who set out to ski across the Bering Strait had to be flown to safety from thin ice – an operation that required two coast guard helicopters, a C-130 military transport plane, and 24 highly trained personnel deployed from a base 700 miles away, according to the coast guard.

Two years ago, a scientific research ship in the Chukchi Sea was diverted to rescue adventurers. In 2010, a smaller cruise ship went aground in the Canadian Arctic, forcing the evacuation of some 300 passengers. “We are starting to see more of the adventure tourists that have a lot more interest in the Arctic,” Wilcox said. “As we see more human activity it increases our risk for potential incidents.” In addition to emergencies, local people said they were afraid of oil spills, pollution and waste, because of the rise in shipping traffic. In 2012, hunters from St Lawrence Island reported finding heavily oiled seals and seabirds in the Bering Strait. A year earlier, government wildlife biologists began recording a mysterious illness killing off seals, as well as avian cholera. Local communities grew concerned about the use of heavy bunker fuels, and dumping of grey water from passing vessels. The loss of ice opening up the Arctic to year-round traffic was also upending the way of life for native Alaskan communities who have used the ice as a platform for hunting and fishing, or as transport routes. The winter ice could no longer be trusted, according to local people. “There are five to seven people in the last five years that I know of off the top of my head who have gone through the ice on snow machines or four-wheelers while travelling,” said Anahma Shannon,

who works with Kawerak, a service organisation for native Alaskans in the Bering coastal region. In typical winters, there is about a mile of solid ice from shore, enabling walrus hunters to approach their prey on land. Hunting from small boats is much riskier. But in this year's record high temperatures, the ice is thin and drifting away from the shore. "This year may be the first year in recent history that we haven't had the outside ice," Shannon said. The season's thin and slushy ice was also hurting fisheries. In past winters, it would be common to see people fishing for king crab on the ice off Nome, setting out traps through holes drilled into the ice. Commercial fishermen might strike out farther, riding their snowmobiles six or seven miles across the ice to Sled Island. But the thinner ice was squeezing fishermen into smaller areas and shallower waters, said Adem Boeckmann, a commercial fisherman. "The lack of ice is making it tougher to find the crab and harvest them," he said. He estimated the catch was only a third or a half of last year's. "We are not making money we are just making ends meet." The native Alaskan communities recognise that cruise ships and tourist dollars could bring big money to places like Nome. But they were already experiencing loss of income and a way of life because of the retreat of the sea ice. The prospect of a flood of visitors to the region was only adding to those fears of losing their livelihoods and their culture, said Austin Ahmasuk, who runs Kawerak's marine programme. "We can draw these very clear parallels from the past for the possibility of the destruction of our culture," he said. "Let's just say we suspect that maybe not the most holistic way of approaching development will occur."

SECRET SERVICE

More Than 42,000 Sign Petition To Allow Guns At GOP Convention

By Niraj Chokshi

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Online petition calls on candidates, the National Rifle Association, the Republican National Committee and chairman Reince Priebus, convention host site Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, and Ohio Gov. John Kasich to do what they can to allow conventi

An online petition to allow the open carry of firearms at this summer's Republican National Convention is rapidly gaining signatures and attention, applying pressure to pro-gun rights Republican officials and presidential contenders to walk the walk when it comes to guns.

Launched anonymously a week ago, the petition has collected more than 42,000 signatures as of Monday morning, putting it well on its way to a current goal of 50,000. On Sunday, leading Republican presidential contender

Donald Trump was asked about it, though he refused to weigh in until he had a chance to read "the fine print."

"I have to see what it says," he told ABC's Jonathan Karl, who asked him about the petition on the Sunday morning political show "This Week." "I'm a very, very strong person for 2nd Amendment. I think very few people are stronger. And I have to see the petition. But I'm not going to comment to you when I haven't seen it."

That non-answer highlights the difficulties this petition poses for the GOP. The petition calls on each Republican presidential contender, the National Rifle Association, the Republican National Committee and chairman Reince Priebus, convention host site Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland, and Ohio Gov. John Kasich to do what they can to allow convention attendees to openly carry firearms. The arena currently bans firearms and other weapons "in accordance with the Ohio's 'concealed carry' law," it says on its website.

"Without the right to protect themselves, those at the Quicken Loans Arena will be sitting ducks, utterly helpless against evil-doers, criminals or others who wish to threaten the American way of life," the petition's author argues. Some have speculated that such dramatic language makes it sound a lot the whole thing is a ruse intended to put Republicans in a tough political spot.

Regardless, it does indeed put GOP officials and presidential candidates in the awkward position of tolerating the types of policies that they often criticize. How can Republicans support conceal-and-carry but not push for it to be allowed at their own convention?

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, R, for example, suggested in December that gun-free zones attract murderers.

"If you're a lunatic, ain't nothing better then having a bunch of targets you know that are going to be unarmed," he said.

A month later, Trump echoed that sentiment, saying he would end "gun-free zones" at schools and on military bases.

"You know what a gun-free zone is to sickos? That's bait!" he said in early January.

Petition organizers first identified themselves as "Americans for Responsible Open Carry" – a group about which little is known, the Akron Beacon Journal reported last week. Now, the only identifier is the author's pseudonym: The Hyperationalist.

The week-old petition exceeded an earlier goal of 5,000 signatures by Thursday night, according to the Journal. It passed the 25,000-signature mark as of two days ago and surpassed 40,000 signatures late Sunday.

Firearms were similarly banned for attendees of the 2012 Republican convention in Tampa, Florida. Requests for comment from the Republican National Committee and arena officials were not immediately returned.

Secret Service Says 'No' To Guns At Republican Convention

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Secret Service Shoots Down Efforts To Make RNC Convention Firearm Friendly

By Andrew Blake

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

Attendees won't be allowed to bring guns to the 2016 Republican National Convention, the U.S. Secret Service said Monday, despite an online petition that has garnered more than 40,000 signatures from individuals who want to exercise their right to bear arms when the GOP picks its presidential nominee in Cleveland this July.

The agency cited Title 18 of U.S. Code Section 2056s and 1752 when asked by an ABC News affiliate in Cleveland on Monday if attendees will be allowed to bring guns to Quicken Loans Arena when the Republican Party holds its convention there this summer.

Those statutes "provides the Secret Service authority to preclude firearms from entering sites visited by our protectees, including those located in open-carry states," the agency said.

"Only authorized law enforcement personnel working in conjunction with the Secret Service for a particular event may carry a firearm inside of the protected site," the agency told Cleveland's newsnet5.

"The Secret Service works closely with our local law enforcement partners in each state to ensure a safe environment for our protectees and the public. Individuals determined to be carrying firearms will not be allowed past a predetermined outer perimeter checkpoint, regardless of whether they possess a ticket to the event."

The agency's response this week comes after an online petition demanding attendees be able to bring guns garnered more than 40,000 signatures in a matter of days.

According to the authors of the petition, Quicken Loans Arena's no-guns-allowed policy "is a direct affront to the Second Amendment and puts all attendees at risk."

"Cleveland, Ohio is consistently ranked as one of the top ten most dangerous cities in America. By forcing attendees to leave their firearms at home, the RNC and Quicken Loans Arena are putting tens of thousands of people at risk both inside and outside of the convention site," reads a portion of their petition.

"This doesn't even begin to factor in the possibility of an ISIS terrorist attack on the arena during the convention. Without the right to protect themselves, those at the Quicken Loans Arena will be sitting ducks, utterly helpless against evil-

doers, criminals or others who wish to threaten the American way of life."

The petition, hosted on Change.org, is attributed to an otherwise unknown entity identified only as "The Hypernationalist." Efforts to reach them by email on Monday were not immediately successful.

Despite the petition's success, however, some have questioned The Hypernationalist's intentions, especially given the lack of information about the person or persons involved, as well as an associated Twitter account that's rife with tweets critical of Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

"It's unclear how many people were fooled into supporting this ruse and how many signed the petition because they enjoyed the humorous intent. It's evident, though, that some of the more rightward-inclined took it for real," wrote Chris Matyszczyk, a reporter for CNet.

Woman Arrested For Moving Barrier At White House Easter Egg Roll

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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Secret Service Closed White House Fence Lines During Capitol Shooting

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Trump Tombstone Removed From Central Park

By Mark Hensch

[The Hill](#), March 28, 2016

New York City officials have removed a tombstone bearing Donald Trump's name from Central Park.

The mysterious artifact was discovered in the park's Sheeps Meadow area on Sunday and was subsequently removed overnight, according to multiple reports.

The tombstone featured the GOP presidential front-runner's name inscribed in stone beneath a cross. The faux-memorial also listed Trump's birth year of 1946, but it did not specify a year of death for the outspoken billionaire.

"Make America Hate Again," the monument's epitaph read, a twist on Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

A photo posted by Beth Marshel (@againwithbeth) on Mar 27, 2016 at 5:06am PDT

The Secret Service on Monday refused to comment on whether the agency considers the ominous marker a death threat.

"We're not going to comment on protective procedures or protective knowledge like that," said Martin Mulholland, special agent in charge of the Secret Service's office of public affairs, to ABC News.

A spokesperson for Central Park confirmed that the tombstone is no longer on its grounds.

Trump, who's been atop multiple polls since launching his White House bid last summer, received Secret Service protection last November. The real estate tycoon's code name is reportedly "mogul."

The Secret Service arrested a Georgia teenager last Friday for allegedly threatening Trump on social media. The 15-year-old boy's name has not been released, and police have not spoken on the nature of his remarks.

The agency also began investigating Anonymous earlier this month over whether some of its members had targeted Trump. Members of the activist hacking collective reportedly posted some of Trump's personal information online, including his cell phone and Social Security numbers.

NATIONAL PROTECTION AND PROGRAMS

CATS App Plugs Into Fight Against Terrorism

[Charlotte \(NC\) Observer](#), March 28, 2016

A new mobile app allows cellphone users to report suspicious behavior or other concerns directly to the Charlotte Area Transit System.

The launch of the "See Something, Say Something" app is a move by CATS to plug into the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's national campaign that goes by the same name. The department's campaign began in 2010.

Homeland Security's goal through See Something, Say Something is to prevent terrorism and related crimes.

With the mobile app by Elerts Corp., bus and transit riders in Charlotte can submit reports of suspicious or criminal activity to transit police.

The app can be used to send photos, video, text and GPS maps pinpointing the location of a potential problem, according to an announcement from CATS.

Members of the community are asked to report unattended packages, odd or unusual behavior, disorderly conduct, smoke, or unfamiliar odors or substances.

Those reports are most helpful when they include details about who was involved, what was seen, as well as when and where a suspicious incident occurred.

"Through the use of this mobile app, riders can have a bigger hand in helping our public transit system operate as safely as possible," said CATS CEO John Lewis.

DHS's Ongoing Challenge: Securing Soft Targets

[Federal Times](#), March 28, 2016

In response to the recent terrorist attacks in Brussels, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said there is "no credible or specific intelligence regarding a similar plot that has been uncovered" in the U.S.

Regardless, the Brussels attacks have certainly brought a new focus by DHS, the intelligence community and law enforcement to mitigate future threats to soft targets.

Security is based on increased vigilance and layering elements of intelligence, surveillance technologies and trained personnel to guard vulnerabilities. The real challenge has always been deciding how much security to allocate to what, where and when.

Democratic societies by their nature are open and accessible, which poses a difficult challenge to secure all soft targets in public places such as airports, trains, buses, malls, schools, stadiums and hospitals. Or, for that matter, to secure any place where many people like to socially or commercially gather. The emergence of new capabilities could enable DHS to address these vulnerability issues, and there are protocols and systems that can make a difference.

DHS is exploring futuristic checkpoints that integrate the intelligent fusion of sensor components. The set-up could consist of behavioral sensors that try to measure hostile intent with micro facial and auditory sensors. Other physiological sensors could monitor respiratory, cardio, thermal and iris reactions of passengers who may mean harm.

These checkpoints could be combined with high-definition thermal cameras equipped with facial recognition software that feeds into real-time databases of suspected terrorists. The checkpoints could also use millimeter wave or 3-D imaging with stand-off abilities to detect bombs at a distance.

Chem-bio sensors, geo-fencing, situational awareness software, predictive modeling and newer interoperable communications technologies are additional instruments that can be used to deliver a better readiness and response for interdiction of threats. Technologies are not a panacea, but they do provide additional tools for protectors and first responders.

Israel, a leading country in developing innovative security, already employs many of these types of technologies and layered perimeter strategies to protect its airports and other critical infrastructure. But the U.S., being a larger country, does not have the resources to cover so many soft targets. For DHS and law enforcement, armed security, barriers, perimeter fences, cameras, acoustic sensors, bomb-sniffing dogs, and joint counter-terrorism training exercises are still the most feasible means of protecting citizens.

Dogs, in fact, have a proven success record for locating bomb materials that many say out-performs machines. But there is a shortage of both trained dogs and trainers, and more investment needs to be made on federal, state and local levels to expand K-9 patrols. A recent federal audit showed that the Transportation Security Administration is short on detection teams because of a lack of trained dogs.

The Brussels attacks, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the Boston bombing demonstrated the gaps in information sharing and interoperable communications between different jurisdictions of first responders and law enforcement. Joint counter-terrorism training exercises and new protocols facilitated by DHS and other parts of government have shrunk many of these gaps, but more progress needs to be made.

While no plots have been recently uncovered directed at our soft targets, it does not mean that such plots do not exist. Increased vigilance, shared intelligence, continued specialized training, and more investments in security technologies, canine detection capabilities, and dedicated security personnel to patrol common spaces will all serve to make us safer.

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

Egyptair Passenger Plane Hijacked, Forced To Cyprus

[Reuters](#), March 29, 2016

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

Officials Say Egyptian Plane Hijacked, Lands In Cyprus

By Menelaos Hadjicostis And Hamza Hendawi

[Associated Press](#), March 29, 2016

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) – An EgyptAir plane was hijacked on Tuesday while flying from the Egyptian Mediterranean coastal city of Alexandria to the capital, Cairo, and later landed in Cyprus where some of the women and children were allowed to get off the aircraft, according to Egyptian and Cypriot officials.

The Airbus flight number MS181 had 81 passengers on board and was flying on a regular route when the hijacking took place, the Egyptians said. It was not immediately clear if one or more hijackers were involved.

Details were sketchy and the motives and identities of the hijacker or hijackers were also not known.

Shortly after, the plane landed at the airport in the Cypriot coastal city of Larnaca, Cypriot officials said, adding that there were suspicions of a bomb on board.

The official later said the hijackers later allowed an unspecified number of women and children to go free and some were disembarking.

A second Cypriot official said there “seems like there’s more than one hijacker.” He said there have been no demands made so far other than that police vehicles move away from the aircraft.

All the officials in Egypt and Cyprus spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The hijacking, however, will most likely bring to the fore again the question of security at Egyptian airports, five months after a Russian aircraft crashed over Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula minutes after it took off from Egypt’s Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. All 224 people on board were killed in the crash. Russia later said an explosive device brought down the aircraft and the extremist Islamic State group said it downed the plane.

Hendawi reported from Cairo.

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EgyptAir Hijack: Jet Lands At Larnaca Airport

[BBC News \(UK\)](#), March 29, 2016

An EgyptAir airliner has been hijacked and forced to divert to Larnaca airport on the south coast of Cyprus.

Flight MS181, an Airbus A320 carrying 81 passengers from Alexandria to Cairo, was taken over after a passenger said he was wearing an explosives belt.

EgyptAir said negotiations had resulted in the release of all those on board apart from the crew and four passengers.

Video from the scene shows people leaving the plane and boarding a bus.

Larnaca airport has been closed and scheduled flights diverted elsewhere.

“The pilot said that a passenger told him he had an explosives vest and forced the plane to land in Larnaca,” the Egyptian civil aviation ministry said in a statement.

“The information we have so far is that it is one hijacker. The person has yet to make any demands,” Cypriot foreign ministry Alexandros Zenon told French television.

Long Before Brussels, ISIS Sent Terror Operatives To Europe

By Rukmini Callimachi

[New York Times](#), March 29, 2016

The day he left Syria with instructions to carry out a terrorist attack in France, Reda Hame, a 29-year-old computer technician from Paris, had been a member of the Islamic State for just over a week.

His French passport and his background in information technology made him an ideal recruit for a rapidly expanding group within ISIS that was dedicated to terrorizing Europe. Over just a few days, he was rushed to a park, shown how to fire an assault rifle, handed a grenade and told to hurl it at a human silhouette. His accelerated course included how to use an encryption program called TrueCrypt, the first step in a process intended to mask communications with his ISIS handler back in Syria.

The handler, code-named Dad, drove Mr. Hame to the Turkish border and sent him off with advice to pick an easy target, shoot as many civilians as possible and hold hostages until the security forces made a martyr of him.

"Be brave," Dad said, embracing him.

Mr. Hame was sent out by a body inside the Islamic State that was obsessed with striking Europe for at least two years before the deadly assaults in Paris last November and in Brussels this month. In that time, the group dispatched a string of operatives trained in Syria, aiming to carry out small attacks meant to test and stretch Europe's security apparatus even as the most deadly assaults were in the works, according to court proceedings, interrogation transcripts and records of European wiretaps obtained by The New York Times.

Officials now say the signs of this focused terrorist machine were readable in Europe as far back as early 2014. Yet local authorities repeatedly discounted each successive plot, describing them as isolated or random acts, the connection to the Islamic State either overlooked or played down.

"This didn't all of a sudden pop up in the last six months," said Michael T. Flynn, a retired Army lieutenant general who ran the Defense Intelligence Agency from 2012 to 2014. "They have been contemplating external attacks ever since the group moved into Syria in 2012."

Mr. Hame was arrested in Paris last August, before he could strike, one of at least 21 trained operatives who succeeded in slipping back into Europe. Their interrogation records offer a window into the origins and evolution of an Islamic State branch responsible for killing hundreds of people in Paris, Brussels and beyond.

European officials now know that Dad, Mr. Hame's handler, was none other than Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the Belgian operative who selected and trained fighters for plots in Europe and who returned himself to oversee the Paris attack, the deadliest terrorist strike on European soil in over a decade.

The people in Mr. Abaaoud's external operations branch were also behind the Brussels attacks, as well as a foiled attack in a suburb of Paris last week, and others are urgently being sought, Belgian and French officials say.

"It's a factory over there," Mr. Hame warned his interlocutors from France's intelligence service after his

arrest. "They are doing everything possible to strike France, or else Europe."

For much of 2012 and 2013, the jihadist group that eventually became the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, was putting down roots in Syria. Even as the group began aggressively recruiting foreigners, especially Europeans, policy makers in the United States and Europe continued to see it as a lower-profile branch of Al Qaeda that was mostly interested in gaining and governing territory.

One of the first clues that the Islamic State was getting into the business of international terrorism came at 12:10 p.m. on Jan. 3, 2014, when the Greek police pulled over a taxi in the town of Orestiada, less than four miles from the Turkish border. Inside was a 23-year-old French citizen named Ibrahim Boudina, who was returning from Syria. In his luggage, the officers found 1,500 euros, or almost \$1,700, and a French document titled "How to Make Artisanal Bombs in the Name of Allah."

But there was no warrant for his arrest in Europe, so the Greeks let him go, according to court records detailing the French investigation.

Mr. Boudina was already on France's watch list, part of a cell of 22 men radicalized at a mosque in the resort city of Cannes. When French officials were notified about the Greek traffic stop, they were already wiretapping his friends and relatives. Several weeks later, Mr. Boudina's mother received a call from a number in Syria. Before hanging up, the unknown caller informed her that her son had been "sent on a mission," according to a partial transcript of the call.

The police set up a perimeter around the family's apartment near Cannes, arresting Mr. Boudina on Feb. 11, 2014.

In a utility closet in the same building, they found three Red Bull soda cans filled with 600 grams of TATP, the temperamental peroxide-based explosive that would later be used to deadly effect in Paris and Brussels.

It was not until nearly two years later, on Page 278 of a 359-page sealed court filing, that investigators revealed an important detail: Mr. Boudina's Facebook chats placed him in Syria in late 2013, at the scene of a major battle fought by a group calling itself the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

According to a brief by France's domestic intelligence agency, he was the first European citizen known to have traveled to Syria, joined the Islamic State and returned with the aim of committing terrorism. Yet his ties to the group were buried in French paperwork and went unconnected to later cases.

Including Mr. Boudina, at least 21 fighters trained by the Islamic State in Syria have been dispatched back to Europe with the intention of causing mass murder, according to a Times count based on records from France's domestic intelligence agency. The fighters arrived in a steady trickle,

returning alone or in pairs at the rate of one every two to three months throughout 2014 and the first part of 2015.

Like the killers in Paris and Brussels, all of these earlier operatives were French speakers — mostly French and Belgian citizens, alongside a handful of immigrants from former French colonies, including Morocco.

They were arrested in Italy, Spain, Belgium, France, Greece, Turkey and Lebanon with plans to attack Jewish businesses, police stations and a carnival parade. They tried to open fire on packed train cars and on church congregations. In their possession were box cutters and automatic weapons, walkie-talkies and disposable cellphones, as well as the chemicals to make TATP.

Most of them failed. And in each instance, officials failed to catch — or at least to flag to colleagues — the men's ties to the nascent Islamic State.

In one of the highest-profile instances, Mehdi Nemmouche returned from Syria via Frankfurt and made his way by car to Brussels, where on May 24, 2014, he opened fire inside the Jewish Museum of Belgium, killing four people. Even when the police found a video in his possession, in which he claimed responsibility for the attack next to a flag bearing the words "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria," Belgium's deputy prosecutor, Ine Van Wymersch, dismissed any connection.

"He probably acted alone," she told reporters at the time.

Though the degree to which the operatives were being directed by the Islamic State might have been unclear at first, a name began to appear in each successive investigation: Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a Belgian citizen who counterterrorism officials say rose through the ranks to become a lieutenant of the Islamic State's external operations efforts.

In the months before the Jewish museum attack, Mr. Nemmouche's phone records reveal that he made a 24-minute call to Mr. Abaaoud, according to a 55-page report by the French National Police's antiterror unit in the aftermath of the Paris attacks.

"All of the signals were there," said Michael S. Smith II, a counterterrorism analyst whose firm, Kronos Advisory, began briefing the United States government in 2013 on ISIS' aspirations to strike Europe. "For anyone paying attention, these signals became deafening by mid-2014."

It was in the summer of 2014 that the link to the terrorist organization's hierarchy became explicit.

On June 22 of that year, a 24-year-old French citizen named Faiz Bouchrane, who had trained in Syria, was smuggled into neighboring Lebanon. He was planning to blow himself up at a Shiite target, and during interrogation, he let slip the name of the man who had ordered him to carry out the operation: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.

Mr. Adnani is the spokesman for ISIS and is considered one of its most senior members. Just a few days after Mr.

Bouchrane checked into a budget hotel in Beirut, Mr. Adnani released an audio recording announcing the establishment of the caliphate.

"Adnani reportedly leads the external operations planning of the Islamic State," said Matthew G. Olsen, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center.

Intelligence officials in the United States and Europe have confirmed the broad outlines of the external operations unit: It is a distinct body inside ISIS, with its command-and-control structure answering to Mr. Adnani, who reports to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State.

The unit identifies recruits, provides training, hands out cash and arranges for the delivery of weapons once fighters are in position. Although the unit's main focus has been Europe, external attacks directed by ISIS or those acting in its name have been even more deadly beyond Europe's shores. At least 650 people have been killed in the group's attacks on sites popular with Westerners, including in Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia, according to a Times analysis.

Within the hierarchy, Mr. Abaaoud was specifically tasked with mounting attacks in Europe, according to the French police report and intelligence brief.

"Abaaoud, known as Abou Omar, was the principal commander of future attacks in Europe," Nicolas Moreau, a French jihadist who was arrested last year, told his French interrogators, according to the report by France's antiterror police. "He was in charge of vetting the applications of future candidates."

In an audio recording released on Sept. 22, 2014, Mr. Adnani, the ISIS spokesman and chief of the external operations wing, addressed the West.

"We will strike you in your homeland," he promised, calling on Muslims everywhere to kill Europeans, "especially the spiteful and filthy French." And he urged them to do it in any manner they could: "Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car," he said, according to a translation provided by the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors extremist propaganda.

In the months that followed, a man decapitated his employer near the French city of Lyon, sending a snapshot of the severed head to the Islamic State. Another man stormed a police station in Paris, carrying a butcher's knife and a photocopy of the Islamic State's flag.

These are among around two dozen plots linked to the Islamic State that were documented in the year after Mr. Adnani's speech. In most, there were no direct operational ties back to Syria, but there were clear signs that the attacker had consumed the terrorist group's propaganda online.

The low potency of these attacks, with single-digit death tolls, combined with the fact that many of the perpetrators had a history of mental illness, prompted analysts and officials to

conclude that the Islamic State remained a distant second to Al Qaeda in its ability to carry out attacks on Western soil.

Experts now believe that the Islamic State was actually adopting a strategy first put forward by an earlier operations leader for Al Qaeda, who argued that the group would become obsolete if it worked only on 9/11-size plots that took months or years to mount. He instead called for Al Qaeda to also carry out a pattern of small- and medium-size plots, and to use propaganda to inspire self-directed attacks by supporters overseas.

In a recent issue of its online magazine in French, *Dar al-Islam*, the Islamic State explained the approach. "The Islamic State has deployed its resources to generate three types of terrorist attacks," the article states, specifying that they include large-scale plots coordinated by the group's leaders, down to "isolated actions of self-radicalized people, who have absolutely no direct contact with ISIS, and yet who will consciously act in its name."

The same article says the group's method for carrying out jihad in Europe involves an adaptation of *Auftragstaktik*, a combat doctrine within the German Army in the 19th century. Those tactical guidelines call for commanders to give subordinates a goal and a time frame in which to accomplish it, but otherwise to give them the freedom to execute it.

The Islamic State explains in the article that it adopted the system to give recruits "complete tactical autonomy," with few fingerprints that could be tracked back to the group, and "no micromanaging."

By early 2015, the Islamic State's external operations branch had personnel dedicated to spending their days in Internet cafes in Syria pumping out propaganda, aimed both at inciting lone-wolf attacks and at luring new recruits.

Among the people who took the bait was Reda Hame, the young technology professional from Paris, who later told investigators that he had joined in hope of fighting to bring down President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. Instead, upon arriving in Syria in June 2015, he walked directly into the Islamic State's pipeline for foreign attacks.

During his intake interview in Raqqa, Syria, in June 2015, the Islamic State administrator taking notes on a computer across from him expressed satisfaction when he learned that Mr. Hame was from Paris and had a background in technology, according to his lengthy account to France's domestic intelligence agency, the *Direction Générale de la Sécurité Intérieure*, or D.G.S.I. The details were recorded in more than 16 hours of questioning, according to a transcript obtained by *The Times* and first reported on by the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

Days later, a man wearing a mask called Mr. Hame outside, told him to lie down in the bed of a pickup truck and covered him with a tarp. He was warned to keep his eyes lowered and not to look out.

They drove at high speed, and when the truck stopped, a fighter speaking Arabic directed him to a sport utility vehicle idling nearby, its tinted windows obscuring its occupants. When Mr. Hame opened the door to the back seat, the driver said, "Monte devant," French for "Get in the front."

The driver, Mr. Hame said, was Mr. Abaaoud, by then considered the most wanted terrorist in Europe. As they drove through the Syrian countryside, the future architect of the Paris attacks explained to Mr. Hame that if he faced the enemies of Islam alone, he would receive double the reward in heaven.

"He asked me if I was interested in going abroad," Mr. Hame told investigators. "He said to imagine a rock concert in a European country — if you were given a weapon, would you be ready to open fire on the crowd?"

When Mr. Hame reiterated that he wanted to fight the Assad government instead, Mr. Abaaoud became terse. "He said he would show me those wounded in the war and buildings that had been destroyed, so that I would realize how lucky I was to be sent back to France rather than stay to fight here," Mr. Hame recounted.

Videos released by the Islamic State after the Paris attacks in November included footage of eight of the 10 attackers while they were still in territory the terrorist group controlled in Iraq and Syria. They announced that they were acting on the orders of Mr. Baghdadi, the caliph of the Islamic State, and then proceeded to shoot or behead a captive, most of them in grotesquely choreographed scenes shot against a desert backdrop, according to the footage archived by the SITE Intelligence Group.

Officials have deduced that the footage was filmed between February and September 2015, suggesting the Paris attacks were being planned months before they took place. It is now known that at the same time Mr. Abaaoud was laying the groundwork for the devastating plot, he was recruiting, cajoling and training Mr. Hame and others for smaller, quick-hit attacks.

The night they met, Mr. Abaaoud dropped off Mr. Hame at a house in Raqqa with a white gate, according to the transcript. He said he would come for Mr. Hame the next morning, and warned him that if he did not agree to the mission, his passport, which was about to expire, would be given to another recruit who would go to Europe in his place.

When Mr. Abaaoud returned the next day, his face was covered with a brown scarf with slits for his eyes. He wore a holstered handgun. "He told me that he was now going to explain the mission to me," Mr. Hame said after his arrest, describing how the discussion occurred in the senior operative's speeding vehicle. "He told me I didn't have a lot of time; he said he was just waiting for the confirmation of his emir. I told him that I would go."

Mr. Hame said his training began about a 30-minute drive from Raqqa, in a villa that acted as Mr. Abaaoud's

classroom. There, the senior operative demonstrated how to load a Kalashnikov rifle. When Mr. Hame tried, he jammed his thumb in the metal, hurting himself. Mr. Abaaoud made him repeat the exercise again and again.

The next day, Mr. Abaaoud drove Mr. Hame to a park covered in dry grass for target practice. Throughout the lesson, Mr. Abaaoud repeatedly lost his temper, annoyed by his recruit's lack of skill.

"He yelled at me because when I was shooting in volleys, it went into the air," Mr. Hame recounted. "He made me practice a lot, to the point that the grass caught fire."

The instructor appeared even more on edge during the third and final day of Mr. Hame's military training, when he drew a silhouette on the wall of an abandoned building and demonstrated how to throw a grenade. Inexperienced and struggling in the suffocating heat, Mr. Hame did not throw it far enough and was cut by shrapnel. Only when Mr. Abaaoud saw him bleeding did he relent, driving his student to a nearby clinic to be bandaged.

At night, Mr. Hame was dropped off at an apartment in Raqqa that appeared to be a dormitory for members of the external operations branch. One room served as an arsenal, with stacks of suicide belts, jugs of explosives, body armor and combat boots. The other recruits were also French speakers, including a man who said he had been training for eight months. He and Mr. Hame were told to team up by Mr. Abaaoud, who decided to send them back to Europe the same day.

They were among the many pawns that Mr. Abaaoud was positioning across the Continent.

If Mr. Hame was not handy with weapons, he had other qualities that were attractive to the Islamic State: He had a French passport and had worked as a computer technician for Astrium, a subsidiary of the French aeronautics giant Airbus. It was at least the second time that Mr. Abaaoud had chosen a fighter with information technology credentials: Sid Ahmed Ghlam, who was dispatched last April to attack churches in France, was in the second year of a five-year computer science program, according to news reports.

The final phase of Mr. Hame's training took place at an Internet cafe in Raqqa, where an Islamic State computer specialist handed him a USB key. It contained CCleaner, a program used to erase a user's online history on a given computer, as well as TrueCrypt, an encryption program that was widely available at the time and that experts say has not yet been cracked.

The external operations unit was on a drive to improve its operational security after months of embarrassing failures.

More than a year and a half earlier, the would-be Cannes bomber, Ibrahim Boudina, had tried to erase the previous three days of his search history, according to details in his court record, but the police were still able to recover it. They found that Mr. Boudina had been researching how to

connect to the Internet via a secure tunnel and how to change his I.P. address.

Though he may have been aware of the risk of discovery, perhaps he was not worried enough.

Mr. Boudina had been sloppy enough to keep using his Facebook account, and his voluminous chat history allowed French officials to determine his allegiance to the Islamic State. Wiretaps of his friends and relatives, later detailed in French court records obtained by The Times and confirmed by security officials, further outlined his plot, which officials believe was going to target the annual carnival on the French Riviera.

Mr. Hame, in contrast, was given strict instructions on how to communicate. After he used TrueCrypt, he was to upload the encrypted message folder onto a Turkish commercial data storage site, from where it would be downloaded by his handler in Syria. He was told not to send it by email, most likely to avoid generating the metadata that records details like the point of origin and destination, even if the content of the missive is illegible. Mr. Hame described the website as "basically a dead inbox."

The ISIS technician told Mr. Hame one more thing: As soon as he made it back to Europe, he needed to buy a second USB key, and transfer the encryption program to it. USB keys are encoded with serial numbers, so the process was not unlike a robber switching getaway cars.

"He told me to copy what was on the key and then throw it away," Mr. Hame explained. "That's what I did when I reached Prague."

Mr. Abaaoud was also fixated on cellphone security. He jotted down the number of a Turkish phone that he said would be left in a building in Syria, but close enough to the border to catch the Turkish cell network, according to Mr. Hame's account. Mr. Abaaoud apparently figured investigators would be more likely to track calls from Europe to Syrian phone numbers, and might overlook calls to a Turkish one.

Next to the number, Mr. Abaaoud scribbled "Dad."

Mr. Hame was instructed to make his way back to Paris, employing an itinerary that mimicked the journey of a backpacker on a summer holiday: He was to travel to Istanbul and spend a few days wandering the streets of the tourist district around Taksim Square.

Then he was to fly to Prague and buy a Czech SIM card. He would again check into a hotel, pretend to be a tourist and leave quick missed calls on Mr. Abaaoud's Turkish phone number. The record of the call would be Mr. Abaaoud's notification of his trainee's progress. Mr. Hame was expected to repeat the procedure for each leg of his journey, including in Amsterdam and then Brussels, before returning by train to Paris.

Once Islamic State leaders knew that Mr. Hame had made it home, they would use the encryption and the Turkish drop box to coordinate further instructions, he said.

The mission began on the morning of June 12, when Mr. Abaaoud drove Mr. Hame and a second recruit to the Turkish border. Both had USB keys with TrueCrypt, and each was handed €2,000, in €500 bills, Mr. Hame said. Both had the same general agenda — to hit a soft target in Europe — but they were instructed to take separate paths, with Mr. Hame returning to France while the second recruit was headed to Spain.

But Mr. Hame's comrade was picked up after he flew to Spain, and under interrogation, he divulged Mr. Hame's plan as well. After being notified, the French police tracked Mr. Hame to his mother's apartment in Paris. Behind a couch, they found his USB stick from the Islamic State, and in his bag a piece of paper showing his login credentials for TrueCrypt. They arrested and began interrogating him last August, almost three months to the day before the worst terrorist attack in French history.

In many ways, it was another clear failure for the Islamic State's operational security. Mr. Hame agreed to cooperate with investigators, and confirmed that the group was bent on attacking in Europe and was already interested in picking out a concert hall to strike.

Yet many aspects of the group's security protocol were working. In the end, Mr. Hame had few specifics he could share with the authorities. He did not know the names or even the nationalities of the other operatives he had met; they had been introduced to him only by their aliases.

Two of Mr. Abaaoud's other small plots around the same time did not go any better. Sid Ahmed Ghlam was ordered by Mr. Abaaoud to open fire on a church in Villejuif, south of Paris, according to the report by France's antiterrorism police. Instead, he shot himself in the leg. Ayoub El Khazzani, the other attacker sent by Mr. Abaaoud, was tackled by passengers after his weapon jammed while he tried to open fire inside a high-speed Thalys train last August, officials said.

Though they failed, the thwarted plots kept counterterrorism officials stretched thin in the months before the November attacks in Paris.

"It served to put all of our agencies on edge," said France's chief antiterrorism judge, Marc Trévidic, who debriefed Mr. Hame, Mr. Ghlam and Mr. Khazzani before retiring last summer. "Just like a smoke screen, it allowed them to calmly prepare."

Among the clearest signs of the Islamic State's growing capacity for terrorist attacks is its progress in making and deploying bombs containing triacetone triperoxide, or TATP.

The white explosive powder was found in the suicide belts of the Paris attackers and in the suitcases of the Brussels bombers, as well as in two other ISIS-led plots in 2014 and 2015.

Before ISIS, Al Qaeda repeatedly tried, but mostly failed, to deploy TATP bombs, starting in 2001 when Richard

Reid tried to destroy an American Airlines flight by sneaking TATP onboard in the sole of his shoe. He was thwarted when the fuse failed to ignite.

TATP has become terrorists' go-to explosive in Europe because the main ingredients, acetone and hydrogen peroxide, can be found in common household goods like nail polish remover and hair bleach, experts say.

But while the building blocks are easy to come by, TATP is difficult to make, because the ingredients are unstable once combined and can easily detonate if they are mishandled. Over at least two years, Islamic State operatives were working to get it right.

The three bombs found in Mr. Boudina's building near Cannes in 2014 were beverage cans filled with the explosive powder and wrapped in black tape, according to the French court filing in the case.

Though he had successfully cooked the explosive, Mr. Boudina was still struggling to set it off. He had jammed a filament into a cavity in the body of each can, most likely to use as a crude fuse, investigators concluded. However, the online searches he had conducted on his laptop just before his arrest indicated that he did not know how to make the final component. He searched "how to make a remote detonator," "detonation by cellphone," and finally "where to buy firecrackers?"

By comparison, the team sent from Syria to carry out the Paris assaults in November had ironed out the final details.

Two months before those attacks, the man suspected of handling logistics for the assailants, Salah Abdeslam, stopped by a fireworks shop northeast of Paris to buy a mechanism used to detonate fireworks from a distance, according to the French prosecutor. The Firework Magician shop's in-house lawyer, Frédéric Zajac, remembered little about the young man with a Belgian accent, except that "unlike other clients, he didn't ask questions about how it all worked."

Mr. Abdeslam is believed to be the only direct participant in the assaults to have survived, and he was arrested last week in Belgium after a continentwide manhunt.

The attackers he had been helping successfully detonated their suicide belts in seven locations in Paris, indicating that the group had mastered both how to mix the compound and how to set it off.

"To be able to assemble it safely, and to detonate it repeatedly, suggests a more organized effort," said Michael Marks, a retired Naval Criminal Investigative Service special agent who was the post-blast investigator on the Navy destroyer Cole. "It suggests a network."

That network stretched like a web across Europe to at least a dozen other accomplices, including a cell holed up in an apartment in the Brussels neighborhood of Schaerbeek, where two other teams of Islamic State fighters prepared the

bombs detonated last week in Brussels Airport and a metro station.

The overpowering odor that comes with refining and storing TATP was noticed by the building's owner weeks before the bombings, Belgian officials said, but he did not report it until after the attacks.

While each of the explosive vests used in Paris in November had about a pound of finished TATP, the bombs used at the departure terminal of the airport and inside a subway car in Brussels are estimated to have weighed 30 to 60 pounds each, according to Claude Moniquet, a veteran of France's intelligence service who now heads the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center.

That marked another level of achievement in making the explosive: The higher the volume of TATP, the more volatile it becomes.

The attacks last week could have been worse: Inside the attackers' apartment were more of the precursor ingredients used to make the explosive — nearly 40 gallons of acetone and eight gallons of hydrogen peroxide — as well as a suitcase containing over 30 pounds of ready-to-go TATP, according to the Belgian police.

The one thing the attackers had not thought of was that the taxi they called to take them to the airport had room for only three suitcases, so they abandoned the fourth upstairs, Mr. Moniquet said.

Their taxi driver told the Belgian newspaper DH that the customers had refused to let him help them load the heavy bags, and that during the drive to the airport, they sat in tense silence.

The driver could not help but notice a strong odor wafting into the taxi from the sealed trunk.

Reporting was contributed by David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt from Washington, Laure Fourquet and Aurelien Breeden from Paris, Katrin Bennhold from London, Andrew Higgins from Brussels, and Runa Sandvik from New York. Alain Delaquerière and Karen Yourish contributed research.

Belgian Police Renew Appeals For Tips Into "Man In White" Bomb Suspect

By Steven Mufson

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

BRUSSELS — Belgian police released new surveillance video Monday and issued a fresh call for help to identify "the man in white," one of three attackers at the Brussels airport and the only one believed to have survived last week's terrorist bombings.

The appeal came after investigators freed a suspect taken into custody and initially charged with participating in a terrorist attack.

But the man, Fayçal Cheffou — who resembles the attacker shown in the airport surveillance image and was

identified by a taxi driver who took the attackers to the airport — refused to answer questions, and there was not enough evidence to hold him, the prosecutor's office said. Prosecutors will decide later in the investigation whether to proceed with any charges against him, officials said.

The release of Cheffou, who in the past has publicly promoted extreme Islamist beliefs in Brussels, reopened the manhunt for the "man in white" and raised further questions about the extent of the network behind last week's bloodshed.

In the video, the third airport attacker is shown in a dark floppy hat, glasses, a goatee and white jacket pushing a luggage cart with a black suitcase on it shortly before two bombs exploded March 22. A photo from the video was made public shortly after the attacks, but the video gives a slightly better view.

One bomb — believed to be the one wheeled by the man — did not detonate in last Tuesday's carnage, which began at the airport and was followed by a suicide blast in a busy metro station.

Meanwhile, police across Europe widened anti-terrorism crackdowns as prosecutors in Belgium charged three other people suspected of having links to militant networks, adding further to signs that the -multi-nation probes were moving rapidly beyond the bombings in Brussels.

Yet even as the authorities chased new leads, there was still more reckoning from the Brussels attacks claimed by the Islamic State.

Belgium's health minister raised the death toll to 35, not counting three suicide bombers. About 300 people were injured, and 96 remain hospitalized, according to the Belgium Crisis Center.

Nearly half of those killed were foreign nationals, including at least four Americans. The Belgian Foreign Ministry said not all of the wounded have been identified because some remain comatose.

In Brussels, the federal prosecutor identified the three people, who were charged with participation in the activities of a terrorist group, only as Yassine A., Mohamed B. and Aboubaker O. They were among nine people detained Sunday morning by police for questioning; the rest were released.

It was not immediately clear whether the latest suspects played roles in planning the suicide blasts at Brussels Airport and a metro station. But the police sweeps across the European Union appeared aimed at heading off possible new attacks.

The raids and arrests added to a picture of multinational networks reaching far beyond the Islamic State strongholds in Iraq and Syria, where the group recently has suffered setbacks.

On Monday, Dutch police said they arrested three other men allegedly linked to terrorism planning. A day earlier, Dutch authorities captured a 32-year-old French citizen in

Rotterdam who was suspected of having ties to an apparent foiled attack in France last week. They gave his name only as Anis B.

Wim de Bruin, a spokesman for the Dutch prosecutor's office, said in an interview that police found mobile phones, SIM cards, ammunition, money and drugs when they captured him.

Dutch police said two of the three other detained men, ages 43 and 47, were of Algerian origin. No information was released about the third suspect. De Bruin said none of them would be extradited to France.

Italian police, meanwhile, were holding Djamel Eddine Ouali, a 40-year-old Algerian suspected of providing false documents to the Islamic State militants behind the attacks in Paris and Brussels. He was arrested over the weekend.

In central Brussels, tensions that marred a memorial event Sunday threatened to recur.

On Monday, a group called Identity Generation spread fliers calling for a demonstration with the slogan "Expel the Islamists" on Saturday in Molenbeek, an overwhelmingly Muslim middle-class neighborhood in Brussels and a hub for some of the suspected plotters in last year's Paris attacks.

Annabell Van den Bergh and Souad Mekhennet in Brussels and Brian Murphy in Washington contributed to this report.

Belgium Frees Charged Suspect In Blow To Bombing Investigation

By Barbara Lewis

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Man Arrested As "Third Bomber" In Brussels Attack Is Freed; Hunt Is Renewed

By Andrew Higgins And Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

BRUSSELS — A noisy citizen journalist who reveled in verbal and physical fights in public spaces, Fayçal Cheffou never quite fit the profile of a furtive underground operative for the Islamic State. Yet that was the role assigned to him when the Belgian authorities announced that he had been charged with terrorism and the Belgian news media identified him as the "third bomber" at Brussels Airport in last Tuesday's attacks.

Mr. Cheffou's arrest last week, curiously easy as he was picked up right outside the federal prosecutor's office, signaled a big break for a Belgian security apparatus assailed by complaints that it had missed vital clues before the terrorist assault at the airport and a subway station.

Now it looks as if the police got the wrong man, or at least lacked enough evidence to hold him. Mr. Cheffou was released on Monday.

Vilified as "an extremist jihadi horror" early on Monday by a senior Belgian official, Mr. Cheffou was freed just a few hours later with the authorities acknowledging that the evidence against a man they had charged with terrorism and murder was not as strong as they had thought. This suggested that Mr. Cheffou had been mistakenly identified by a witness as the bomber in a dark hat and white coat in an airport surveillance photo.

On Monday, the Belgian police again asked for help identifying that bomber, releasing for the first time surveillance video showing him and the two other attackers slowly pushing luggage carts through the airport with large black bags on them.

To add to the confusion, Eric Van der Sijpt, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office, said Monday that the charges against Mr. Cheffou remained for the moment.

"We're not saying that he's innocent. That we do not do," Mr. Van der Sijpt said in telephone interview. "It's that he's no longer needed in prison. But there are two different things. Preventative custody has nothing to do with the actual investigations or the charges brought."

He added that the prosecutor would decide at the end of the investigation whether to prosecute Mr. Cheffou and that only then would the status of the charges against him be decided.

In a separate statement, the prosecutor's office said Monday that three men detained in and around Brussels on Sunday had been charged with participating in the activities of a terrorist group. It was not clear if they were connected to the attacks last Tuesday.

The disarray over Mr. Cheffou followed a catalog of mishaps and errors that last week prompted Belgium's ministers of justice and the interior to offer their resignations — they were asked to stay on — and led to angry questioning of the government during a parliamentary hearing on Belgium's response to terrorism.

Reflecting public outrage over mounting evidence that the authorities had ignored or misinterpreted signals that might have prevented the attacks, *Le Soir*, a leading French-language Belgian newspaper, last week splashed a damning indictment of the security apparatus across its front page: "Serious mistakes." *La Capitale*, another newspaper, was blunter still: "Chaos," its front page screamed.

Since then, dismay has only increased, with rival French- and Dutch-speaking politicians trading accusations on Monday over who was responsible for allowing several hundred hooligans to storm a makeshift shrine to the victims of the terrorist attacks in front of the old Brussels stock exchange on Sunday. The French speakers denounced the

hooligans, who had assembled on Saturday in the town of Vilvoorde, north of Brussels, as Dutch-speaking fascists.

Then, just as the hooligan furor was reaching its peak, the federal prosecutor's office announced that Mr. Cheffou, named only as Fayçal C. in official statements, had been released. And with that the best hope so far of piecing together the terrorist plot and perhaps identifying other plots in the works had suddenly evaporated. The three other people so far identified as directly involved in last week's attacks — two brothers, Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui, and the suspected bomb-maker, Najim Laachraoui — are all dead.

"The evidence that had led to the arrest of the man named Fayçal C. was not substantiated by the evolution of the ongoing investigation," Thierry Werts, another spokesman for the federal prosecutor, said in a statement. "Consequently, he has been freed by the investigative judge."

Belgians writing on Twitter in Dutch expressed outrage over the latest turn of events. "We got him but it was the wrong guy #painful," said one. Another fumed: "Cheffou the new hero of the Left on Twitter. I'm going to be sick." Others, mostly writing in French, pilloried the authorities for having arrested Mr. Cheffou in the first place.

Mr. Cheffou had been picked out of a photographic lineup by a cabdriver who shuttled three men to Brussels Airport, where two of them — Ibrahim el-Bakraoui and Mr. Laachraoui — blew themselves up at 7:58 a.m. last Tuesday. Mr. Bakraoui's younger brother, Khalid, blew himself up at 9:11 a.m. at the Maelbeek subway station.

The death toll from the attacks rose on Monday to 35, as the authorities reported that four victims who had been hospitalized died from their injuries. The toll, which was reported by the Belgian health minister, Maggie De Block, did not include the three suicide bombers.

In an interview on Sunday, Yvan Mayeur, the mayor of the City of Brussels, the central borough of the 19 municipalities that make up the Belgian capital, said that the taxi driver had identified Mr. Cheffou in a police photo lineup, but that the authorities were still waiting for DNA confirmation that he was the bomber.

Mr. Mayeur added that he did not know whether Mr. Cheffou had been involved in terrorism, but did know him to be a local troublemaker who had repeatedly disrupted a camp of refugees in Parc Maximilien, near the Gare du Nord railway station.

Mr. Cheffou, he said, often harangued and got into fights with volunteers from Belgian nongovernmental organizations, denouncing them for not being Muslims and urging migrants in their care to rebel.

"He tried to get the refugees to turn against NGOs because they were 'nonbelievers,'" Mr. Mayeur recalled.

In September, after prosecutors declined to intervene, the mayor issued a municipal order barring Mr. Cheffou from the migrant encampment, which was later shut down.

His written order accused Mr. Cheffou of wreaking havoc at the camp, alleging that four of his underlings had tried in September to force a 17-year-old female migrant to spend the night with "the chief." She escaped with help from volunteers. It also said he had denounced Belgian workers at the camp as being infidels, collaborators with the state and, in one case, in the pay of Israel.

Aurelien Breeden contributed reporting from Paris.

Belgium Frees Man Charged In Brussels Airport Attack, Focuses On Discovered Gloves

Gloves found on bus test positive for explosives and are suspected to match those worn by airport bombers, officials say

By Julian E. Barnes, Valentina Pop And Devlin Barrett
[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

3 More Face Terror Charges In Brussels; Death Toll Rises

By Steph Solis

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

Belgian authorities on Monday charged three people detained during Sunday's raids with participating in terrorist activities, but a judge released another suspect, according to state media and the Associated Press.

Prosecutors ordered the three — identified as Yassine A., Mohamed B. and Aboubaker O. — be held on terrorism-related charges, according to broadcaster RTBF.

The authorities said the trio were part of a group of nine people who were rounded up Sunday during a series of raids across Belgium. Five of them were released later Sunday, and authorities said Monday that the sixth remaining detainee was released without charges, RTBF reported.

A man known as Faycal C., who was detained in connection with the attacks, has been released by a judge. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office said the judge found no evidence to justify holding the man identified in news reports as Fayal Cheffou, who faced preliminary charges of "involvement in a terrorist group, terrorist murder and attempted terrorist murder."

Raids have occurred almost daily since last Tuesday's suicide bombings at Brussels' main airport and a subway station near the headquarters of the European Union. At least four Americans died in the attacks.

On Monday, Belgian health minister Maggie De Block said four of those wounded in the attacks have died at the hospital, bringing the number of dead to 35.

The Brussels Airport remains closed. Eight hundred staff members are due to test the temporary infrastructure and passenger check-in system Tuesday to determine whether the airport can partially reopen. Belgian government officials must approve the new passenger service arrangements.

"The simple fact is that a restart in the short term is not possible in the devastated infrastructure," the airport staff said in a news release on the airport's website.

Before the bombings, Brussels Airport served about 600 flights a day and 23.5 million passengers per year.

Meanwhile, the website of Belgium's Federal Police on Monday began carrying a 32-second video of a mysterious man in a hat suspected of having taking part in the airport bombing, according to the AP.

"The police are seeking to identify this man," the site says.

The video shows the man, wearing glasses and a white jacket, wheeling a baggage cart through the airport along with the two men identified by Belgian authorities as the bombers.

Police did not say why they had released the video.

The Associated Press and USA TODAY's Matthew Diebel contributed to this report.

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Belgian Police Hunt Airport Suspect; Victim Toll Rises To 35

By John-Thor Dahlburg

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

BRUSSELS (AP) – As the number of victims in the Brussels suicide attacks rose to 35, Belgian police released a video of a mysterious man in a dark hat seen in the company of the bombers who attacked Brussels Airport, indicating that he is still at large.

"Police are seeking to identify this man," the Belgian Federal Police's website said Monday.

The video's release came as a Belgian magistrate also ruled that a man identified as Faycal C., who was arrested during the police raids that followed the March 22 attacks, could be released.

Faycal C. was among those taken into custody and facing preliminary terror charges. Belgian media reported the man was the mysterious suspect in the white jacket and dark hat spotted with the two bombers at the airport the morning of the attacks.

But the Belgian magistrate ruled that new evidence uncovered by investigators revealed there were no grounds to keep Faycal C. in custody and he was released, the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office said.

The Belgian Federal Police's website posted a 32-second video of the still-unidentified suspect as he wheels baggage through the terminal alongside the bombers.

"If you recognize this individual or you have information concerning this attack, please contact investigators," police asked.

Tensions remain high in the city, particularly in the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek, where several of those involved in both the attacks on Brussels and those in Paris last November, hailed from.

Jamal Ikazban, a member of the Molenbeek council, tweeted Monday that young people in the neighborhood were being sent text messages by recruiters. Ikazban did not provide further details, beyond writing that "We must ensure these recruiters can do no more damage."

Belgian authorities also announced that three more people swept up in police raids that followed the attacks on the airport and on a Brussels subway train were being held on charges of participating in terrorist activities.

It was not clear if the suspects ordered held by an investigating judge were linked to the attacks themselves. The three – identified by Belgian prosecutors as Yassine A., Mohamed B. and Aboubaker O. – were detained during 13 police searches Sunday in Brussels and the northern cities of Mechelen and Duffel.

The federal prosecutors' office provided no details of the alleged actions committed by the suspects and released a fourth person without charge.

The bombings, the bloodiest in recent Belgian history, were claimed by the Islamic State extremist group and confirmed Belgium's status as an unwitting rear base from which Muslim extremists can stage attacks in Europe. Many of those responsible for the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds came from Belgium.

Four more people wounded in the Brussels attacks died in the hospital, Belgian Health Minister Maggie De Block announced on her Twitter account Monday.

She posted: "Four patients deceased in hospital. Medical teams did all possible. Total victims: 35. Courage to all the families."

De Block had reported over the weekend that 101 of the 270 wounded in the blasts were still being treated in hospitals, including 32 in burn units. A doctor at one of those burn units who had once served in Afghanistan described patients' wounds as shocking.

One week after the devastating attacks, which severely damaged Brussels Airport's departure area, the facility is planning to test its capacity to partially resume passenger service.

Florence Muls, an airport communications manager, said 800 staff members on Tuesday will test temporary infrastructure and new arrangements designed to handle passenger check-ins.

It's too early to say when airport service might actually resume, she said, adding that government and firefighters

must approve the new system before Brussels Airport can start handling passenger traffic again.

Before the bombings, Brussels Airport served some 600 flights a day and 23.5 million passengers per year.

Lori Hinnant in Brussels contributed to this report.

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Brussels Attacks Were A Terrorist Interrogation Failure

By Marc A. Thiessen

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

For years, Brussels has been the epicenter for European outrage over the CIA's terrorist interrogation program. Now it is Belgium that has some explaining to do for its failure to effectively interrogate a high-value terrorist — an interrogation that could have foiled last week's deadly terror attacks. The carnage is a direct result of Europe's refusal to accept that terrorists must be treated differently than common criminals.

When Salah Abdeslam, believed to be the logistics chief for an Islamic State terror cell, was captured, Belgian officials followed law enforcement procedures with precision. They provided Abdeslam a lawyer, told him he had the right to remain silent and put him into the Belgian criminal justice system. Four days later, the terror cell carried out bombings in Brussels that killed 35 people — including at least four Americans — and injured hundreds more.

Astonishingly, officials did not question Abdeslam at all for his first 24 hours in custody. He spent Friday night in the hospital recovering from a leg wound sustained in the raid. When he was finally returned to the police on Saturday, he was questioned by authorities for a grand total of . . . two hours — and then was not questioned again until after the attacks. Why? "He seemed very tired and he had been operated on the day before," a senior Belgian security official told Politico.

He seemed tired? That's precisely when they should be interrogating him. The CIA used sleep deprivation as one of its most effective interrogation tools. But for Belgians, a terrorist's exhaustion is a reason to stop questioning, not intensify it.

But here is the most incredible part: During those two hours of questioning, The Post reports, "investigators did not ask . . . about his knowledge of future plots." Seriously? Abdeslam was the logistics chief for the Brussels-based terror

cell that carried out both the Paris and Brussels bombings. According to the New York Times, "He was the fixer, renting cars, finding apartments, picking people up and dropping them off." He could have identified the other members of his cell, the safe houses they used, how they communicated, moved money, picked travel routes and — most importantly — the targets they had selected.

But investigators did not bother to ask him about plans for new attacks. Instead, The Post reports, they "concentrated solely on the Paris attacks . . . and then no other discussions were held until after Tuesday's attacks."

The mind simply boggles.

Investigators had found unused detonators and weapons in a safe house with his fingerprints. Did it occur to them to ask what he had intended to use them for? Apparently not.

Abdeslam's questioning is a textbook example of why the law enforcement model for interrogating terrorists is a disaster. As we saw in Brussels, law enforcement officials are in no hurry to extract answers from a detainee, because they are questioning terrorists after an attack has occurred. Their goal is to extract a confession in order to secure a conviction. In such circumstances, patience is a virtue.

But in an intelligence-driven interrogation, patience is deadly. Interrogators are trying to get information from the terrorist quickly, before an attack occurs. In such circumstances, you need to take a terrorist from a state of defiance to a state of cooperation quickly. Speed is of the essence.

It is simply unconscionable that Abdeslam was allowed to protect the identities of cell members and their plans for the Brussels attacks. But that is only the beginning of the shameful incompetence on display here. Not only did officials not ask Abdeslam about future attacks, but they also compounded that error by holding multiple news conferences in which they bragged about his arrest and boasted how well he was cooperating. This was a fatal mistake.

Belgian officials should never have publicly acknowledged Abdeslam's capture. When terrorists learn that one of their comrades is being interrogated, they rapidly begin purging email accounts, shutting down phone numbers, dispersing operatives and closing other vital trails of intelligence — and in this case, likely accelerating attack plans. But if a terrorist's capture is kept secret, these intelligence trails may remain warm for some time — allowing officials to exploit them as they extract information from the detainee.

This case demonstrates the need for some form of secret detention and an intelligence-driven approach to interrogating captured high-value terrorists. It does not mean, as Donald Trump has suggested, that Abdeslam should have undergone waterboarding and "a lot more." In the CIA's experience, two-thirds of detainees cooperated without any

enhanced interrogation techniques at all. Just the experience of disappearing into secret detention — with no idea where they were and no lawyer present — was enough to get them talking.

Officials in Europe and the United States need to wake up and change their approaches. The Islamic State released a video this weekend featuring two terrorists, allegedly Belgian nationals, celebrating the Brussels attacks from inside Iraq. One of them looks into the camera and declares, “This is just the beginning of your nightmare.”

If we keep treating terrorists like common criminals, that nightmare will soon become reality.

FBI Has Accessed San Bernardino Shooter’s Phone Without Apple’s Help

By Matt Zapotosky

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

The Justice Department is abandoning its bid to force Apple to help it unlock the iPhone used by one of the shooters in the San Bernardino terrorist attack because investigators have found a way in without the tech giant’s assistance, prosecutors wrote in a court filing Monday.

In a three-sentence filing, prosecutors wrote that they had “now successfully accessed the data” stored on Syed Rizwan Farook’s iPhone and that they consequently no longer needed Apple’s court-ordered help getting in. The stunning move averts a courtroom showdown pitting Apple against the government — and privacy interests against security concerns — that many in the tech community had warned might set dangerous precedents.

It is unclear how, precisely, investigators got into the phone, or what FBI agents learned about the plot from the materials they were able to review. On the eve of a hearing in the case last week, the FBI had signaled that it might have found a way into Farook’s device, writing in a court filing that “an outside party demonstrated to the FBI a possible method.” But government officials said they wanted to test that method further before employing it in Farook’s case, and they did not offer details about who proposed it or how it would work.

The Justice Department declined to comment on Monday. In a statement, Apple said: “From the beginning, we objected to the FBI’s demand that Apple build a backdoor into the iPhone because we believed it was wrong and would set a dangerous precedent. As a result of the government’s dismissal, neither of these occurred. This case should never have been brought.”

The government will now be left to decide whether it will outline the method to Apple in keeping with a little-known process in which federal officials are supposed to consider disclosing security vulnerabilities they find.

Michael Daniel, special assistant to the president and cybersecurity coordinator, wrote in a White House blog post published in April 2014 that “disclosing vulnerabilities usually makes sense,” given how much people rely on the Internet and connected devices.

“But there are legitimate pros and cons to the decision to disclose, and the trade-offs between prompt disclosure and withholding knowledge of some vulnerabilities for a limited time can have significant consequences,” Daniel wrote. “Disclosing a vulnerability can mean that we [forgo] an opportunity to collect crucial intelligence that could thwart a terrorist attack, stop the theft of our nation’s intellectual property, or even discover more dangerous vulnerabilities that are being used by hackers or other adversaries to exploit our networks.”

Agents and prosecutors were focused for now on the San Bernardino case, and no decision had been made on disclosing the vulnerability, said a federal official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing.

Mark Bartholomew, a professor at SUNY Buffalo Law School who specializes in intellectual property and technology law, said he expected Apple would fight to learn about it so the company could fix the problem.

“They’re going to pursue this in the courts, and I don’t know where this will end up,” Bartholomew said.

Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, were killed in a shootout with police after they launched an attack that killed 14 people at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, Calif., in December. Prosecutors have said their neighbor, Enrique Marquez Jr., was involved in terrorist plots and had discussed with Farook possibly targeting a nearby community college and highway. He is facing charges in federal court.

The bid to access Farook’s phone was meant to further the FBI’s investigation, though it was controversial from the start. The Justice Department obtained a court order compelling Apple’s assistance under the All Writs Act, a centuries-old law that gives courts the power to “issue all writs necessary or appropriate in aid of their respective jurisdictions and agreeable to the usages and principles of law.”

David Bowdich, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Los Angeles field office, said in a statement, “We promised to explore every investigative avenue in order to learn whether the San Bernardino suspects were working with others, were targeting others, or whether or not they were supported by others. While we continue to explore the contents of the iPhone and other evidence, these questions may not be fully resolved, but I am satisfied that we have access to more answers than we did before and that the investigative process is moving forward.”

If allowed to stand, the order in Apple’s case would have forced company engineers to create software to disable a phone security feature so that the FBI could try its hand at

unlocking the device by cracking a numeric password. Apple quickly resisted, arguing that forcing it to create such software would violate the company's constitutional rights and weaken privacy for users around the world.

Federal prosecutors and the FBI had sought to characterize the dispute as limited to only Farook's phone, though FBI Director James B. Comey acknowledged that it could set a precedent if the government won. They argued that Apple, which creates its software, was the only party that was in a position to help.

Monday's filing squarely contradicts that claim — although federal authorities have said someone came forward with the new technique only after the FBI began its high-profile legal battle with Apple. Neither side backed down from its arguments, but with Monday's filing a legal resolution will remain on hold. That means it might take another case to determine to what extent the All Writs Act permits a court to order a company to provide technical assistance in unlocking encrypted devices.

Aaron Levie — co-founder and chief executive of cloud-computing company Box, which filed a legal brief supporting Apple's case — said he didn't see a winner in the FBI's decision to withdraw the case. "I can't anoint any winner," he said in an interview. "This entire experience has brought to the fore a much bigger problem that remains unresolved."

Bartholomew, the law professor, said Congress might even be spurred to weigh in.

The technique the government found to get into the phone, though, might see immediate re-use. In a court filing last week, Apple told a federal judge that if the solution worked, it wanted to see if it could also be used to unlock an iPhone used by a drug dealer in a Brooklyn case and eliminate the need for the company's help there. Notably, the two phones run on different operating systems — Farook's on iOS 9 and the drug dealer's on the older iOS 7. And Apple has previously extracted data from locked phones running older operating systems.

A federal official said the new technique has been demonstrated to work only on iOS 9, though Apple has said in previous court filings that it would like to test that claim.

Elizabeth Dwoskin and Ellen Nakashima contributed to this report.

Justice Department To Withdraw Legal Action Against Apple

By Kevin Johnson

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

The Justice Department is expected to withdraw from its legal action against Apple Inc., as soon as today, as an outside method to bypass the locking function of a San Bernardino terrorist's phone has proved successful, a federal law enforcement official said Monday.

The official, who is not authorized to comment publicly, said the method brought to the FBI earlier this month by an unidentified entity allows investigators to crack the security function without erasing contents of the iPhone used by Syed Farook, who with his wife, Tashfeen Malik, carried out the December mass shooting that left 14 dead.

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FBI Unlocks San Bernardino Shooter's iPhone, Drops Apple Legal Fight

[Los Angeles Times](#), March 28, 2016

Federal officials said Monday that they have unlocked the iPhone belonging to one of the San Bernardino shooters and are dropping a request in front of a federal judge that sought to force Apple to help with that effort.

The move comes a week after officials announced a "third party" had come forward to help investigators unlock the phone without help from the computer giant. It's unclear what the FBI found on the phone.

"Our decision to conclude the litigation was based solely on the fact that, with the recent assistance of a third party, we are now able to unlock that iPhone without compromising any information on the phone," prosecutors said in a statement.

"We sought an order compelling Apple to help unlock the phone to fulfill a solemn commitment to the victims of the San Bernardino shooting — that we will not rest until we have fully pursued every investigative lead related to the vicious attack," the statement said. "Although this step in the investigation is now complete, we will continue to explore every lead, and seek any appropriate legal process, to ensure our investigation collects all of the evidence related to this terrorist attack. The San Bernardino victims deserve nothing less."

The decision appears to halt — at least for now — a historic legal showdown over the issues of national security and privacy. Apple had strongly opposed helping the FBI unlock the phone, arguing it would threaten the privacy of all its customers.

US Withdraws Apple Case, Saying It Has Unlocked iPhone

By Katie Benner

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

SAN FRANCISCO — The Justice Department said Monday that it was withdrawing a legal action that would have forced Apple to cripple the security system on an iPhone used by a terrorist.

The Justice Department is stepping back from the case — which involved demanding Apple's help to open the iPhone used by Syed Rizwan Farook, a gunman in a mass shooting in San Bernardino, Calif., last year — because law

enforcement has found another way into the device, officials said in a filing.

"The government has now successfully accessed the data stored on Farook's iPhone and therefore no longer requires the assistance from Apple," the Justice Department said in the filing.

It is unclear what useful data, if any, was found on Mr. Farook's device.

The government's decision ends an immediate legal battle with Apple that had grown increasingly contentious because the giant technology company had refused to help authorities, citing privacy issues. Yet law enforcement's ability to unlock an iPhone through an alternative method raises new questions, including about the strength of Apple's security on its devices.

The development also creates potential for new conflicts between the government and Apple, as how the government broke into the phone remains unknown. Lawyers for Apple have previously said that the company would want to know the method used to crack open the device.

Apple and the Justice Department did not immediately respond to calls for comment. Continue reading the main story

Justice Dept. Reportedly Will Drop Encryption Case Against Apple

By Victor Morton

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

The Justice Department will reportedly withdraw the case against Apple demanding that the tech giant help the FBI hack the San Bernardino shooter's iPhone.

USA Today, citing a federal law enforcement official, said the filing in a California federal court could come Monday afternoon.

The official said the case became technologically moot because an unspecified method of cracking the phone's security without erasing its contents had recently been brought to the FBI's attention.

FBI Opens San Bernardino Shooter's iPhone; US Drops Demand On Apple

Move delays a high stakes showdown between Washington, Silicon Valley

By Devlin Barrett And Daisuke Wakabayashi

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

Mr. Trump's Dangerous Babble On Foreign Policy

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Donald Trump might use nuclear weapons to go after Islamic State terrorists. Or maybe not. In a recent spate of interviews, including with The Times, he was unable or unwilling to clarify his disturbing views on this and other critical national security issues, which sometimes shift from one minute to the next.

The recent horrific terrorist attacks around the world have provided a new opportunity for Mr. Trump to fan fears and throw out his alarming prescriptions for dealing with the world's most complex challenges. On Wednesday, Mr. Trump was asked if he would use tactical nuclear weapons against the Islamic State. "I'm never going to rule anything out — I wouldn't want to say. Even if I wasn't, I wouldn't want to tell you that because at a minimum, I want them to think maybe we would use them," he said on the Bloomberg Politics program "With All Due Respect."

He was more measured in his comments to The Times on Friday, saying nuclear weapons are "the biggest problem the world has" and he would use such weapons only as "an absolute last step." Even if Mr. Trump, the leading Republican presidential candidate, doesn't really believe that nuclear weapons should be used against a terrorist group, the fact that he has voiced it lends weight to this insane notion and could make it easier for other nuclear-armed states to think about that possibility.

The consequences of using a nuclear weapon in terms of lives lost, physical destruction and cost to American moral standing would be devastating. The United States and Russia have significantly reduced their nuclear arsenals, and the threat that either would ever use the weapons has greatly receded, in part because advanced conventional weapons can destroy almost any military target. Equally bizarre was Mr. Trump's casual attitude in endorsing the idea of Japan and South Korea developing their own nuclear weapons, which would reverse America's longstanding efforts to prevent the number of nuclear-armed states from expanding.

Mr. Trump also challenged decades of American policy by calling NATO "obsolete." Since the Cold War, the alliance has undergone reforms and remains the primary organization that can deal with military threats. It is central to the stability of Europe, which is vulnerable to terrorist attacks, weak economies and the flood of refugees from the Syrian war. With Russia's aggressive movements in Ukraine and threats to the Baltics, this is no time to suggest that Washington is rethinking its strongest commitments to its allies. Although Mr. Trump said he doesn't want to pull America out of NATO, he said it has to be changed so the United States bears less of the cost.

Mr. Trump is confronting most of these issues for the first time, and many of his thoughts are contradictory and shockingly ignorant. In speaking with The Times, for instance, he complained that one problem with the Iran nuclear deal is that American businesses are now losing out to Europe on

lucrative deals with Iran. He did not know that that is because Congress has insisted on keeping American sanctions in place.

Mr. Trump claims he is not an isolationist and wants to “make America great again.” It is hard to see how he achieves that when he describes a completely unhinged view of international engagement that denigrates Muslims and other foreigners and international organizations, including the United Nations. Mostly, his vision of cooperation with allies depends largely on how much they would pay the United States for protection.

In his interviews, Mr. Trump has said “unpredictability” is central to his thinking. He seems to have no inkling that operating in a dangerous world — one in which the United States is militarily involved in many conflict zones — requires some ability to communicate intelligently and forthrightly with both allies and enemies. It also seems to have escaped him that American voters deserve to know what a candidate is actually proposing.

Trumping NATO

The Republican would accelerate a U.S. retreat begun under Obama.

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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Obama Of Arabia

By Kristen Breitweiser

[Huffington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Why does President Obama think it's okay for 15 Arabs (and four of their friends) to come into our country, hijack our planes, crash them into our buildings, and brutally kill 3,000 innocent people?

Because those 15 Arabs were Saudis, that's why. And, Saudis are special. Saudis are apparently allowed to get away with murder – or at least the financing of it.

I am a 9/11 widow. My husband Ron was killed while he was working at his desk for Fiduciary Trust Company on the 94th floor of Tower 2. Ron was 39 years old, I was 30, and our daughter was two. I watched the horror unfold on live worldwide television as I stood in my kitchen speaking to Ron. Moments later, I watched Flight 175 slice into his building, exactly where he stood on the other end of the line talking to me.

Since 9/11, my life has been spent fighting for truth, accountability, and lessons to be learned so that no other family would ever have to suffer such searing pain and tragic loss. Shamefully, my government has fought me tooth and nail along the way. Recently, it has become increasingly clear to me why my government has fought against such transparency, accountability, and revelation of the truth regarding the 9/11 attacks.

There are 28 pages of the Joint Inquiry of Congress (an investigation into the U.S. government intelligence failures prior to 9/11) that have remained classified and hidden away from the American public by both the Bush and Obama Administrations. These 28 pages allegedly prove that the Saudis had a controlling hand in funding the 9/11 attacks that killed 3,000 innocent people.

Now, it's more than fair to say that if these 28 pages blamed the Iraqis or the Iranians for financing the 9/11 attacks, they would have been released years ago. Unfortunately, since the 28 pages allegedly implicate the Saudis, they're likely to remain secret and kept away from the American public forever.

Knowing that evidence of your husband's murder is being specifically withheld from you by the president – with the sole intent to protect the terrorists and their financial backers – is not something any American should ever have to tolerate.

Unfortunately, the 28 pages aren't the only example of the U.S. government protecting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the detriment of the 9/11 families.

For the past 15 years, the 9/11 families have also tried to hold the KSA accountable in a court of law. Most recently, the KSA was dismissed from the 9/11 case on grounds of foreign sovereign immunities protection under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA).

The FSIA was clearly not created with the intent that nations that sponsor mass terrorism should get away with it scot-free. Nevertheless, the U.S. government has wholeheartedly supported this perverted and warped use of the FSIA by the Saudis. In short, it seems that as long as you are an ally of the U.S. and not a named state-sponsor of terrorism, apparently you can underwrite all the mass murder you want and get away with it.

Obviously, the 9/11 families have fought very hard against the Saudis misuse of the FSIA and their dismissal from our case. In fact, several times we have petitioned for a writ of certiorari seeking Supreme Court review of our case. Each time, the U.S. Department of Justice (at the direction of President Obama) has written “Letters of Interest” recommending that the Supreme Court deny hearing our case thereby allowing the Saudis to remain excused from our case via their FSIA shield.

Why would President Obama recommend that the highest court in the land refuse to hear our case about the worst terrorist attack in the land? If he wasn't going to support us, couldn't he just have kept his mouth shut? Did he really need to intervene and kill our chances of Supreme Court review? And, why does President Obama, as well as certain other members, officials, and bureaucrats in our government, think it is more important to support and protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rather than Americans who were victims of a terrorist attack?

Finding ourselves blocked by the president with regard to the release of the 28 pages, and with regard to the Supreme Court reviewing the dismissal of the KSA as a key defendant in our case, we turned to the U.S. Congress for help. And Congress answered our call with a vital piece of anti-terror legislation called JASTA (Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act).

JASTA ensures that no nation (including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) that funds terrorism will be able to use the FSIA as a shield to their culpability. JASTA is the legislative response to the Saudi's misuse of the FSIA in our 9/11 court case. JASTA removes FSIA protections from the KSA and, as a result, the 9/11 families will finally be able to have our day in court against the Saudis.

Notably, JASTA merely brings the KSA back into court and allows for the discovery and investigation to begin against the Saudi's and their financial role in the 9/11 attacks – nearly 15 years after the crime was committed. Egregiously, it has taken eight long years in Washington, several Congresses, and two Secretaries of State to get JASTA even close to passing into law. (Secretary of State Clinton wasn't exactly an enthusiastic supporter of JASTA, but then again, neither is Secretary Kerry. The KSA has given between \$10 and 25 million to the Clinton Foundation.

Unsurprisingly, as soon as JASTA was set to pass with Senate approval, the shadowy Saudi-protectionist hand of the U.S. government, once again, reached out to block our progress. A whisper campaign with no fingerprints was dispensed to kill JASTA.

And, those whispers sounded something like this: if JASTA passes, the Saudis will bankrupt our economy by withdrawing \$800 billion worth of T-bonds, and even worse, if JASTA passes, the Saudis will stop protecting and sharing intelligence information with the U.S. and leave us vulnerable to an ISIS attack.

So, it would seem that the same group of people who fought against the release of the 28 pages, and our case being heard by the Supreme Court, are at it once again, this time opposing JASTA and labeling it a diplomatic disaster.

Exactly how a piece of legislation, like JASTA, that stops nations from funding terrorists who want to kill Americans can be labeled a diplomatic disaster defies logic. Does anyone think the folks in Belgium would have a problem with JASTA? What about Paris? San Bernardino?

The problem is that those of us who are victims of terrorist attacks don't exactly benefit from any relationship with the KSA – a nation that has knowingly funded terrorists for years. Conversely, those who do directly benefit from a "special relationship" with the KSA feel that the rest of us should just quietly go away and accept our plight and fate.

Why does our government cover up and protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rather than hold them accountable for their funding of terrorist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda?

Why does our government not care about victims of terrorism funded by the KSA? In a nutshell, here's why:

1. The U.S. has sold nearly \$100 billion worth of weapons to KSA. Our defense contracting industry makes large campaign contributions to ex-presidents, presidents, potential presidents, and various members of Congress.

2. KSA funds the CIA for its "off the books" forays around the world – in other words, when the CIA wants to do something without the mess and hassle of Congressional oversight (like the war in Yemen and Syria, Iran-Contra, funding the Mujahedeen, etc.), they turn to the KSA to fund their recreational activities.

3. KSA provides drone bases for the U.S. military.

4. KSA is part of the newly formed coalition fighting against Assad and the proxy war in Yemen.

5. The U.S. apparently sold approximately \$800 billion of U.S. Treasury Bonds to the KSA and they now threaten to cash out, thereby crashing the U.S. economy.

6. KSA pays lobbying firms with deep ties to the Obama, Bush, and Clinton White Houses in addition to Congress.

Three thousand innocent people were killed on 9/11. Right here, on our soil. Those men and women were slaughtered in broad daylight. And to this day, not one person, not one official, not one Kingdom has been held accountable in an open court of law. Not one. And that is a crime itself.

Rumor has it that President Obama is soon scheduled to travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I only wish I could adequately relay the disgust I have in my heart when I anticipate having to see my president smiling, laughing, and joking with his "special Saudi friends" – the very same people who I believe underwrote the murder of my husband and nearly 3,000 others.

President Obama, you must not have read those 28 pages of the JICI, because if you did, I cannot fathom how or why you could ever bow and kiss the ring of Saudi terror. No amount of money, no greed, no power, no regional interest could ever be worth such treason.

9/11 widows Patty Casazza, Monica Gabrielle, Mindy Kleinberg, and Lorie Van Auken also sign their name to this blog.

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Guantánamo Limbo: Dozens Still Waiting For First Review Obama Ordered In 2011

By Carol Rosenberg

[Miami Herald](#), March 28, 2016

Mustafa al Shamiri spent most of his years at Guantánamo wrongly described as an al-Qaida trainer and

facilitator, a captive of consequence, until his first parole-style hearing revealed an astonishing admission. An intelligence review “discredited” the most damning parts of his prison dossier in his 14th year of U.S. military detention. He was mistaken for someone else with a similar name.

Within weeks, the Periodic Review Board concluded he was a low-level fighter, not a leader, who could leave Guantánamo, preferably to an Arabic-speaking country to ease him into a new life. Today, two months after that decision, the 37-year-old Yemeni is still at Guantánamo, awaiting a country to take him.

But he is one of the lucky ones. Another 40 captives who also were deemed ineligible for release in 2009 have yet to have their fate decided by the board. Can they go or must they stay?

It wasn't supposed to work that way. When President Barack Obama ordered the Defense Department on March 7, 2011, to set up inter-agency reviews for Guantánamo detainees, something the International Red Cross had long advocated, those detainees not charged with a crime and not cleared to go with security arrangements were supposed to get a first hearing within a year.

Now at the current rate, says attorney Shane Kadidal of the Center for Constitutional Rights, “it seems utterly implausible that they can complete these hearings before the end of the president's term.” Kadidal has gone before the board once with a client who was ultimately cleared to go.

And these are baseline hearings that decide not that a captive can leave — just whether the State Department can start looking for a country to take him in. Once a destination is arranged, a second intelligence analysis ensues to determine whether the security arrangements offered by the would-be host country are robust enough.

Five years after President Barack Obama ordered full, annual parole-style reviews, 40 Guantánamo captives are still waiting.

A Pentagon spokesman, Navy Cmdr. Gary Ross, said all Guantánamo detainees entitled to an “initial hearing” should get one “by the end of the fall,” which is Dec. 20. After a hearing the board decides each case, a process that in a Yemeni's case has gone on eight months.

A Justice Department lawyer, Joseph Folio, told a federal judge in November that the process was hampered by the need to create a bureaucracy to handle Obama's executive order and complicated by the participation of multiple agencies in it.

As for the inertia, Kadidal says some people in the Pentagon may have purposely slowed the process because they don't want to give up on holding captives at Guantánamo. Not that they're wedded to keeping these specific last 91 detainees, but instead want to preserve the military's authority to hold detainees in an offshore prison, if

unintentionally but inevitably “perpetually trapped in a legal quagmire that does not clean itself up.”

Or as Kadidal put it: “Bureaucracies have their own sort of agendas.”

Government officials have blamed a variety of factors, including the complicated task of combing through intelligence agencies files — sorting fact from fiction in a place that in some instances may not have gotten it right for years, as the story of Shamiri illustrates.

So far, 24 detainees have gotten full board hearings and all but four have been cleared for release, with security arrangements.

As anonymous as Shamiri was before his hearing, Mohammed al Qahtani is infamous.

At Guantánamo he was suspected of being the would-be 20th hijacker in the Sept. 11 plot and interrogated in such a ruthless and troubling fashion that someone leaked his interrogation log to Time magazine in 2005. By 2008, a senior Pentagon official rejected his prosecution in the joint trial of five men accused as 9/11 plotters.

“We tortured Qahtani,” Pentagon war court overseer Susan Crawford told journalist Bob Woodward in early 2009. Yet a federal task force sorting through the Guantánamo files for the new Obama administration included Qahtani on a Jan. 22, 2010, list of trial candidates.

Now 40, the Saudi citizen has never been charged. And he only just recently was assigned a Periodic Review Board hearing — on July 14 — to decide whether he'll present a significant continuing security threat to the United States. If so, because he's not charged, he could be added to the list of indefinite detainees — forever prisoners — ineligible for release.

“There hasn't been the urgency that one would expect,” for something that Obama ordered done, said Kadidal, one of the lawyers representing Qahtani. That was the president's second executive order — to get something related to Guantánamo done within a year. The first, issued Jan. 22, 2009, was to sort through the captives' files and close the detention center. On that day the prison held 242 war-on-terror captives. Today there are 91.

Some captives once considered trial candidates are getting dates to go before the inter-agency board.

Of the 24 detainees who have gotten full board hearings, 20 men once considered trial candidates or forever prisoners have been approved for release, with security arrangements. Just four who were reviewed were still considered too dangerous to let go. Forty captives have yet to get their first hearings. A new evolving chart prepared by the Miami Herald lays these out.

While the board hasn't finished reviewing all the forever prisoners, it has begun looking at men once considered as possible candidates for trial who are still not charged. Among

them: Diarist Mohamedou Ould Slahi, 45, whose lawyers sued in federal court to get him a hearing.

Justice Department attorney Folio said at a Nov. 24 federal court hearing that Slahi “remains in line, like dozens of other detainees at Guantánamo, to receive a PRB hearing.” The judge deferred to the authority of the executive, but the Mauritanian captive got a June 7 date, anyway.

In one mysterious instance, the board heard from “forever prisoner” Salman Rabeii, 36, a Yemeni, eight months ago but has yet to decide his case. In contrast, the board last week cleared fellow Yemeni detainee Ayyub Ali Salih, 37, in five weeks.

From a politics and rhetoric perspective we should be past the point where anyone can say the 91 folks at Guantánamo are ‘the worst of the worst.’

Steve Vladeck, American University Law professor

American University law professor Steve Vladeck, who routinely studies the board decisions, is likewise a critic of the glacial pace of the process. He blames, in part, “internal resistance and obstructionism” by bureaucrats who don’t want the prison closed.

But what Vladeck sees as remarkable about the enterprise is not how few have gone through the process but that the majority of those evaluated actually have been approved for release — after spending years on a list deemed too dangerous to be let go.

In that regard, the process appears to have vindicated critics of Guantánamo who argue U.S. intelligence was overwhelmed or ignorant in assessing its captive population in the first dozen or so years. Some who probably should still be there were let go during the years when the Bush administration mostly repatriated about 530 captives, he says. And some who are still there probably could have been released years ago.

“From a politics and rhetoric perspective we should be past the point where anyone can say the 91 folks at Guantánamo are ‘the worst of the worst,’” Vladeck says. “A handful of them might be. But plenty of them aren’t. That’s not a matter of speculation. It’s the president’s own PRBs that are saying that.”

Defenders of the process say the board’s bureaucracy picked the most straightforward cases first, tipped the scales toward those likely to be allowed to go. Vladeck says that’s even more damning. “Even if they picked the easy cases first, what does it say that there are ‘easy cases’ at Guantánamo at this point in time? After 14 years in the blink of an eye they get cleared by the PRB.”

See our chart of the ongoing Periodic Review Board process: Who’s been cleared to go and who’s still waiting.

CIA Photographed Detainees Naked Before Sending Them To Be Tortured

By Spencer Ackerman

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#), March 28, 2016

The CIA took naked photographs of people it sent to its foreign partners for torture, the Guardian can reveal. A former US official who had seen some of the photographs described them as “very gruesome”. The naked imagery of CIA captives raises new questions about the seeming willingness of the US to use what one medical and human rights expert called “sexual humiliation” in its post-9/11 captivity of terrorism suspects. Some human rights campaigners described the act of naked photography on unwilling detainees as a potential war crime. Unlike video evidence of CIA torture at its undocumented “black site” prisons that were destroyed in 2005 by a senior official, the CIA is said to retain the photographs. In some of the photos, which remain classified, CIA captives are blindfolded, bound and show visible bruises. Some photographs also show people believed to be CIA officials or contractors alongside the naked detainees. It is not publicly known how many people, overwhelmingly but not exclusively men, were caught in the CIA’s web of so-called “extraordinary renditions”, extra-judicial transfers of detainees to foreign countries, many of which practised even more brutal forms of torture than the US came to adopt. Human rights groups over the years have identified at least 50 people the CIA rendered, going back to Bill Clinton’s presidency. It is also unclear how many of those rendition targets the CIA photographed naked. The rationale for the naked photography, described by knowledgeable sources, was to insulate the CIA from legal or political ramifications stemming from their brutal treatment in the hands of its partner intelligence agencies. Stripping the victims of clothing was considered necessary to document their physical condition while in CIA custody, distinguishing them at that point from what they would subsequently experience in foreign custody – despite the public diplomatic assurances against torture that the US demonstrably collected from countries with a record of torturing detainees. The Guardian is aware of the identities of some of the detainees photographed naked and is choosing not to disclose them out of concern for their safety and dignity. “Is the naked photography a form of sexual assault? Yes. It’s a form of sexual humiliation,” said Dr Vincent Iacopino, the medical director of Physicians for Human Rights. Iacopino has not seen the nude photographs but raised grave concerns. “It’s cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment at a minimum and may constitute torture,” he said. International human rights law, to include the Geneva conventions, forbids photographing prisoners except in extremely limited circumstances related to their detention, to include anything that might compromise their dignity. “Photographing or videotaping detainees in US custody unrelated to the processing of prisoners or the management of detention facilities can constitute a violation of the laws of war, including the Geneva conventions, in

some cases,” said Nathaniel Raymond, a researcher at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and an expert on detainee abuse. “Any evidence that the CIA or any other US government agency intentionally photographed naked detainees should be investigated by law enforcement as a potential violation of domestic and international law.” The naked photographs from rendition targets are distinct from previously identified caches of torture photos from the US military and the CIA. The renditions remain the most secret aspect of the CIA’s since-discontinued apparatus of detentions, prisoner transfers and abusive interrogations. In 2015, attorneys for the former black-site detainees now charged with war crimes at Guantánamo Bay learned of the existence of up to 14,000 photographs the CIA took and maintains of their former detainees. That cache is not believed to contain photographs of people the agency rendered to allied intelligence services. All of those photos remain undisclosed to the public. The 500-page portion of the Senate’s landmark investigation into George W Bush-era CIA torture that the government released in 2014 dealt overwhelmingly with the CIA’s detentions and interrogations, keeping the rendition program a secret. But the report’s 318th footnote reveals that the CIA photographed the people it captured and sent to other countries. The Senate footnote reads: “There are also few CIA records detailing the rendition process for detainees and their transportation to or between detention sites. CIA records do include detainee comments on their rendition experiences and photographs of detainees in the process of being transported.” However, the Senate footnote does not go on to acknowledge that some of the subjects were naked when they were photographed. The CIA is known to have employed nudity in other aspects of its custody of terrorism suspects. The Senate investigation revealed that the CIA “routinely” stripped its own detainees nude, although Justice Department officials did not formally approve the practice until 2005. Often the nudity occurred in tandem with other torture techniques, such as shackling and frigid conditions, leading in at least one case to a detainee’s death. Officials in the George W Bush-era US Justice Department considered humiliation central to keeping detainees nude, although they insisted that doing so did not imply any threat of sexual violence. “This technique is used to cause psychological discomfort, particularly if a detainee, for cultural or other reasons, is especially modest,” a Justice Department official observed in 2005 during the course of an internal debate about retaining or abandoning the torture techniques. The official, in a memo declassified early in the Obama administration, considered forced nudity distinct from “any acts of implicit or explicit sexual degradation”. The distinction was less clear in practice. The Senate report documented that CIA officials inserted pureed food into detainees’ anuses, a procedure the agency alleges was a medically necessary practice called “rectal rehydration” but

which human rights advocates consider sexual assault. The “rehydration” left detainee Mustafa Hawsawi, who is held at Guantánamo currently facing a US military tribunal in connection with the 9/11 attacks, with a rectal prolapse and related persistent medical problems. The CIA declined to comment for this story.

Feds: Defender Of Minnesota ISIS Suspect ‘Preaching Jihad’

[KSJR-FM Collegeville \(MN\)](#), March 28, 2016

Federal prosecutors say there’s evidence a St. Paul imam serving on the defense team in one of the Minnesota ISIS terror cases appears to have preaching about jihad.

In court documents, the government said a “co-conspirator” made the claims against St. Paul Imam Hassan Mohamud, who’s been acting as a law clerk for the defense of Mohamed Farah. Hassan Mohamud has been critical of the ISIS prosecutions and the government’s anti-terror program, nationally called Countering Violent Extremism but known locally as Building Community Resilience.

- Full coverage: Called to Fight

While prosecutors have yet to detail the claims of Mohamud’s preaching, they expect to file a motion by Tuesday inquiring about disqualifying him, Murad Mohamud, who is representing Mohamed’s younger brother, Adnan, and P. Chinedu Nwaneri, the attorney for Mohamed Farah.

That could create problems for the defense of Adnan and Mohamed Farah, who are facing charges of plotting to travel abroad to join ISIS in Syria. Their trial, along with three other young men, is set to start on May 9. It’s unclear if the trial dates for Adnan and Mohamed will be postponed if their attorneys are disqualified from representing them at trial. On Monday, U.S. District Judge Michael J. Davis ordered federal prosecutors to explain whether there are grounds to disqualify defense attorneys for two Minneapolis men facing ISIS-related charges.

In his order, Davis referred to claims that Hassan Mohamud was “apparently preaching about jihad and related topics.”

Mohamud attributed to the government allegation, which he called “false,” to his vocal stance to the government’s Building Community Resilience program.

“It’s all about politics,” he said. “If we refused to work with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, that doesn’t mean we believe terrorism.”

“We’re against terrorism,” he added. “We’re against violent extremism. Both of them are not part of the religion.”

In 2013, Mohamud said he was part of more than 150 Islamic scholars who went to Mogadishu and issued a fatwa, or a religious edict, against violent extremism.

Mohamud said if he's disqualified from being part of Mohamed Farah's defense team, it would disrupt the trial and the defendant "will never get a fair trial."

"He has a team that are well equipped about both laws — Islamic tradition and American legal system," he said.

Attorneys for the suspects weren't immediately available for comment. Parents of the Farahs declined to speak on the matter.

In late February, federal officials barred Mohamud from participating in a tour of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport organized by the Department of Homeland Security, even though he initially received an invitation from authorities. He believed his opposition to the federal anti-radicalization effort was the reason.

Asked about the airport incident, Department of Homeland Security said in a statement Monday that it can't comment on individual cases. The federal agency said it does not bar someone from a public event "based on protected First Amendment activity," but "a security or background check may be run on an individual before he or she is allowed to enter a secure location."

Ten days ago, Davis denied a request for a change of attorney for Hamza Ahmed, one of the five young men awaiting trial on charges of plotting to travel abroad to join ISIS in Syria.

"Do you have any idea what the magnitude of this case is?" Davis asked Mitchell Robinson, the new attorney that Ahmed wanted to retain.

"I normally wouldn't be doing this, sir, but you stepped your foot into one of the most complicated cases, at a period that's very short before the trial, where the defendant could end up in prison for the rest of his life," Davis told Robinson. "This is a death sentence for him."

A hearing on whether there are grounds to disqualify for the attorneys is set on Friday.

Brussels Airport Suicide Bombers Listed In U.S. Databases; Known To FBI

[Fox News](#), March 28, 2016

Two additional law enforcement sources confirm to Fox News that the two brothers named as suicide bombers in the Brussels airport attack were listed in U.S. intel databases and known to FBI.

One source explained to Fox that Belgian authorities shared intelligence on these individuals with their foreign counterparts. Fox is told that among the agencies listed under the "tear line" of an intelligence document on these individuals was FBI.

This source explains that intelligence on these individuals lived in U.S. databases for cross-referencing purposes — essentially so FBI and other U.S. agencies had

awareness of the names if they were to come up over the course of another investigation.

Fox is told that post-9/11, this is a prime example of the kind of foreign intelligence sharing that we hear about.

Additionally, this source tells Fox that FBI's participation in the investigation into the Brussels attacks amounts to a full court press right now. Director Comey noted today that there are no known connections between Monday's attacks and threats to the U.S. homeland, but Fox is told that FBI assets overseas and agents across the country are working their sources hard to get any possible information on the perpetrators named in these attacks and any potential copycat plots that might be planned against the U.S. homeland.

Court Papers: Woman To Plead Guilty To Terrorism Charge

By Jeff Amy

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A young Mississippi woman plans to plead guilty to a terrorism charge Tuesday, months after authorities say she and her fiance tried to go to Syria to join the Islamic State group.

Court papers show 20-year-old Jaelyn Young, originally from Vicksburg, will plead guilty in Aberdeen federal court to conspiring to provide material support to a terrorist organization.

Young faces up to 20 years in prison, \$250,000 in fines and lifetime probation.

Lawyers for Young did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment Monday.

Her fiance, Muhammad Dakhalla, pleaded guilty March 11 to a similar charge and awaits sentencing. The pair at one point planned to claim they were going on their honeymoon while traveling to Syria.

The couple was arrested Aug. 8 before boarding a flight from Columbus, Mississippi, with tickets for Istanbul. Authorities say they contacted undercover federal agents last year, seeking online help in traveling to Syria. Both are jailed in Oxford.

Young, a sophomore chemistry major at Mississippi State University at the time of her arrest, is the daughter of a school administrator and a police officer who served in the Navy reserve. She was a former honor student, cheerleader and homecoming maid at Vicksburg's Warren Central High School.

Dakhalla grew up as the youngest of three sons of a prominent figure in Starkville's Muslim community. He is a 2011 psychology graduate of Mississippi State who and was preparing to start graduate school at the university.

Prosecutors have portrayed Young as the leader of the plot. They said that by the time Young began dating Dakhalla

in November 2014, she was already interested in converting to Islam. She announced her conversion in March and began wearing a burqa, a garment worn by some Muslim women to cover their face and body.

"After her conversion, Young distanced herself from family and friends and felt spending time with non-Muslims would be a bad influence," prosecutors wrote in a statement of facts regarding Dakhalla's plea.

The statement said Young increasingly complained about the treatment of Muslims in the United States and United Kingdom. Prosecutors said that, after watching pro-Islamic State group videos, she began to view the fighters as liberators. They said Young approvingly cited a video of a man accused of being gay being thrown off a roof to his death by militants and also expressed approval of the shooting of five members of the military in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

"Young continually asked Dakhalla when they were going to join (the Islamic State group) and began to express hatred for the U.S. government and to express support for the implementation of Sharia law in the United States," prosecutors wrote.

The court papers reiterated earlier government claims that Young and then Dakhalla contacted undercover FBI employees online stating they wanted help to travel to Islamic State group territory.

The papers confirm that both Young and Dakhalla left farewell letters "that explained they would never be back, with Young acknowledging her role as the planner of the expedition and that Dakhalla was going as her companion of his own free will."

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CYBER NEWS

FBI Investigating Cyber Attack At MedStar Health

[Baltimore Sun](#), March 28, 2016

Hackers attacked the computer system at MedStar Health on Monday, forcing thousands of employees in the state's second-largest health care provider to resort to paper medical records and transactions.

The nonprofit, which operates 10 regional hospitals, quickly shut down all computer system interfaces to prevent a computer virus from spreading, officials said in a statement. No patient medical records or other information was compromised, they said.

Medstar said all hospitals and clinical facilities remained open, though its 30,000 employees and 6,000 affiliated physicians couldn't log in to the health care system's computer network.

"MedStar's highest priorities are the safety of our patients and associates and confidentiality of information," the nonprofit said in its statement. "We are working with law enforcement, our IT and Cyber-security partners to fully assess and address the situation."

The FBI is helping with the investigation but the agency declined to provide details.

"There's been a suspected cyberattack," said Baltimore FBI spokesman David Fitz. "We're assisting."

Officials with another major health care provider, University of Maryland Medical Center, said they put in place added layers of security protection in response to the MedStar outage.

"Unfortunately in today's business environment, IT systems are at risk from cyber criminals intent on causing disruption, financial harm and data espionage," the hospital system said in a statement. "The healthcare industry is not exempt from these risks."

Ted Harrington, a partner at Baltimore computer security company Independent Security Evaluators, said the attack could affect patient care. His company has studied hospital security and recently published a report on the vulnerability of medical devices and databases to cyberattack.

"Without access to that patient data they can't administer care with the same level of effectiveness," Harrington said. "Lack of availability does have implications for patient health."

While some MedStar services weren't available Monday, doctors at its hospitals, including Union Memorial, Franklin Square Medical Center and Good Samaritan continued to see patients despite the attack.

Radiation oncology services at University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center are contracted through MedStar Health. The department canceled 36 appointments after 10 a.m. Monday and all day Tuesday because of the outage.

One employee at St. Joseph's radiation oncology department said he showed up to work and could not log on.

"The computers were on, but you couldn't log in," said David Bender, a medical dosimetrist in the department. "You could see your desktop, but nothing would open. If you tried to connect to the Internet, you couldn't do anything."

Bender said workers were told to turn off and unplug their computers. He went home at noon because he said his department could not treat patients without access to records.

"I am shocked because they seem to have really good security," he said of MedStar.

The attack comes as hospitals have become a particular target of so-called ransomware attacks, in which hackers install software on a system that encrypts data so that users can no longer access it.

This is often accomplished by convincing a user in the hospital to open an infected email attachment. The hackers

then demand payment — often in the form of hard-to-trace digital currency — in exchange for the key that frees the data.

Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in California recently paid \$17,000 to regain access to its systems. Last week, two other California hospitals came under attack, as did one in Kentucky, according to computer security reporter Brian Krebs, who runs the website KrebsOnSecurity.

The American Hospital Association, a trade group, has advised members on these cyberattacks, which have lasted up to a week.

“Although most security experts and law enforcement personnel will advise against paying the ransom, many companies do pay, particularly if the information encrypted are ‘crown jewels’ and hard to replace,” a lawyer for the association wrote in a recent blog post.

“But it’s important to understand there is never a guarantee that you will even get your data back, and the hackers now know you are willing to pay the ransom.”

MedStar did not provide more details on the nature of the cyberattack here.

At Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, patient Mary Carroll, 45, said she was told by staff that the “entire computer system was down” in the hospital. Computer screens at a nursing station and a monitor in the family waiting area also were blank, said Carroll, whose mother was undergoing open-heart surgery Monday.

Carroll’s daughter Latae Single, 28, said the public wireless Internet also was not working. The problems were concerning to her, she said.

“How does that affect the patients? Everything in there is connected to their system,” she said. “Maybe that’s why they’re moving so slow in there, because they’re doing everything by paper.”

Carroll, who was waiting for her mother’s surgery to end, said she planned to ask doctors about the computer problems and any impact they might have on her mother’s care.

In the hospital’s emergency room lobby, patients waited to be seen. A member of the nursing staff said the emergency room was accepting patients as usual.

At Good Samaritan Hospital in Northeast Baltimore, the computers were down in the emergency department, at the desks of the security guards and nurses in the triage waiting room. The nurses were taking insurance information by hand on what one nurse described as one of the busiest days of the week.

The pharmacy was closed and locked. A sign on the glass doors said: “Systems down. We will reopen Tuesday 3/29/16 @ 8 a.m. We apologize for the inconvenience.”

Computer Virus Hits MedStar Health, Prompts FBI Investigation

[Fox News](#), March 28, 2016

MedStar Health has reportedly been hit with a virus that has forced it to shut down significant parts of its IT operation.

“Early this morning, MedStar Health’s IT system was affected by a virus that prevents certain users from logging-in to our system,” explained the company, in a post on its Facebook page. “MedStar acted quickly with a decision to take down all system interfaces to prevent the virus from spreading throughout the organization. We are working with our IT and Cyber-security partners to fully assess and address the situation.”

“Currently, all of our clinical facilities remain open and functioning. We have no evidence that information has been compromised,” it added. “The organization has moved to back-up systems paper transactions where necessary.”

The health group, which runs 10 hospitals, the MedStar Health Research Institute and the MedStar Medical Group, describes itself as the largest healthcare provider in the Maryland and Washington, D.C. region.

The FBI told FoxNews.com that it is aware of the incident. The Bureau is “looking into the nature and scope of the matter,” it explained, in an emailed statement.

The Associated Press reports that the virus has affected Washington’s Georgetown University Hospital and other medical offices in the region.

A law enforcement official says FBI is assessing whether the virus is so-called ransomware. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because this person was not authorized to publicly discuss details about the ongoing criminal investigation.

Hospitals have become a target for cybercriminals using ransomware, malicious software used to extort money. The software can encrypt files until a ‘ransom’ is paid in a difficult-to-trace digital currency, such as bitcoins.

The scale of the ransomware threat was highlighted last month when a Los Angeles hospital paid nearly \$17,000 in bitcoins to hackers who disabled its computer network. Henderson, Kentucky-based Methodist Hospital suffered a ransomware attack in February.

During 2013, the number of attacks each month rose from 100,000 in January to 600,000 in December, according to a 2014 report by Symantec, the maker of antivirus software.

A report from Intel Corp.’s McAfee Labs released in November said the number of ransomware attacks is expected to grow even more in 2016 because of increased sophistication in the software used to do it.

The company estimates that on average, 3 percent of users with infected machines pay a ransom. It’s not clear how many of those users were individuals and how many companies. Some ransomware attacks go unreported because the victims don’t want it publicized they were hacked.

The first fully functional ransomware targeting Apple's Mac OS X operating system was identified by security specialist Palo Alto Networks earlier this month

FBI Investigating Medstar Health Hacking

[In Homeland Security](#), March 28, 2016

A virus infected the computer system of MedStar Health on Monday, forcing one of the Washington region's largest health care providers to shut down significant portions of its online operations.

Hospital officials acknowledged the breach, which is being investigated by the FBI, but said they had "no evidence that information has been stolen."

"MedStar acted quickly with a decision to take down all system interfaces to prevent the virus from spreading throughout the organization," spokeswoman Ann Nickels said in a statement. "We are working with our IT and cybersecurity partners to fully assess and address the situation. Currently, all of our clinical facilities remain open and functioning."

The \$5 billion health-care system operates 10 hospitals and more than 250 outpatient facilities in the Washington region. It serves hundreds of thousands of patients and employs more than 30,000 people.

Hospital staff reported that they were unable to access email or a vast database of patient records.

One employee told The Post that the entire Medstar computer system is inaccessible.

"Even the lowest level staff can't communicate with anyone. You can't schedule patients, you can't access records, you can't do anything," said the woman, who asked that her name not be used because she wasn't authorized to speak about the incident.

Employees, she added, are using paper charts to continue seeing patients.

The MedStar infection follows two recent cyber attacks against hospitals. In both cases, hackers deployed "ransomware" — a virus that holds systems hostage until victims pay for a key to regain access.

Last month, a hospital in Los Angeles paid hackers \$17,000 in bitcoins, an internet currency, to free its system. Two weeks ago, a Kentucky facility announced it was in an "internal state of emergency" after a similar attack.

Though the nature of MedStar infection remains unclear, Nickels said she had "not been told that it's a ransom situation."

FBI Investigating Computer Virus Causing Major Outages At Large Hospital Chain Medstar Health

[Houston Chronicle](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — FBI investigating computer virus causing major outages at large hospital chain Medstar Health.

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FBI Investigating Outage At Maryland Hospital Chain

[CNN](#), March 28, 2016

The FBI is looking into how a computer virus infected systems at MedStar Health, a large Maryland chain with 10 hospitals and dozens of clinics.

"Early this morning, MedStar Health's IT system was affected by a virus that prevents certain users from logging into our system," the hospital chain announced on its Facebook page Monday.

"MedStar acted quickly... to take down all system interfaces to prevent the virus from spreading throughout the organization," it explained.

The yet-unidentified computer virus is forcing the hospital chain to rely on paper documents and some backup computer systems, the company said.

David Fitz, a spokesman for the FBI's office in Baltimore, told CNNMoney that "the FBI is aware of the incident and is looking into the nature and scope of the matter."

Fitz said the FBI was made aware of the issue on Monday afternoon.

MedStar did not immediately return calls to CNNMoney.

MedStar has several locations in and around Baltimore. The hospital chain reported treating 4.5 million patients during its 2015 fiscal year.

There's heightened attention to cyberattacks now. In recent months, several American hospitals have been tossed into chaos after having their computers infected by hackers.

The weapon of choice has been ransomware, a particularly nasty type of computer virus that encrypts digital files. Hackers don't give you a key to unlock documents until they are paid a ransom.

In mid-March, hackers attacked Methodist Hospital, an averaged-sized medical facility located in western Kentucky. They forced it to operate "in an internal state of emergency" for five days. Methodist Hospital refused to pay the ransom, instead shutting down the infected part of the computer system and relying on backup copies of the information stored elsewhere.

In February, the Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center paid a \$17,000 ransom in bitcoins to get its computer systems back up and running.

Several other American hospitals have also been hit by ransomware in recent weeks.

Computer Virus Forces DC Healthcare Giant Offline: Reports

By Cory Bennett, The Hill
[The Hill](#), March 28, 2016

A computer virus on Monday caused major online outages at MedStar Health, one of the Washington area's largest healthcare providers, according to multiple reports.

Hospital officials told The Washington Post that no information had been stolen.

"MedStar acted quickly with a decision to take down all system interfaces to prevent the virus from spreading throughout the organization," said spokeswoman Ann Nickels in a statement. "We are working with our IT and cybersecurity partners to fully assess and address the situation. Currently, all of our clinical facilities remain open and functioning."

The FBI is investigating the incident, The Associated Press reported.

MedStar, a \$5 billion operation, operates 10 hospitals and more than 250 outpatient facilities in the Maryland and Washington, D.C., area. The organization trains and employs thousands of physicians, who handled more than 4 million outpatient visits in the last fiscal year.

The Hill has reached out to both MedStar and the FBI for comment.

Washington's MedStar Health Shuts Down Computers After Virus

By Jim Finkle And Dustin Volz
[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Why Hackers Are Going After Health-care Providers

By Andrea Peterson
[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Washington is reeling from the news of a hack at MedStar, one of the largest medical providers in the area. A computer virus infecting the organization's computer systems forced MedStar to shut down much of its online operations Monday.

The exact nature of the attack is not yet known, but MedStar is just the latest victim in a string of cyberattacks that have hit the health-care industry hard. Here's what you need to know about how health-care providers became the latest digital battleground.

Why would cybercriminals go after the health-care industry?

The health-care sector has a lot of information that could be valuable to criminals and that makes them a juicy target.

First, they often have a bunch of personal information that could be used for traditional financial fraud – things like your name, social security number, and payment information. But they also have health insurance information, which can be sold for even more on online black markets because it can be used to commit medical fraud – things like obtaining free medical care or purchasing expensive medical equipment – that often isn't caught quite as quickly as credit card or bank account fraud.

A particularly plucky cybercriminal could even find a way to leverage compromising medical information guarded by health-care providers into a blackmail scheme – although that hasn't become a major avenue for attack yet, according to Ben Johnson, co-founder and chief security strategist at cybersecurity Carbon Black.

However, several U.S. hospitals have also now been hit with ransomware, a type of malicious software that basically lets an attacker hold a computer hostage. Once ransomware gets in a system, it starts quietly using hard-to-break encryption to lock up the information stored there – making information inaccessible to the legitimate user. After the software has finished locking things up, it typically pops up with a message demanding a payoff in a difficult-to-track digital currency like bitcoin in exchange for the digital key needed to get back into the data.

This is a particular type of nightmare scenario for health-care providers because more and more of them rely on electronic medical records to keep things up and running.

"Health care is a bit unique in that up-time is really important," said Johnson, which means providers may be more likely than other targets to pay quickly so they can get back to work.

Just how vulnerable is the health-care sector to cyberattacks?

Things aren't looking good.

According to cybersecurity firm TrendMicro, health care was the sector that was hit hardest by data breaches from 2010 through 2015. Not all of those breaches involved hacks – two-thirds were actually due to the loss or theft of things like laptops, smartphones, or thumb drives – but it still demonstrates a major problem with the way the industry approaches keeping data safe.

"It's a big environment with a lot of different pieces – and not a lot of investment in cybersecurity," said Johnson.

Part of the problem is that hospitals and doctors' offices often have to oversee a mishmash of different types of equipment running different types of software – and they can't always apply standard security practices, like regular updates, without risking instability because it might break the connections between systems, according to Jay Radcliffe, a senior security consultant at cybersecurity company Rapid7.

The FBI actually warned health-care providers that they needed to up their digital defenses in April of 2014. "The

healthcare industry is not as resilient to cyber intrusions compared to the financial and retail sectors, therefore the possibility of increased cyber intrusions is likely,” said a private notice the FBI distributed to the sector obtained by Reuters at the time.

In 2015, several big health insurers suffered major breaches. One hack at Anthem, the nation’s second-largest health insurer, left information on up to 80 million people exposed. Another at Premera exposed data on 11 million people, including medical information in some cases.

Last month a ransomware attack hit Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in California. Staff was forced to resort to paper record-keeping for a week and divert patients to other hospitals, according to local reports. The hospital eventually paid the attackers roughly \$17,000 to get access back to their data. Two other hospitals in Southern California were also reportedly hit with similar ransomware this month – as was a Kentucky hospital, which declared an “internal state of emergency” after the attack.

And to make matters worse, the health-care providers are also having to grapple with the problem of securing connected medical devices: A hacked pacemaker or drug pump could have potentially life-threatening consequences for patients, and even other types of networked devices could end up helping a cybercriminal find a surreptitious way to get access to a hospital’s computer systems.

“That can be the weak spot in your network – and in a lot of cases, a hospital might not even realize it was connected,” said Radcliffe.

What is the health-care sector doing to fix all this?

The industry has its own groups dedicated to helping coordinate how it responds to cybersecurity threats, including the National Health Information Sharing and Analysis Center, or NHISAC, which was founded in 2010. Those sort of efforts are useful because they can help industries work together to help stem the spread of a particular type of threat early on.

And there is at least one bright side of all the recent breaches and hacks in the health-care sector: “They’re really waking up to the fact that they are a huge target,” said Johnson.

But, unfortunately, that awareness is just part of the problem. Even once an organization has committed the funds to build up their digital defenses, it can be difficult to plot the best path forward, according to Johnson, because it takes time to figure out which tools to put in place and whom to hire.

The latter part can be difficult for health-care providers because there’s a shortage of security professional across all industries.

“I’ve literally talked to health-care organizations that have 300 open security positions, and are struggling to fill even a handful of them,” said Johnson.

“It’s going to be a rough few years,” he said.

Keeping Pace With An Ever-Evolving Threat Landscape

[Homeland Security Today](#), March 28, 2016

In today’s increasingly interconnected world, cyber criminals have become adept at exploiting the Internet to support underground online marketplaces, child exploitation, intellectual property theft, and many more cyber-related crimes.

To more effectively mitigate and respond to these threats, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Cyber Crimes Center – also known as C3 – received a major expansion over the summer in an effort to enhance the agency’s ability to disrupt and defeat increasingly sophisticated cyber criminals operating around the globe.

C3 delivers computer and cyber-based technical services in support of domestic and international investigations into crossborder crime. The recent expansion included more space and capacity for their cyber facility, as well as much larger training and analytical facilities.

Homeland Security Today spoke with Patrick Lechleitner, Acting Deputy Associate Director of C3, who discussed how the center has evolved since its establishment in 1997, and what its future looks like as cyber criminals and technologies become increasingly difficult to combat.

“What we have been seeing over the years is that everything these transnational criminal organizations [TCOs] have been doing, they are now doing on the Internet, or in a computer-enabled way. We have had to evolve to adapt to that,” Lechleitner said.

A far flung investigative capability

Lechleitner further explained HSI has 200 domestic offices and more than 70 offices overseas, giving HSI the ability to follow a case wherever in the world it may lead. C3 has become the reachback for all those offices on any kind of criminality with a digital nexus.

Since its creation, ICE has had to adapt as transnational criminal organizations have moved operations to the Internet. C3 now houses three units: child exploitation investigations, computer forensics, and cyber crimes.

Lechleitner explained that, “In addition to child exploitation and computer forensics units, we have added a third unit: the computer crimes unit. This is the resource driving innovation when it comes to computer-enabled crimes, such as network intrusion of online theft of intellectual property and intrusion of export control data.”

The expansion of the center has helped keep pace with escalating threats. As criminality has moved to the digital realm, C3 has seen an explosion of activity by transnational actors on the deep web. Additionally, the sophistication of TCOs versus individual actors has become more pervasive.

One of the most recent examples is the notorious takedown of Silk Road and Silk Road 2.0. C3 played a major supportive role in these complex, multi-agency investigations, which involved computer hacking, fraudulent identification, and the economic pieces – money laundering and currency.

Do Federal Agencies Make The Grade On Cybersecurity?

By Jacob Olcott, Contributor

[The Hill](#), March 28, 2016

March may be spring break for students, but for government agencies, it's time for their annual cybersecurity report cards. Last week, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued scores and grades for federal agencies' cybersecurity efforts for 2015. For most agencies, the results were not good. Out of the 24 large agencies evaluated, the General Services Administration was the only agency to earn an A grade (a 91, on a scale of zero to 100). This was a significant decrease from 2014, when eight agencies earned A grades.

While most will focus on the top-level scores, there are three important takeaways.

First, the government needs to modernize its data collection process. Today, chief information security officers in large multinational businesses are able to provide cybersecurity metrics and measurements to senior executives in real time. Board members regularly consume these metrics during quarterly meetings. They know their jobs are on the line if the company doesn't execute properly on its cybersecurity initiatives.

The OMB must move toward automated reporting of agency data in order to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of agency cybersecurity programs. Today, the OMB relies on an antiquated collection process that prevents it from providing more frequent updates to members of Congress. Without more frequent measurements, it is hard for senior agency officials and members to conduct robust oversight.

Modernizing the data collection process will help address the second point: The government needs to reassess the accuracy of the data that it is collecting. BitSight Technologies (of which I am vice president of business development) observes indicators of compromise, examples of poor hygiene and poor user practices taking place on government networks every day. Some of our real-time observations conflict with the data manually reported by agencies to the OMB.

For example, agencies are graded on their automated capability to detect and block software and screen Web pages to make objectionable content unavailable to the user. This capability should prevent employees from downloading unwanted, malicious software programs that could result in

breaches. Though several agencies receive very high grades in these categories, we have observed those same agencies downloading large quantities of unwanted software such as adware and grayware, as well as potentially infected software applications through peer-to-peer file sharing.

Agencies are also graded on the percentage of email systems that can identify "spoofed" incoming or outgoing messages. This reduces the likelihood that an employee will be tricked into opening a message that appears to come from a trusted source. Though many agencies state that they are implementing anti-spoofing technologies on 100 percent of email traffic, we observe that some of these agencies have actually implemented ineffective controls or have not implemented them at all.

The difference between our observations and manually reported data is not necessarily the result of an intentional misrepresentation. Instead, it suggests that having an automated collection process is critical to ensuring that policymakers have the most accurate, objective data possible.

Third, the government must create more useful metrics to better evaluate the effectiveness of an agency's program. Some metrics that the government uses to evaluate agencies are not terribly useful in assessing the security effectiveness of an agency. For instance, in the category of "Malware Defense," agencies are judged on whether they have deployed intrusion prevention and antivirus technology. But what if the technology is deployed, but improperly configured? This could leave the network unprotected. Similarly, the report cites as a strong metric that "100% of agencies completed Indicators of Compromise scans by July 31, 2015." While these scans are certainly a best practice, a better performance metric would have focused on how many machines were fixed after compromise was identified.

Better metrics exist. Most experts agree that measuring the time from initial breach to detection/resolution is the most important and relevant cybersecurity metric. This one metric measures an organization's capability to identify, detect, respond and recover. Many private-sector security professionals use this "golden" metric in board-level reporting. The Obama administration recently listed breach detection and incident response time as one of its five priorities for cybersecurity. Future OMB reports should incorporate these and other "timeliness" metrics in order to truly evaluate an agency's performance.

Another area where metrics are necessary is that of third-party contractors and business associates. As we've learned repeatedly, from cyberattacks affecting the OPM and also Target and other Fortune 1000 companies, third-party vendors can pose significant risk to organizational security. Although tens of thousands of third-party contractors hold sensitive data or perform services for the government, agencies collect no metrics on the cybersecurity performance

of their third-party contractors. The OMB should address this gaping hole in future reports.

Hackers Blur Line Between Thief And Spy

By Geoff Dyer And David J Lynch In Washington
[Financial Times](#), March 28, 2016

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

Defence Groups Take Aim At Cyber Security

By Peggy Hollinger, Industry Editor
[Financial Times](#), March 28, 2016

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

China's Top Web Browsers Leave User Data Vulnerable, Group Says

Report from Citizen Lab accuses Tencent of weak encryption practices with its QQ Browser

By Juro Osawa And Eva Dou
[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

Calling All Women: The Cybersecurity Field Needs You And There's A Million Jobs Waiting

[Forbes](#), March 28, 2016

Cybersecurity has a gender problem: Only 11% of the world's information security workforce are women, according to the Women's Society of Cyberjutsu (WSC) — a 501(c)3 non-profit passionate about helping and empowering women to succeed in the Cybersecurity field.

The small representation of women in cyber is a big opportunity for them to enter a field with a severe labor shortage. There are one million cybersecurity job openings in 2016. More than 209,000 cybersecurity jobs in the U.S. are unfilled, and postings are up 74% over the past five years, according to a 2015 analysis of numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics by Peninsula Press, a project of the Stanford University Journalism Program. Demand for cybersecurity talent is expected to rise to 6 million globally by 2019, with a projected shortfall of 1.5 million, says Michael Brown, CEO at Symantec, the world's largest security software vendor.

WSC states that 50% of professional occupations in the U.S. are held by women, and that 25% of computing occupations in the U.S. are held by women. That leaves tremendous headroom for women to enter the fast-growing cybersecurity market, which is expected to grow from \$75 billion in 2015 to \$170 billion by 2020.

There are numerous programs to help high school girls learn about cybersecurity, gain experience for potential summer internships, and enhance college applications.

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering offers the GenCyber Computer Science for Cyber Security (CS4CS) Summer Program for High School Women. This is a free, three-week, full-day summer program providing an introduction for high school women on the fundamentals of cybersecurity, and computer science. No background or experience in cybersecurity or computer programming is needed in order to apply. NYU's summer cyber program is generously funded by the National Science Foundation and National Security Agency.

For college grads, professionals in other fields, and IT workers interested in crossing over to cyber, there are several organizations and programs devoted to women in cybersecurity:

SANS CyberTalent Immersion Academy for Women

SANS Institute, a leading information security training provider recently announced the SANS CyberTalent Immersion Academy for Women. This accelerated training and certification program offers women a fast track to top jobs in cybersecurity. Qualified candidates complete SANS' intensive world class training and earn GIAC certifications at no charge. Participants that successfully complete the program are guaranteed cybersecurity employment opportunities.

The Women's Society of Cyberjutsu

The Women's Society of Cyberjutsu (WSC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit passionate about helping and empowering women to succeed in the Cybersecurity field. We are a community of women supporting each other through every step of her career journey. Whether you're transitioning to cybersecurity, just entering the field, or are a seasoned vet, our top-notch hands-on technical training and workshops provide the practical skills that translate into real world experience. By joining WSC, not only do you get hands-on training, you get access a multitude of other resources and programming to enhance your cyber learning experience.

Women in Cyber Project

The Women in Cybersecurity Project, as part of New America's Cybersecurity Initiative, brings together cybersecurity companies, government, and big thinkers to promote methods to bring women into the cybersecurity field. We believe that without a workforce made up of men and women, cybersecurity companies will not build products that women—half of consumers—will buy and use. That means greater danger for all of us. We strive to put effective solutions to bring women into the field into action.

Women in Cyber Security (WiCyS)

The Women in Cyber Security (WiCyS) initiative was launched in 2013 with support from a National Science Foundation grant for a collaborative project between Tennessee Tech, the University of Memphis and Jackson State Community College. Since then, with support from various industry, government and academic partners, WiCyS

has become a continuing effort to recruit, retain and advance women in cybersecurity. It brings together women (students, faculty, researchers, professionals) in cybersecurity from academia, research and industry for sharing of knowledge, experience, networking and mentoring.

Women are equal to (or better than) men. 50% of the world's population and 50% of the U.S. population are women. For women reading this post — the cybersecurity field needs you, and they will be lucky to have you!

FBI Wants U.S. Businesses To Help As Cyber Extortion Gains Urgency

By Jim Finkle

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

DHS Continues To Find-And-Replace Cyber Talent

By Jason Miller, Federal News Radio

[Federal News Radio \(DC\)](#), March 28, 2016

The Homeland Security Department seems to be on a never-ending find-and-replace mission when it comes to cybersecurity experts.

The latest edition of this expedition brings us to Danny Toler, who is moving to be the career deputy assistant secretary in the Cybersecurity and Communications Office after serving as the head of network security deployment for the last 16 months, according to a March 18 email from Suzanne Spaulding, undersecretary of the National Programs and Protection Directorate at DHS, which Federal News Radio obtained.

"Over the course of almost four years at CS&C, Danny has become a widely respected and trusted leader who epitomizes professionalism and integrity," Spaulding wrote in her email to staff.

Toler joins Greg Touhill in the deputy assistant secretary role. Touhill has been with DHS since April 2014.

Toler has been with DHS since 2011 coming over from the State Department.

Additionally, Spaulding announced Brian Gattoni, current Network Security Deployment (NSD) branch chief for systems engineering and acquisition, will take over as acting director of NSD once Toler begins his new position.

Along with Toler's move, Emile Monett is coming to DHS from the General Services Administration to work on the continuous diagnostics and mitigation (CDM) program. Monett will focus on supply chain and other acquisition related areas for CDM.

He joins DHS after spending the last six-plus years as GSA's senior adviser for cyber in the Office of Mission

Assurance, where he worked on a variety of cyber and mission areas, including leading the effort to develop recommendations to make the federal acquisition community more cyber conscious. In 2015, Monette began to help lead an effort to create cyber risk profile indicators.

Monette's decision to join DHS comes after he spent the majority of his federal career working at GSA as a senior procurement adviser and analyst.

In another security related move, Leo Wong joined the Federal Communications Commission as its chief information security officer in November. Wong comes to the FCC after spending the previous five years as the CISO and deputy CISO of the Agriculture Department's Food and Nutrition Service.

Finally, the Small Business Administration recently announced it was bringing on a new kind of CDO — a chief digital officer.

Tracy Terrill will serve in this first-time position after spending his entire career in the private sector working for companies such as LegalZoom, NBC Universal Studios and Gartner.

"Tracy has built a digital service team with top talent from both the private and public sector," said Maria Contreras-Sweet, SBA administrator in a March 15 release. "The team is charged with guiding improvement of our systems and ensuring that the SBA leverages its digital capabilities to effectively serve entrepreneurs and small businesses."

Terrill will lead SBA's digital services team, which the White House hopes every CFO Act agency has stood up by the end of fiscal 2016. Several agencies already beat the deadline by setting up digital services offices including the departments of Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs and GSA.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

As Pakistan Mourns, Prime Minister Vows To Defeat Militants

By Kathy Gannon And Zarar Khan

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — In an emotional televised address, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed Monday to hunt down and defeat the militants who have been carrying out attacks like the Easter bombing that targeted Christians and killed 72 people.

"We will not allow them to play with the lives of the people of Pakistan," Sharif said. "This is our resolve. This is the resolve of the 200 million people of Pakistan."

As the country began three days of mourning after Sunday's suicide bombing in the eastern city of Lahore in a park crowded with families, Sharif said the army would forge

ahead with a military operation on extremist hideouts and police will go after what he called the "cowards" who carried out the attack.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a breakaway Taliban faction that supports the Islamic State group, claimed responsibility and said it specifically targeted Christians.

But most of those killed were Muslims who also had been in the popular park for the holiday. Many women and children were among the victims, and dozens of families held tearful funerals Monday for their slain relatives. At least 300 people were wounded.

Sharif, who canceled a visit to the United States to attend a nuclear summit, also warned extremists against using Islam to justify their violence in the overwhelmingly Muslim nation.

Pakistan has suffered a series of attacks in recent months, and Sharif said militants are hitting "soft targets" like playgrounds and schools because military and police operations are putting pressure on their operations.

Sharif met with security officials earlier in the day, and raids and dozens of arrests were carried out in eastern Punjab province, where several militant organizations are headquartered.

The prime minister also visited hospitals in Lahore where many of the injured were being treated. Sharif was born in the city, which is also the capital of Punjab province, his power base.

"It strengthened my resolve when I met the wounded people," he said in his address. "God willing, I will not sit idle until I bring smiles back on their faces."

The attack underscored both the militants' ability to stage large-scale attacks despite a government offensive and the precarious position of Pakistan's minority Christians.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis decried what he called the vile and abominable bombing against Christians and urged Pakistani authorities to "make every effort to restore security and serenity" in the country, particularly for religious minorities.

In Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, Islamic extremists protested for a second day outside Parliament and other key buildings, demanding that authorities impose Sharia law. The army deployed paramilitary Rangers as well as about 800 additional soldiers from neighboring Rawalpindi to Islamabad, to protect the center, which houses main government buildings and diplomatic missions.

The leader of the protesters, Sarwat Ejaz Qadri told a local TV channel they would stay outside Parliament "until our demands are met." Hundreds were hunkered down for a long stay, chanting prayers, occasionally raising anti-government slogans and brandishing long sticks.

They were protesting the hanging last month of policeman Mumtaz Qadri. He was convicted for the 2011 murder of Gov. Salman Taseer, who was defending a

Christian woman jailed on blasphemy charges. Taseer had also criticized Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws and campaigned against them. The woman, Aasia Bibi, is still in jail facing blasphemy charges.

In recent weeks, Pakistan's Islamist parties have been threatening widespread demonstration to protest what they say is Sharif's pro-Western stance. They have also denounced draft legislation in Punjab province that outlaws violence against women.

Earlier this month, Sharif had officially recognized holidays celebrated by Pakistan's minority religions, including Easter and the Hindu festival of Holi.

Ahsanullah Ahsan, a spokesman for the breakaway Taliban faction, told The Associated Press that along with striking at Christians celebrating Easter, the bombing also was meant to protest military operations in the tribal regions. The same militant group also took responsibility for the twin bombings of a Christian church in Lahore last year.

But of the 72 dead from Sunday's attack, 14 have been identified as Christians and 44 as Muslim, said Lahore Police Superintendent Mohammed Iqbal. The rest have not been identified.

Shama Pervez, a widow who lost her 11-year-old son Sahil in the bombing, was inconsolable at his funeral. A fifth-grader at a Catholic school, he had pleaded with her to go to the park rather than stay home Sunday, and she said she finally gave in.

In the Christian area of Youhanabad on the outskirts of Lahore, mourners crowded into a church that was targeted in an attack a year ago.

"How long will we have to go on burying our children?" asked Aerial Masih, the uncle of Junaid Yousaf, one of Sunday's victims.

Ten members of Qasim Ali's family were killed in the park, and all were Muslims. His 10-year-old nephew, Fahad Ali, lay wounded in a bed at home. He had lost his parents and a sister, and another two sisters also were badly injured.

"I don't know how I will be able to do anything to continue at school!" he cried.

Forensic experts searched debris in the park. The bomb had been a crude device loaded with ball bearings, designed to rip through the victims for maximum damage, said counterterrorism official Rana Tufail. He identified the suicide bomber as Mohammed Yusuf, a known militant recruiter.

Nobel peace prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, herself a survivor of a Taliban shooting, said she was "devastated by the senseless killing of innocent people in Lahore."

"My heart goes out to the victims and their families and friends," she said. "Every life is precious and must be respected and protected."

White House spokesman Josh Earnest called the bombing "grotesque."

"The fact that you have an extremist organization targeting religious minorities and children is an outrage," he said, also noting the high number of Muslims among the victims.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said targeting a park filled with children "revealed the face of terror, which knows no limits and values."

France expressed its "solidarity in these difficult moments" with Pakistan and underlined "the inflexible will of our country to continue to battle terrorism everywhere."

Zahid Hussain, an expert on Pakistani militants, said the violence was a show of strength by religious extremists, angered over what they see as efforts to undermine their influence.

Pakistan's military launched an all-out offensive against militants in the North Waziristan tribal region bordering Afghanistan in June 2014. The army says the operation, called Zarb-e-Azb, has killed more than 3,000 militants. In December 2014, the Taliban retaliated with one of the worst terror assaults in Pakistan, attacking a school in northwestern city of Peshawar and killing 150 people, mainly children.

Hussain said the government has sent mixed signals to Islamic extremists. On one hand, it has allowed banned radical groups to operate unhindered under new names and radical leaders to openly give inciting speeches. At the same time, it has hanged convicts like Qadri and promised to tackle honor killings and attacks against women.

"It is one step forward and two steps backward," Hussain said. "The political leadership has to assert itself and say no to extremism once and for all."

Army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif promised Pakistan "will never allow these savage nonhumans to overrun our life and liberty."

Punjab's government said it will give about \$3,000 in compensation to the seriously wounded and \$1,500 to those with minor injuries from the bombing.

Gannon reported from Islamabad. Associated Press writers Asif Shahzad and Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Asim Tanveer in Multan contributed to this report.

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Pakistan In Mourning As Toll From Lahore Suicide Bombing Rises

By Daniyal Hassan And Salman Masood
[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

LAHORE, Pakistan — Shock and grief enveloped Pakistan on Monday as the official death toll from a suicide attack in Lahore a day earlier rose to 69, with 341 people wounded.

The local news media put the number of people killed at 71.

Police investigators said a suicide bomber had detonated explosives in a vest during the evening rush hour on Sunday at Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, one of the largest public parks in this eastern city.

Jamaat-e-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it had targeted Christians. Pakistani officials were skeptical about the claim, as most of those killed and wounded were Muslims. But because Sunday was Easter, a large number of Christian families had come to the park.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived in Lahore on Monday morning and visited Jinnah Hospital to show solidarity with the victims. He said he was deeply grieved and vowed to bring the culprits to justice.

Later, he met with senior government officials and pledged to eliminate terrorism.

"Our resolve as a nation and as a government is getting stronger, and the cowardly enemy is trying for soft targets," Mr. Sharif said during the meeting. "Our goal is not only to eliminate terror infrastructure but also the extremist mind-set, which is a threat to our way of life."

Mr. Sharif was planning to address the nation Monday evening, his press office said.

The military's chief spokesman, Lt. Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa, said Monday that intelligence raids had been carried out in three cities in Punjab Province, of which Lahore is the capital, after the bomb attack, and a "number of terrorists and facilitators were arrested." However, he gave no further details about the identities of those arrested or whether they were connected to Sunday's bombing.

According to hospital sources, 252 people had been admitted to hospitals in the city by 10 a.m. on Monday, while 89 had been discharged. Of the wounded, 26 were in critical condition, officials said.

An initial police report said that four young men had been approached by a police officer near the entrance to the park on Sunday evening. Three of them managed to escape, but the fourth ran through the gate and detonated his explosives. At least 10 kilograms of explosives was used in the bombing, the police said.

Lahore, widely considered the cultural and political capital of Pakistan, appeared in mourning on Monday. Most of the commercial centers and shopping areas were closed, and security forces were on high alert throughout the city. A three-day Spring festival at Race Course Park in Lahore was cancelled because of security fears.

The police cordoned off the blast site for forensic investigation. On Monday afternoon, shoes and shreds of clothing were strewn about in the parking lot of the park.

At city hospitals, chaos and anxiety prevailed as relatives kept pouring in to visit the wounded victims.

Rashida Bibi, 50, who was being treated for head injuries, said she and 32 members of her extended family had come to Lahore from Sahiwal, another city in Punjab, to enjoy Sunday. "We were at the swings. Suddenly there was a blast and I fell down. Children and women started screaming and soon rescue workers arrived. I cannot describe the terrible scenes," Ms. Bibi said.

Meanwhile, at least 2,000 protesters continued a sit-in outside the Parliament in the national capital, Islamabad.

The protesters had rampaged through the city on Sunday after holding a rally in neighboring Rawalpindi to express support for Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, a former police guard who was executed on Feb. 29 for the 2011 killing of a governor, Salmaan Taseer. Mr. Taseer had called for changes in the country's blasphemy laws, saying they were being used to persecute religious minorities.

To hard-line Islamists and religious parties, any change to the blasphemy laws is unacceptable, and they have campaigned violently against such proposals, portraying Mr. Qadri as a hero.

On Monday, the protesters presented their demands to the government. They included declaring Mr. Qadri an official martyr, imposition of Sharia law in Pakistan and immediate execution of all those convicted of blasphemy.

District officials in Islamabad and leaders of the protesters were in negotiations on Monday afternoon to end the sit-in. However, political analysts said they expected a protracted standoff, as the government was unlikely to accede to the demands.

Troops had been deployed in Islamabad to secure the Parliament and other important buildings, including the headquarters of the Supreme Court and a large complex of apartment blocks for Parliament members.

Mobile phone service in some parts of the capital was suspended by the authorities.

The attack in Lahore, which is also Mr. Sahrif's political stronghold, has drawn new attention to the government's efforts to stem terror in the country and has renewed calls for action against militant groups in Punjab.

Previously, Mr. Sharif and his younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Punjab, had resisted calls for an army operation in the province.

Senior police officials had also refused to consider military action, saying that the provincial police are capable of handling the militants.

Critics have faulted the government's handling of protests in the wake of Mr. Qadri's execution. Omar R. Quraishi, a senior journalist based in the port city of Karachi,

said the government's policy of letting pro-Qadri supporters vent their fury seemed to have backfired.

"Calling in the army to re-establish peace in Islamabad is a sign of the government's inability to govern effectively," Mr. Quraishi said.

Follow Salman Masood on Twitter @salmanmasood.

Death Toll In Pakistan Bombing Climbs Past 70

By Annie Gowen And Shaiq Hussain

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

LAHORE, Pakistan — As Pakistan began burying its dead Monday, authorities counted 29 children among those killed by an Easter suicide bombing in an amusement park, victims of a terrorist attack that has re-inforced growing feelings of dread here.

Although 2015 was relatively quiet, horrified Pakistanis are again asking what their government can do to protect them from extremist violence.

More than 70 people in all were killed in the devastating attack Sunday in Lahore. Officials vowed to hunt down the Islamist militant bombers who claimed they targeted Christians — yet killed many of their Muslim brethren in the bargain.

Even after a week of terrorist violence in Iraq, Turkey and Belgium, the attack here nonetheless became a focus of global dismay.

It was the country's worst terrorist attack this year and the deadliest attack in Pakistan since nearly 150 were killed at a school in Peshawar in late 2014 — a shock to the nation that led to an unexpectedly peaceful 2015. That calm period now seems to be over.

Security forces arrested a "number of terrorist suspects and facilitators" in at least five separate raids in cities across Punjab province, where Lahore is located, according to Lt. Gen. Asim Bajwa, an army spokesman. Bajwa also said that "a huge cache of arms and ammunition" was recovered in the operations, but he did not say where the weapons stockpile was found.

Police in Lahore said Monday that they were investigating whether the suicide bomber — who detonated an explosives-packed vest in the crowded park Sunday evening — had accomplices. The blast ripped through crowds of families celebrating Easter and a school break, transforming a joyful scene into a spectacle of chaos and horror. The city was in a period of official mourning Monday, with schools and markets closed and little traffic.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis on Monday decried the Easter bombing as "vile and abominable" and called for Pakistan's religious minorities to be protected. He urged authorities in Pakistan to "make every effort to restore

security and serenity” to Pakistanis, according to the Vatican’s website.

Pakistani authorities noted that more Muslims than Christians were killed and injured. Of those who died at the scene, 14 were Christian, 44 were Muslim, and nine could not immediately be identified, according to Muhammad Iqbal, the superintendent of police for operations in Lahore.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived in Lahore, which is one of his political strongholds, to visit the wounded in one of the city’s many hospitals, his office said. He also announced that he was canceling a trip to Washington, where he had planned to attend this week’s nuclear summit.

A splinter faction of the Pakistani Taliban, Jamaat ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying, “It was our people who attacked the Christians in Lahore, celebrating Easter.”

Pakistan, a country of 190 million, has suffered for years from sectarian violence and Islamist militancy, including a Taliban-led insurgency in the tribal areas on the border with Afghanistan. Recent terrorist attacks targeting minorities and schools have left many ordinary Pakistanis scared and on edge.

“This shouldn’t be happening,” said Rani Farzand, a teacher and neighbor of an 8-year-old girl who died in the blast. “The kids are not safe in the parks, in the schools, in the mosques. Where should we send our children? What should we do?”

On Monday, little remained of the carnage at Gulshan-e-Iqbal park, a leafy oasis in Pakistan’s second-largest city.

Police had cordoned off the bloodstained area between a fountain and a bumper-car ride in the children’s amusement section where the bomb exploded. Objects were left like small grace notes — a jeweled sandal, mangled reading glasses, a child’s shoe.

The identification card of the suicide bomber was discovered amid the debris, local media reported. The reports identified the bomber as Muhammad Yousaf Farid, born in 1988. Those reports could not be confirmed.

At Jinnah Hospital in Lahore, where about half of the more than 300 injured were taken Sunday night, 67 remained hospitalized with a variety of injuries, including burns and shrapnel wounds, doctors said. Politicians and TV anchors weaved among the beds, where occupants were labeled “blast victim.”

Among them were two small children, their beds marked with signs saying “unknown.” Their family died in the blast, and they had yet to be linked with other relatives.

Some were clearly still in shock. Zeeshan Taaj, 23, had been walking through the park on his way back from a pickup cricket match when the bomb detonated. He injured his leg in the aftermath and is trying to come to terms with what he saw: “Fire and smoke,” he said. “I have seen chopped legs blown off, heads and dead bodies scattered all around me.”

A friend tried to comfort him by tucking a sheet around his still-bloodied leg wound.

In another bed, Tasleem Sultan, 40, described how she and four other adult family members took eight children to the kiddie amusement park Sunday night and found it bustling on the warm evening. Her niece, Zainab, 8, had donned her best red dress and put flower-shaped barrettes in her hair for the occasion. She rode an elephant on the merry-go-round. She was holding her aunt’s hand when the force of the explosion separated them.

Later, her father found Zainab, bleeding and lifeless.

“I was weeping. I am still in shock,” Jamshaid Iqbal, 35, said in an interview at his family home after her funeral. “Why isn’t the government protecting us?”

In Islamabad on Monday, thousands of Muslim demonstrators protesting the execution of Islamist assassin Mumtaz Qadri staged a sit-in inside the capital city’s “Red Zone,” which is home to a number of vital government institutions, including Parliament and the prime minister’s house. Qadri assassinated Punjab’s governor, Salman Taseer, in 2011 over the latter’s opposition to Pakistan’s blasphemy laws.

Most blasphemy cases are lodged against non-Muslims for violations such as desecrating the Koran, Islam’s holy book, according to rights monitors. The army was deployed Sunday night to protect government buildings after the protesters rampaged across the city, damaging property and setting buildings on fire.

Erin Cunningham in Kabul, Babar Dogar in Lahore, and Haq Nawaz Khan and Aamir Iqbal in Peshawar, Pakistan, contributed to this report.

Pakistan To Launch Paramilitary Crackdown After Easter Attack

By Mehreen Zahra-Malik And Mubasher Bukhari
[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Another Bombing, This Time In Pakistan

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Pakistan’s Taliban has struck again. The group Jamaat-e-Ahrar has claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on Sunday in a park in Lahore crowded with families, including many Christians enjoying an Easter outing. The bomber set off his explosives near a swing set, killing at least 69 people and injuring more than 300 others.

A spokesman for the Taliban group said the attack had two objectives: to kill Christians and to “give a message to government that it cannot deter us even in their stronghold, Lahore.” Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province, is the

hometown of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Mr. Sharif's brother, Shahbaz Sharif, is the province's chief minister.

The attack was meant to expose as hollow Mr. Sharif's claims — intended to reassure foreign investors and Pakistani citizens — that he has the Taliban on the run. Clearly it is not on the run — in part because a succession of Pakistani governments and the military have cynically used terrorist groups for their own purposes, encouraging them to act as proxy fighters against India.

Murdering women and children at play is all too typical of the Taliban's atrocities. Pakistan's Taliban has long targeted students, including the 2012 assassination attempt on Malala Yousafzai, an activist for girls' education; the December 2014 massacre of 150 students and teachers at an army-run school in Peshawar; and the attack on students at Bacha Khan University, also near Peshawar, in January.

Pakistan's Islamist parties are outraged by what they view as Mr. Sharif's pro-Western policies. Sunday also marked the end of mourning among Islamists for Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, a police guard executed for the murder of the former governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer. Mr. Taseer had angered Islamists by calling for reform of Pakistan's blasphemy laws against insult to Islam.

Pakistan's Islamists consider Mr. Qadri, Mr. Taseer's killer, a hero. On Sunday, protesters angry over his execution rampaged through the streets of Islamabad, the capital. They said they would not be mollified until Pakistan institutes Shariah law and executes all people charged with blasphemy.

Mr. Sharif vowed on Monday to defeat not just Taliban terrorists but the "extremist mind-set" in Pakistan. But much of the blame for that mind-set lies with Pakistan's own governments and their willingness to tolerate extremism as long as it can be used as a weapon against Pakistan's enemies. Meanwhile, these same governments have invested too little in the country's real needs, including basic services, a credible judiciary and economic opportunity.

The Pakistani people have suffered too much from the ravages of the Taliban, and the hypocrisy of Pakistan's leaders. The question now is whether Mr. Sharif can succeed where his predecessors have so tragically failed.

Pakistan Is Terror Ground Zero With Nukes: David Andelman

By David A. Andelman

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

Half a world away from Belgium, terror and death have hit another American ally and where the stakes are even higher. This time, the target was Pakistan — a suicide bomb ripping through a Christian Easter celebration in the heart of Lahore, capital city of the Punjab, killing scores, wounding hundreds. It was a powerful and direct message to Pakistan,

which unlike Belgium, likely has the world's fastest growing nuclear arsenal.

The message to the nation's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, from a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, who quickly claimed responsibility for the attack in his home base of Lahore, was simple and direct. "He can do what he wants, but he will not stop us," said Ehsanullah Ehsan, a group spokesman.

It was as clear evidence as possible that the Taliban is determined to destabilize, even topple the government or nudge it away from its pro-American position into one more favorable to the radicals' toxic agenda. The 20 pounds of explosives packed around quantities of ball bearings were designed to maximize the lethal footprint of the blast. And the fact that it took place Southeast of Islamabad, far from Taliban strongholds along the Afghan frontier suggests its ability to work its will as it pleases.

The danger for America is that such a move comes against a background of deeply troubling activity in a region that itself is teetering on the brink of profound unrest. It was, after all, in Pakistan, where an American Navy SEAL team located and terminated Osama bin Laden. It is also Pakistan where the Taliban and other tribal forces maintain their back offices and arms depots for their immediate aim of overthrowing the American-backed regime in neighboring Afghanistan.

They are waiting — for the American withdrawal and at the same time for a more accommodating attitude among the leadership of Pakistan toward their wants and needs.

The danger is that such wants and needs could extend into the arsenal of nuclear arms that Pakistan is expanding at breakneck speed. Already, its nuclear stockpile has passed neighboring India's — 120 to 100 in terms of deployed warheads. This is a fraction of the numbers maintained by the United States and Russia. But at its current pace, Pakistan's arsenal could balloon to 350 in the next decade — placing it third in the world, ahead of China, Britain or France. According to the Carnegie Endowment, Pakistan has enough highly enriched uranium to continue the buildup all but unchecked.

"The growth path of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, enabled by existing infrastructure, goes well beyond the assurances of credible minimal deterrence provided by Pakistani officials and analysts after testing nuclear devices," the report concludes.

That leaves some frightening potential. Most of the new weapons are "low yield," effectively tactical nuclear weapons, easily deployed — to vast and lethal effect — on isolated battlefields. Or, for that matter, carried in a suitcase into the heart of a city. Indeed, the Carnegie report does raise directly the prospects of "a risky strategy that would place weapons that are the least safe and secure close to the forward edge

of battle — a battle that could be triggered by actions taken by extremist groups.”

This must be at least one aim of a multi-pronged campaign by the Taliban, with Sunday’s massacre only the latest skirmish. But it is clearly an aim that should have Washington deeply worried. A suggestion of the depth of this concern was the statement, issued immediately after news reached the White House. National Security Council spokesman Ned Price suggested, “We will continue to work with our partners in Pakistan and across the region, as together we will be unyielding in our efforts to root out the scourge of terrorism.”

Just how effective such an effort might be should become a central focus in the calculus of when and in what fashion to pull American forces out of Afghanistan and leave a nuclear armed-up region to its own devices.

David A. Andelman, a member of the USA TODAY Board of Contributors, is editor emeritus of World Policy Journal and author of *A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today*. Follow Andelman on Twitter: @DavidAndelman

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Global War On Christianity Feared As Radical Islamists Warn Of More Attacks

By Valerie Richardson

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

The deadly Easter Sunday attack by a suicide bomber in Pakistan has sent fears soaring of an expanding war on Christianity globally, even as the radical Islamic group behind the strike warned that more assaults on believers were in the works.

“We carried out the Lahore attack as Christians are our target,” Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for Taliban faction Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, told Agence Press-France by telephone on Monday, adding that additional attacks on schools and colleges are planned.

Andrew T. Walther, vice president of communications for the Knights of Columbus, which has warned of a “genocide” targeting Christian communities in the Islamic world, said the slaughter of adults and children during the Easter celebration “highlights that Christians, especially in countries where they are a small minority, are often targeted.”

“And, as a whole, Christians are the most persecuted religious group in today’s world,” said Mr. Walther, citing a recent Pew Research Center study examining violence targeting religious groups.

The White House and State Department came under fire Monday for failing to mention in statements condemning the Pakistan violence that the victims gathered at the park in Lahore, Pakistan, were singled out for their Christian faith, drawing a fresh round of criticism.

“This was a very targeted attack of a known Christian population, and of course it was Easter Sunday,” said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of American Center for Law and Justice, which operates an office in Lahore.

“I’m very disappointed that the State Department not only did not call it Islamic jihadism, but would not acknowledge that this was a targeted attack against Christians, which the perpetrators have acknowledged,” Mr. Sekulow said. “I think we’ve got to start saying exactly what this is.”

In Pakistan the army launched raids Monday and rounded up suspects in Lahore and other major cities in the Punjab province, including Faisalabad and Multan. An army spokesman said on Twitter that a number of suspected “terrorists and facilitators” were arrested, and that a “huge cache of arms and ammunition” was recovered.

“Terrorists cannot dent our resolve. Our struggle will continue until the complete elimination of the menace of terrorism,” said Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in an emotional televised address.

While the attack was aimed at members of Pakistan’s tiny Christian minority, who make up just 1.6 percent of the population, a large number of the victims were Muslim, according to Pakistani authorities.

Pope Francis, who has championed Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere persecuted by Islamic extremists, denounced the attack Monday as a “cowardly and senseless crime” and called on authorities to protect “in particular, the most vulnerable religious minorities.”

“Easter Sunday was bloodied by an abominable attack that massacred so many innocent people, for the most part families of the Christian minority, especially women and children, gathered in a public park to joyfully pass the Easter holiday,” the pope told those gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

The Obama administration’s reluctance to condemn specifically the targeting of Pakistani Christians comes a week after Secretary of State John F. Kerry drew cheers from religious liberty groups by declaring that Islamic State, also known as ISIS and ISIL, “is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians and Shia Muslims.”

In a statement Monday, however, State Department spokesman John Kirby condemned the “appalling attack” that “targeted innocent civilians in the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park,” but failed to mention the connection between the attack by Islamic extremists and Easter celebrations.

Former Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson said Monday he was dumbfounded by the omission.

"This is craziness that we simply refuse to acknowledge it and allow it to continue to grow," said Mr. Carson on "Fox & Friends." "You know, I can't really explain why our administration goes out of its way not to include the fact that Christians are being persecuted, but of course this has implications for our country too in the future."

Not playing the 'Christian card'

John L. Allen Jr., author of "The Global War on Christians," said he understood the reluctance of world leaders to "play the Christian card in some of these situations."

"The calculation is that sometimes, doing so could make matters worse rather than better. That is, it might put other Christians at risk," he said. "I understand the argument for discretion, but that said, I also understand the argument for calling things by their real name."

"Particularly in the Middle East these days, and especially in territories under ISIS control, I think we're in a situation where we no longer have to worry about making things worse, because really they have become about as bad as they could possibly be," said Mr. Allen, who operates the Catholic news website Crux.

A February 2015 Pew report found that Christians remain the most persecuted religion as measured by the number of countries in which they face harassment. Christians faced discrimination — and worse — in 102 of 198 countries studied, while Muslims were harassed in 99 of the 198, according to data from 2013.

Since then, however, analysts say persecution of Christians has climbed as they are publicly targeted by Islamic terrorists, particularly in the Middle East. Six months ago in Syria, for example, Islamic State beheaded 12 Christians, including a 12-year-old boy, then hung them on crosses, according to Christian Aid Mission.

The Easter attack was the third mass attack on Christians in Pakistan in the last three years. A year ago, more than 30 Christians died at the hands of a suicide bomber in Lahore, while more than 100 were killed at a Peshawar church in 2013.

Wilson Chowdhry, the chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association, described the attack as "a clear targeting of Christians during their Easter celebrations."

"Pakistan is not safe for Christians as there is a genocide taking place there," Mr. Chowdhry said in a statement. "Not a genocide that is state-sponsored in its entirety, but a genocide nevertheless. Unless Western governments wake up to this problem, the death toll for Christians living there is set to rise exponentially."

And Pakistan ranks only sixth on a list of countries compiled by Open Doors, a Christian activist group that monitors persecution, where Christians are at risk, behind North Korea, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Syria.

Pakistan's nearly 4 million Christians "feel increasingly under threat in their daily lives," according to the Open Doors survey. "The persecution of religious minorities is in effect enabled rather than deterred by the state."

An estimated two-thirds of the Christian population has fled Syria since 2011, while the number of Iraqi Christians has plummeted from an estimated 1.5 million in 2003 to as few as 200,000, fueling a refugee crisis as Christians flee the region. Some Christian leaders in the region fear that faith communities dating back virtually to the days of Jesus are in danger of being wiped out if trends continue.

Mr. Sekulow described the Pakistan suicide bombing as "an intentional move by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," the leader of Islamic State.

"I mean, this is what he wants to do. He's encouraging targeted attacks on Christians," said Mr. Sekulow. "They knew this was a Christian population, they knew that park was frequented by Christians, they knew it was Easter."

He compared it to reports that Tom Uzhunnail of India, a Catholic priest abducted by militants last month in southern Yemen, had been crucified on Good Friday. It remains unclear as to whether the priest was actually killed.

"It's like the Catholic priest: They're doing that because they want to make a point," Mr. Sekulow said. "And they're using methods, whether it's bombing or crucifixion, that make an impact."

Syrian Forces Pursue Campaign Against Islamic State After Retaking Palmyra

By Lisa Barrington

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Ancient Sites Survived Islamic State Occupation

Government's antiquities director said many of Palmyra's famed antiquities somehow survived

By Dana Ballout

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

Scenes From Palmyra Indicate ISIS Slowed Assault On Treasures

By Kareem Fahim

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

CAIRO — As photographs and video footage emerged on Monday from the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra, antiquities experts were relieved and horrified at what Islamic

State militants had wrought in the months they had controlled the city.

A day after Syrian government troops retook control of the city, the most hopeful appraisal came from Maamoun Abdulkarim, Syria's antiquities director, who said 80 percent of the Unesco World Heritage site that encompasses the 2,000-year-old ruins remained intact. He said that the militants appeared to have deliberately slowed their assault on the ruins, fearing that they would stir a revolt among the local population.

But archaeologists abroad expressed shock at the damage inside the Palmyra Museum, where Syrian state television showed shattered statues and other artifacts torn from their mountings and damage apparently caused by shelling.

The damage to the museum was "severe," said Michael D. Danti, a professor of archaeology at Boston University. "The release of video and photography of some of the galleries shows substantial damage to the buildings," he wrote in an email message, adding that there was evidence that the Islamic State had "carried out acts of deliberate destruction of sculptures."

Syrian government troops fully captured the city on Monday, after a three-week assault supported by Russian air power. The expulsion of the Islamic State, whose tenure in Palmyra was marked by public beheadings and the attacks on its heritage, prompted a sense of collective relief rare during Syria's five-year-plus war.

In an episode that came to define the militant's occupation of the city — and their violent disdain for its residents and Palmyra's cultural legacy — the militants publicly executed Khalid al-Asaad, who had worked for decades as the city's head of antiquities, possibly because he refused to reveal the locations of ancient artifacts.

The years of combat between the government and its opponents have killed more than 200,000 people and displaced more than half of Syria's population. Amid the carnage, many Syrians have continued working, often in vain, to protect the country's historical sites from heavy weapons and other threats, including looters.

The worries for the ancient treasures in Palmyra, an oasis city in Syria's central desert, began even before the Islamic State captured the city in May. The Temple of Baal, one of the ancient city's best preserved sites, had been damaged by mortar fire, and grave robbers had stolen artifacts from tombs.

Within months of taking control of the city, Islamic State militants had destroyed the temple's primary building and other structures, as well as the nearby Temple of Baalshamin. In October, they destroyed triumphal arches dating to the second century, built by the Romans to celebrate victory over the Persians.

But in contrast to the gleeful videos the militants have released detailing their destruction of ancient artifacts in other places, they had made little attempt to publicize their actions in Palmyra. Mr. Abdulkarim said that in October, after the militants destroyed the triumphal arches, the Islamic State had begun to regard its campaign as potentially dangerous provocation to locals, for whom the ancient city was not just a treasure, but also a central pillar of the local economy.

Mr. Abdulkarim, who works in Damascus, said he had pushed residents to warn the Islamic State to stop the destruction, delivering the message through employees of his ministry still working in Palmyra, as well as the family of Mr. Assad, the murdered antiquities head.

"I think Daesh understood very strongly that if they continued to destroy buildings, they would be attacked by the local community," he said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State.

Mr. Abdulkarim said that the damage to Palmyra's medieval citadel, including to a bridge and a wall, could be repaired within two years. Blocks from the triumphal arc were in good condition, and it could also be rebuilt, he said. The restoration of the two temples, along with funerary towers that had been destroyed, would take years, and would require support from Unesco, he said.

Professor Danti, who is also a director of an initiative focused on documenting and protecting the cultural heritage of Northern Iraq and Syria, said that while the damage had been expected, it was "both severe and extensive with some monuments in better condition and some worse than expected."

The sculptures in the museum had suffered, "but most if not all can be reconstructed," he said. "We can say the same for Palmyra's major monuments, but debates over authenticity, priorities, and motivation will not be far behind," he said.

Sarah Almukhtar contributed reporting from New York.

If All Else Fails, 3D Models And Robots Might Rebuild Sites

By Stephen Farrell

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Cultural organizations have been working to create precise three-dimensional digital models of the threatened heritage monuments in Palmyra, Syria, in case the originals are damaged beyond repair.

Near the marble quarries of Carrara, Italy, robots, like the one in the video above, are using the models to carve a 20-foot-high scale reproduction of one of Palmyra's most famous ancient monuments: a Roman triumphal arch that Islamic State militants razed last year.

When finished next month, the 12-ton replica is to be temporarily installed at Trafalgar Square in London, with plans to bring it to New York later in the year.

But the recent ouster of Islamic State militants from Palmyra has raised hopes among the organizations of pursuing an even more ambitious rebuilding agenda.

"This is the moment we have been waiting for," said Roger L. Michel Jr., the founder and executive director of the Institute for Digital Archaeology, which works with Harvard, Oxford and the Museum of the Future in Dubai.

Mr. Michel said it was important to send a "powerful message" to those intent on destroying world heritage sites.

"Every time we resurrect from the rubble one of these monuments, it undercuts the message of fear and ignorance that these people are trying to spread," he said. "If they knock it down, we will rebuild it. If they knock it down again, we will rebuild it again."

The Romans built the original triumphal arch in the second century to celebrate a victory over the Persians.

The reproduction was created from a 3D computer model generated from dozens of photographs of the arch taken by archaeologists, tourists and other visitors to Palmyra before the Islamic State captured the city.

Alexy Karenowska, the director of technology at the Institute for Digital Archaeology, said the photographs had been put into a database, and once experts were confident that the computer model contained all the structural information necessary, a file was sent to Italy. There, robots are carving the reproduction from blocks of Egyptian marble.

Dr. Karenowska acknowledges that a reproduction can only ever be "second best." But she added, "The idea is to use this as a way of drawing attention to the fact that reconstruction is underway, and as proof of what technology can do for something that touches all of us."

Iraq Lawmakers Give PM Until Thursday To Reshuffle Cabinet

By Salam Faraj

[AFP](#), March 28, 2016

Baghdad (AFP) – Iraq's parliament gave embattled Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi until Thursday to present a cabinet of technocrats as Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr expanded his protest movement for reform.

Sadr himself spent the night camping in the Green Zone while thousands of his supporters continued a 10-day-old sit-in outside the gates of the fortified area in central Baghdad.

"Parliament is the legitimate representative of the people and it declared that Thursday is the final deadline for the government to present a new ministerial line-up," the speaker's office said in a statement on Monday.

Sources in parliament told AFP that 170 lawmakers out of 245 present voted in favour of the deadline.

"If Abadi fails to present his new cabinet, he must be present in parliament on Saturday to explain why," said Haidar al-Mutlaq, an MP from the State of Law bloc.

Abadi has promised to reshuffle the government by replacing party-affiliated ministers with technocrats, a move meant to help tackle corruption and Iraq's massive budget crunch.

The premier has faced resistance from ministers within his own Shiite bloc who are reluctant to give up their positions and attendant privileges.

Abadi already faces pressure from the street in the shape of the sit-in by Sadr's supporters at the gates of the Green Zone, which is home to his office, parliament and several large Western embassies.

Sadr had warned that his supporters would storm the Green Zone if Abadi failed to present a line-up of technocrats.

But buying Abadi a little more time, Sadr entered the Green Zone alone on Sunday, asking his supporters to remain outside the perimeter.

The Sadrist movement also staged protests in the holy Shiite city of Najaf, where Sadr is usually based, as well as in Basra, Hilla and Kut.

"This demonstration is a message to the leaders from the Green Zone, telling them that Sadr represents all Iraqis," said Hadi al-Denienawi, the head of Sadr's office in Najaf.

Falah Mohammed Hassan, 47, was among thousands who demonstrated in the southern port city of Basra.

"The aim of this protest is to call for change and reforms. The only thing we will accept is a cabinet of technocrats, we will topple all the corrupt and make them accountable," he said.

Many leading Iraqi politicians live inside the Green Zone, a sprawling area the US army sealed off after invading Iraq in 2003.

The restricted zone is now seen as an egregious symbol of the privileges enjoyed by the ruling elite and the corruption that has stunted the development of the oil-rich country.

The scion of an influential clerical family from the holy city of Najaf, Sadr first made a name for himself at the age of 30 as a vociferous anti-American cleric who raised a rebellion.

His influence ebbed after the 2011 US pullout but he retained strong support among the lower classes and is now casting himself as the champion of the fight against graft.

El Hermano Obama

By Fidel Castro Ruz

[Granma](#), March 28, 2016

Los reyes de España nos trajeron a los conquistadores y dueños, cuyas huellas quedaron en los hatos circulares de

tierra asignados a los buscadores de oro en las arenas de los ríos, una forma abusiva y bochornosa de explotación cuyos vestigios se pueden divisar desde el aire en muchos lugares del país.

El turismo hoy, en gran parte, consiste en mostrar las delicias de los paisajes y saborear las exquisiteces alimentarias de nuestros mares, y siempre que se comparta con el capital privado de las grandes corporaciones extranjeras, cuyas ganancias si no alcanzan los miles de millones de dólares per cápita no son dignas de atención alguna.

Ya que me vi obligado a mencionar el tema, debo añadir, principalmente para los jóvenes, que pocas personas se percatan de la importancia de tal condición en este momento singular de la historia humana. No diré que el tiempo se ha perdido, pero no vacilo en afirmar que no estamos suficientemente informados, ni ustedes ni nosotros, de los conocimientos y las conciencias que debíamos tener para enfrentar las realidades que nos desafían. Lo primero a tomar en cuenta es que nuestras vidas son una fracción histórica de segundo, que hay que compartir además con las necesidades vitales de todo ser humano. Una de las características de este es la tendencia a la sobrevaloración de su papel, lo cual contrasta por otro lado con el número extraordinario de personas que encarnan los sueños más elevados.

Nadie, sin embargo, es bueno o es malo por sí mismo. Ninguno de nosotros está diseñado para el papel que debe asumir en la sociedad revolucionaria. En parte, los cubanos tuvimos el privilegio de contar con el ejemplo de José Martí. Me pregunto incluso si tenía que caer o no en Dos Ríos, cuando dijo "para mí es hora", y cargó contra las fuerzas españolas atrincheradas en una sólida línea de fuego. No quería regresar a Estados Unidos y no había quién lo hiciera regresar. Alguien arrancó algunas hojas de su diario. ¿Quién cargó con esa pérdida culpa, que fue sin duda obra de algún intrigante inescrupuloso? Se conocen diferencias entre los Jefes, pero jamás indisciplinas. "Quien intente apropiarse de Cuba recogerá el polvo de su suelo anegado en sangre, si no perece en la lucha", declaró el glorioso líder negro Antonio Maceo. Se reconoce igualmente en Máximo Gómez, el jefe militar más disciplinado y discreto de nuestra historia.

Mirándolo desde otro ángulo, cómo no admirarse de la indignación de Bonifacio Byrne cuando, desde la distante embarcación que lo traía de regreso a Cuba, al divisar otra bandera junto a la de la estrella solitaria, declaró: "Mi bandera es aquella que no ha sido jamás mercenaria...", para añadir de inmediato una de las más bellas frases que escuché nunca: "Si deshecha en menudos pedazos llega a ser mi bandera algún día... ¡nuestros muertos alzando los brazos la sabrán defender todavía!...". Tampoco olvidaré las encendidas palabras de Camilo Cienfuegos aquella noche, cuando a varias decenas de metros bazucas y

ametralladoras de origen norteamericano, en manos contrarrevolucionarias, apuntaban hacia la terraza donde estábamos parados. Obama había nacido en agosto de 1961, como él mismo explicó. Más de medio siglo transcurriría desde aquel momento.

Veamos sin embargo cómo piensa hoy nuestro ilustre visitante:

"Vine aquí para dejar atrás los últimos vestigios de la guerra fría en las Américas. Vine aquí extendiendo la mano de amistad al pueblo cubano".

De inmediato un diluvio de conceptos, enteramente novedosos para la mayoría de nosotros:

"Ambos vivimos en un nuevo mundo colonizado por europeos". Prosiguió el Presidente norteamericano. "Cuba, al igual que Estados Unidos, fue constituida por esclavos traídos de África; al igual que Estados Unidos, el pueblo cubano tiene herencias en esclavos y esclavistas".

Las poblaciones nativas no existen para nada en la mente de Obama. Tampoco dice que la discriminación racial fue barrida por la Revolución; que el retiro y el salario de todos los cubanos fueron decretados por esta antes de que el señor Barack Obama cumpliera 10 años. La odiosa costumbre burguesa y racista de contratar esbirros para que los ciudadanos negros fuesen expulsados de centros de recreación fue barrida por la Revolución Cubana. Esta pasaría a la historia por la batalla que libró en Angola contra el apartheid, poniendo fin a la presencia de armas nucleares en un continente de más de mil millones de habitantes. No era ese el objetivo de nuestra solidaridad, sino ayudar a los pueblos de Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau y otros del dominio colonial fascista de Portugal.

En 1961, apenas dos años y tres meses después del Triunfo de la Revolución, una fuerza mercenaria con cañones e infantería blindada, equipada con aviones, fue entrenada y acompañada por buques de guerra y portaviones de Estados Unidos, atacando por sorpresa a nuestro país. Nada podrá justificar aquel alevoso ataque que costó a nuestro país cientos de bajas entre muertos y heridos. De la brigada de asalto proyanki, en ninguna parte consta que se hubiese podido evacuar un solo mercenario. Aviones yankis de combate fueron presentados ante Naciones Unidas como equipos cubanos sublevados.

Es de sobra conocida la experiencia militar y el poderío de ese país. En África creyeron igualmente que la Cuba revolucionaria sería puesta fácilmente fuera de combate. El ataque por el Sur de Angola por parte de las brigadas motorizadas de Sudáfrica racista los lleva hasta las proximidades de Luanda, la capital de este país. Ahí se inicia una lucha que se prolongó no menos de 15 años. No hablaría siquiera de esto, a menos que tuviera el deber elemental de responder al discurso de Obama en el Gran Teatro de La Habana Alicia Alonso.

No intentaré tampoco dar detalles, solo enfatizar que allí se escribió una página honrosa de la lucha por la liberación del ser humano. De cierta forma yo deseaba que la conducta de Obama fuese correcta. Su origen humilde y su inteligencia natural eran evidentes. Mandela estaba preso de por vida y se había convertido en un gigante de la lucha por la dignidad humana. Un día llegó a mis manos una copia del libro en que se narra parte de la vida de Mandela y ¡oh, sorpresa!: estaba prologado por Barack Obama. Lo ojeé rápidamente. Era increíble el tamaño de la minúscula letra de Mandela precisando datos. Vale la pena haber conocido hombres como aquel.

Sobre el episodio de Sudáfrica debo señalar otra experiencia. Yo estaba realmente interesado en conocer más detalles sobre la forma en que los sudafricanos habían adquirido las armas nucleares. Solo tenía la información muy precisa de que no pasaban de 10 o 12 bombas. Una fuente segura sería el profesor e investigador Piero Gleijeses, quien había redactado el texto de "Misiones en conflicto: La Habana, Washington y África 1959-1976"; un trabajo excelente. Yo sabía que él era la fuente más segura de lo ocurrido y así se lo comuniqué; me respondió que él no había hablado más del asunto, porque en el texto había respondido a las preguntas del compañero Jorge Risquet, quien había sido embajador o colaborador cubano en Angola, muy amigo suyo. Localicé a Risquet; ya en otras importantes ocupaciones estaba terminando un curso del que le faltaban varias semanas. Esa tarea coincidió con un viaje bastante reciente de Piero a nuestro país; le había advertido a este que Risquet tenía ya algunos años y su salud no era óptima. A los pocos días ocurrió lo que yo temía. Risquet empeoró y falleció. Cuando Piero llegó no había nada que hacer excepto promesas, pero ya yo había logrado información sobre lo que se relacionaba con esa arma y la ayuda que Sudáfrica racista había recibido de Reagan e Israel.

No sé qué tendrá que decir ahora Obama sobre esta historia. Ignoro qué sabía o no, aunque es muy dudoso que no supiera absolutamente nada. Mi modesta sugerencia es que reflexione y no trate ahora de elaborar teorías sobre la política cubana.

Hay una cuestión importante:

Obama pronunció un discurso en el que utiliza las palabras más almibaradas para expresar: "Es hora ya de olvidarnos del pasado, dejemos el pasado, miremos el futuro, mirémoslo juntos, un futuro de esperanza. Y no va a ser fácil, va a haber retos, y a esos vamos a darle tiempo; pero mi estadía aquí me da más esperanzas de lo que podemos hacer juntos como amigos, como familia, como vecinos, juntos".

Se supone que cada uno de nosotros corría el riesgo de un infarto al escuchar estas palabras del Presidente de Estados Unidos. Tras un bloqueo despiadado que ha durado ya casi 60 años, ¿y los que han muerto en los ataques

mercenarios a barcos y puertos cubanos, un avión de línea repleto de pasajeros hecho estallar en pleno vuelo, invasiones mercenarias, múltiples actos de violencia y de fuerza?

Nadie se haga la ilusión de que el pueblo de este noble y abnegado país renunciará a la gloria y los derechos, y a la riqueza espiritual que ha ganado con el desarrollo de la educación, la ciencia y la cultura.

Advierto además que somos capaces de producir los alimentos y las riquezas materiales que necesitamos con el esfuerzo y la inteligencia de nuestro pueblo. No necesitamos que el imperio nos regale nada. Nuestros esfuerzos serán legales y pacíficos, porque es nuestro compromiso con la paz y la fraternidad de todos los seres humanos que vivimos en este planeta.

Fidel Castro Ruz

Marzo 27 de 2016

Fidel Castro Criticizes Barack Obama's Efforts To Change Cuba

By Azam Ahmed

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

MEXICO CITY — Fidel Castro, the former president of Cuba, offered a critical response on Monday to President Obama's recent visit to his country, declaring that despite the warming relations between the two Cold War enemies, "we do not need the empire to give us anything."

In a long and digressive letter titled "Brother Obama" published in Granma, the official Communist Party newspaper, Mr. Castro struck a discordant note with the country's political class, including his younger brother Raúl Castro, the current president.

Mr. Obama did not meet with the elder Mr. Castro during his three-day visit to Cuba last week, which was meant to be a capstone to efforts to bury hostilities between the two countries, and to encourage the reform of Cuba's flagging economy and political system.

Mr. Castro, who is 89 and has not been seen in public since last summer, remains highly influential in the Communist Party even after his retirement, and took the opportunity on Monday to offer a counterpoint to the optimism of Mr. Obama's visit.

In his nearly 1,600-word missive, Mr. Castro recounted the history of United States aggression against his country, including the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the decades-long economic embargo of the island, which is still in effect. He chastised Mr. Obama, 54, for his youth and for failing to recognize what Mr. Castro said were the major accomplishments of Cuba's Communist revolution, such as state pensions and salaries, the steps to eradicate racial discrimination and the role of Cuba's indigenous people in society.

The letter urged Mr. Obama not to jump to conclusions about the Cuban system, or assume that the past could be so easily forgotten.

"My modest suggestion is that he reflects and doesn't try to develop theories about Cuban politics," Mr. Castro wrote, citing Mr. Obama's own words during the trip, including a request to leave the past behind and embark on a future of hope and togetherness. "I suppose all of us were at risk of a heart attack upon hearing these words from the president of the United States."

Theodore Piccone, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, said that Mr. Castro was "exercising the Cuban people's muscle memory on the bad things the United States did after he led the revolution," but that the letter was probably not intended to derail the diplomatic opening.

"The timing of the editorial — coming after the visit, during which Fidel was neither seen nor heard — signals an effort to do minimal harm to his brother's rapprochement with the U.S.," Mr. Piccone added.

Mr. Castro's admonition comes across as something of a reminder to the Cuban people that shedding the government's long-running enmity with the United States and reforming its economic system should not undermine what he and other Cubans view as the ideals and achievements of the revolution.

"Nobody should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science and culture," Mr. Castro wrote.

Fidel Castro Slams Obama Over Cuba Trip

By Tim Elfrink

[Miami New Times](#), March 28, 2016

By most accounts, President Obama's historic visit to Havana last week was a success. His rousing speech to the Cuban people was roundly hailed as a step forward from musty Cold War-era policy, and even hardliners had to admit he got in a pretty good dig at Raúl Castro over human rights abuses.

But like your curmudgeonly great-uncle fuming at the Christmas party over how the Jell-O is too warm and the kids are just too damn loud, Fidel Castro apparently did not catch rapprochement fever last week.

This morning, Fidel published in *El Granma*, the state paper, a lengthy, rambling critique of Obama's visit. The piece reads like, well, your cranky great-uncle's latest screed on Facebook, so getting to the heart of Fidel's complaints isn't easy.

But his biggest beef in the column, titled "El Hermano Obama," is that the U.S. president would lecture Cuba on

human rights given the United States' rather checkered history on his island.

Of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Fidel writes that "nothing can justify this premeditated attack that cost our country hundreds of killed and wounded."

Castro also raised another Miami-linked piece of bloody history: The 1976 bombing of Cubana de Aviación Flight 455, which was tied to South Florida-based terrorists Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles.

Of Obama's pleas to look to the future with hope, Fidel writes that "each of us risked a heart attack upon hearing these words... after a merciless blockade that has lasted almost 60 years, and those who have died in the mercenary attacks on ships and Cuban ports, an airliner full of passengers detonated in midair, mercenary invasions, multiple acts of violence, and strength?"

Which are all fair points. (Less fair: Castro's claims that "racial discrimination was swept away by the Revolution" when most outsiders agree that racism is still a big problem on the island.)

But the column also points to the main reason Obama didn't meet with Fidel on the trip: Castro's beefs, however rooted in fact, are all touchstones of the Cold War freeze that Obama is trying to chip away at. Obama didn't organize the Bay of Pigs. He never secretly funded Bosch or Carriles. He would end the embargo tomorrow if Congress would let him.

Luckily, based on the reception Obama received — plus the ecstatic crowds that flocked to other Western visitors the Rolling Stones and the Tampa Bay Rays — Fidel's bitching seems about as likely to get a reaction as any other old man yelling at clouds.

White House Spars With Fidel Castro Over Obama's Visit

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

The White House got into a war of words Monday with former Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, who criticized President Obama's historic trip to Havana.

Writing in the official state newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, the 89-year Mr. Castro criticized Mr. Obama's relative youth and raised the U.S. "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba in 1961.

"Native populations do not exist at all in the minds of Obama," Mr. Castro wrote. "Nor does he say that racial discrimination was swept away by the [Cuban] Revolution; that retirement and salary of all Cubans were enacted by this before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old."

White House press secretary Josh Earnest suggested that Mr. Obama's trip had gotten under Mr. Castro's skin.

"The fact that the former president felt compelled to respond so forcefully to the president's visit is an indication of

the significant impact of President Obama's visit to Cuba," Mr. Earnest said.

Noting that U.S. journalists questioned Cuban President Raul Castro about political prisoners, Mr. Earnest said, "That's the kind of thing that's never happened before. And there's no denying that creates some additional pressure on the Cuban government."

Raul Castro is Fidel's younger brother. Mr. Obama held a private meeting with the Cuban leader but did not meet with Fidel Castro during his three-day visit to the island.

Fidel Castro To Obama: 'We Don't Need The Empire To Give Us Anything'

By Alan Gomez

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

MIAMI — Fidel Castro didn't meet with President Obama during his visit to the island last week, but the retired Cuban leader responded Monday with a long, testy letter that concluded: "We don't need the empire to give us anything."

Castro's missive, titled "Brother Obama," rejected the idea that his country needs U.S. assistance to stay afloat, arguing that Cuba is perfectly capable of producing the food and economic prosperity needed by its 11 million citizens. Responding to Obama's suggestion that his visit should allow both countries to "leave the past behind," Castro bristled, citing the failed Bay of Pigs invasion and the five-decade-old economic embargo as realities that can never be forgotten.

"I suppose all of us were at risk of a heart attack upon hearing these words from the President of the United States," Castro wrote in Cuba's state-controlled newspaper, Granma. "Nobody should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science and culture."

Obama's historic trip to Cuba, the first by a U.S. president in nearly 90 years, was designed to solidify the recently re-established political relationship between the Cold War foes. During the trip, Cuban President Raúl Castro met several times with Obama, conducted a joint press conference hailing the new relationship and seemed at ease and jovial with the U.S. president as they sat and watched a baseball game together.

Many have wondered how Fidel Castro has been reacting to the rapid changes that have taken place in Cuba since he stepped down due to an illness in 2008. His brother, Raúl, has since changed many aspects of Cuba's communist system, allowing people to own, buy and sell their homes for the first time, allowing half-a-million state workers to become private entrepreneurs, and ultimately shocking everyone by beginning the process of normalizing relations with the U.S.

The revolutionary leader didn't mince words on the final point, mockingly referring to Obama as "our illustrious guest"

before dissecting and criticizing various aspects of his speech to the Cuban people.

Castro quoted a section of Obama's address where he discussed the shared history of Cuba and the U.S. — both colonized by Europeans who depended on slaves brought there from Africa. Obama was trying to make the point that people in both countries are descended from slaves and slave-owners, but Castro focused on another population.

"The native populations don't exist at all in Obama's mind," Castro wrote.

Obama also mentioned several challenges facing the U.S., including "racial bias" in communities around the country and within the criminal justice system. Castro ignored that section, instead blasting Obama for failing to recognize the advances in race relations Castro and his government feel they've carried out.

Castro wrote that Obama did not "say that the Revolution swept away racial discrimination, or that pensions and salaries for all Cubans were decreed ... before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old."

Frank Mora, the director of the Latin America and Caribbean Center at Florida International University in Miami, summed up his reaction to Castro's letter in two words: "Who cares?"

Mora said the elder Castro is "literally in the history books" and that his influence over Cuban politics has long since passed. He said Raúl Castro can't stop his older brother from arguing on the changes taking place, but is clearly moving on despite Fidel's objections.

"(The letter) made him look pretty insignificant as to where this relationship is heading," Mora said. "He represents a different era, a different stage in the history of the relationship. He's trying to resuscitate the past, but people will ignore it."

(Editor's note: The best way to watch 360-degree content is on your desktop or laptop computer. For viewing on smartphones, download our app, VRstories, from either the App Store or from Google Play. Either navigate using touch or your phone's gyroscopic controls, or view in full VR with a Cardboard viewer.)

Fidel Castro Breaks Silence, Chides Obama

By Moses Patterson

[Havana \(CUB\) Times](#), March 28, 2016

HAVANA TIMES — Former Cuban president Fidel Castro broke his silence today and came out swinging in his first public reaction, before or after, the visit last week to the island by US President Barack Obama, reported dpa news.

"We do not need any gifts from the empire," Castro, 89, wrote in a "reflection" published on the front page of the official "Granma" newspaper. Fidel said it was his "duty to respond to the speech" pronounced in Havana by Obama to the Cuban people on March 22nd.

"Each of us ran the risk of a heart attack upon hearing the words of the president of the United States," Castro said in reference to the call for reconciliation in Obama's address to Cubans, after half a century of hostility between the two countries.

Fidel rejected the idea of reconciliation, "after a merciless blockade that has lasted almost 60 years." He recalled "those who died in the mercenary attacks on ships and Cuban ports, an airliner full of passengers detonated in midair, mercenary invasions, and multiple acts of violence and force."

"Besides, I warn that we are able to produce the food and material wealth we need with the effort and intelligence of our people," said Castro in the article titled "Brother Obama" and in which he also described as "syrupy" the words with which the US president called on both countries to "forget the past."

Obama visited Cuba from March 20-22 as part of the thaw in relations that both countries presidents publicly announced in December 2014, after decades of estrangement.

Fidel Castro, who ruled the destinies of Cuba and its people from 1959-2006, did not participate in the talks between the government of his brother Raul and the Obama administration. Although he had not rejected rapprochement with the old ideological enemy, Fidel Castro has shown skepticism during the negotiations.

In his top of the Cuban news article, Castro recalled the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 and praised his government's role in the struggles of African independence. He accused Washington of having supported the racist apartheid regime in South Africa.

"I do not know what Obama has to say today about this history. I do not know what he did or did not know, although it is very doubtful that he knew absolutely nothing," said Fidel.

"My modest suggestion is that he reflect and not try to develop theories about Cuban politics," he said.

In his historic nationally televised address to Cuba last Tuesday, Obama called for democracy and civil liberties on the island.

Upon leading the 1959 revolution, Fidel Castro erected a communist one-party system that has governed the island for over a half century. The words of the former president, 89, always generate expectations in Cuba, despite living removed from power since 2006.

Fidel Castro is not involved in day-to-day Cuban public life and in recent times rarely publishes his "Reflections", which he began writing after recovering from the illness that led to his handing over the presidency to his brother Raul.

Fidel Castro Criticized Obama's 'Sweetened Words' To Cuban People

By Erik Andersen

[PBS NewsHour](#), March 28, 2016

Former Cuban president Fidel Castro publicly criticized President Barack Obama's recent Cuban trip in a letter published Monday, his first official response to Obama's historic visit.

"We do not need the empire to give us anything," Castro said in a 1,500-word column for Granma, the Cuban Communist Party's official newspaper.

Entitled "Brother Obama," the letter denounced Obama's "sweetened words" to the Cuban people in Havana, where he asked them to "forget the past, leave the past behind [and] look to the future together," Castro quoted Obama as saying. Despite the audience's enthusiastic response to the president's words, Castro wrote, "all of us were at risk of a heart attack upon hearing these words from the President of the United States."

"My modest suggestion is that he gives it thought and does not attempt now to elaborate theories on Cuban policy," Castro wrote, citing what he said was a part of a U.S. history of aggression toward Cuba, including the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and nearly 60-year blockade against the communist country.

Though Castro did not address any of the specific policy decisions Obama proposed during his speech, such as lifting the embargo and allowing U.S. companies to do business on Cuban soil, he did warn that "[n]obody should be under the impression that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights or the spiritual wealth they have gained."

Castro was not absolute in his criticism of the president. He praised Obama's "humble origin and natural intelligence," which were "evident" during the trip.

Obama did not meet with the 89-year-old former Cuban leader during his three-day visit to the island nation. Castro's brother, President Raúl Castro, attended a baseball game with Obama.

Following a period of illness, Castro stepped down as president in favor of his brother Raúl in 2008. According to CNN, Castro still wields an "enormous influence" in Cuba, where people study his writing and infrequent appearances "for insights into Cuba's opaque political system."

Fidel Castro Says Obama's "Syrupy Words" Were Enough To Cause A Heart Attack

By Karen DeYoung

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

President Obama's "syrupy" words about brotherhood and shared history, and his call to leave behind the enmity of the past, were enough to give Cubans "a heart attack," former president Fidel Castro said Monday in his first public response to Obama's visit to Cuba last week.

"We don't need any gifts from the empire," Castro wrote in a scathing article, addressed to "Brother Obama" and published in Granma, the Cuban Communist Party newspaper.

His words were in stark contrast to the feel-good atmosphere of Obama's three days on the island, where he held a news conference, attended a baseball game with current President Raúl Castro, and delivered a major address.

Obama did not meet with Fidel Castro during the visit. The 89-year-old revolutionary leader is said to be in ill health and has not appeared publicly, other than in photographs, for some time. Raúl, his brother, replaced him as president in 2008.

Articles titled "Reflections of Fidel" are published infrequently under his byline by Granma.

In his Cuban speech last Tuesday, Obama said that he came to Cuba "to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas," and to "extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people" following the reestablishment of relations between the two countries.

"We both live in a new world, colonized by Europeans," he said. Both countries "can trace their heritage to both slaves and slave-owners. We've welcomed . . . immigrants who came a great distance to start new lives in the Americas."

He went on to talk about "blended" culture, "common passions" and "common values," while acknowledging differences between the two countries. While exhorting the Cuban government to open itself to free expression and the global economy, Obama said he believed that "our grandchildren will look back on this period of isolation as an aberration, as just one chapter in a longer story of family and friendship."

Castro, after a long and somewhat rambling recounting of the failed U.S.-sponsored exile invasion of Cuba in 1961, and a critique of U.S. policy toward racism in southern Africa, wrote that he doubted Obama was unaware of the history between Cuba and the United States.

He offered a "modest suggestion" that the American president reflect on that history "and not offer elaborate theories about Cuban politics."

"Each of us probably had a heart attack" while listening to Obama, Castro wrote. "After nearly 60 years of ruthless blockade. And how many have died from mercenary attacks on boats, in Cuban ports, on an airplane full of passengers that exploded in full flight, in mercenary invasions and multiple acts of violence and force?"

"No one should fool themselves into thinking that our noble and generous people will renounce their glory and their rights, and the spiritual wealth of our educational, scientific and cultural achievements.

"I'll add that we are capable of producing our own food and the material wealth we need from the labor and intelligence of our own people," Castro concluded.

The article, which was published in full on Granma's Spanish website, did not initially appear on the English-language site.

The newspaper published verbatim texts of Obama's speech and his news conference with Raúl Castro, and heavily covered other aspects of the visit in both Spanish and English.

Comments posted on Fidel Castro's article were largely positive. "A little disorganized, but always interesting," one comment noted diplomatically.

Fidel Castro Blasts Obama's Trip To Cuba In Harsh Letter

By Adam Edelman

[New York Daily News](#), March 28, 2016

So much for solidarity.

Just days after President Obama's historic trip to Cuba, Fidel Castro ripped the warming of relations between his nation and the U.S., angrily stating that "we don't need the empire to give us any presents."

In a 1,500-word bristling letter titled "Brother Obama," published Monday in Cuban state media, Castro, who did not meet with Obama during the visit, recounted decades of U.S. aggression against his country and told Obama to stay out of Cuba's affairs.

GOOGLE PLANS TO BRING HIGH SPEED INTERNET, OTHER TECH PRODUCTS TO CUBA

"My modest suggestion is that he reflects and doesn't try to develop theories about Cuban politics," the 89-year-old Castro wrote. "No one should pretend that the people of this noble and selfless country will renounce its glory and its rights."

The 1,500-word bristling letter, titled "Brother Obama," was published Monday in Cuban state media and was the former dictator's first response to Obama's three-day visit to Cuba last week.

"We are capable of producing the food and material wealth that we need with work and intelligence of our people," Castro added.

Quoting Obama's declaration during his visit last week that "it is time, now, for us to leave the past behind," Castro added that, "I imagine that any one of us ran the risk of having a heart attack on hearing these words from the President of the United States."

CUBAN MAN WANTS OBAMAS VISIT TO LEAD TO DEMOCRACY

Castro also used his letter to rebut Obama's speech during his visit line-by-line, engaging in an ex-post-facto dialogue with pointed critiques of perceived slights and

insults, including Obama's failure to give credit to indigenous Cubans and Castro's prohibition of racial segregation after coming to power in 1959.

Castro also discussed decades of U.S. aggression against Cuba, describing in detail the decades-long U.S. trade embargo against the island, the 1961 Bay of Pigs attack and the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner backed by exiles who took refuge in the U.S.

ANGRY FAN CHUCKS BEER CAN INTO RAY'S DUGOUT IN CUBA PROTEST

The aggressive note marked the former dictator's first response to Obama's three-day visit last week, in which the American president said he had come to bury the two countries' history of Cold War hostility.

Obama did not meet with Fidel Castro during his visit, choosing instead to sit down with Castro's brother Raul, who took over as Cuba's leader in 2008.

THE OBAMA'S DANCE THE TANGO AT ARGENTINE STATE DINNER

His trip, the first to Cuba by an American president in nearly 90 years, was intended to build momentum behind his opening with the island nation and to convince the Cuban people and the Cuban government that a half-century of U.S. attempts to overthrow the Communist government had ended, allowing Cuba to reform its economy and political system without the threat of U.S. interference.

With News Wire Services Tags: fidel castro , cuba , barack obama

Fidel Castro Is Less Than Impressed With Obama's Cuba Visit

By Jp Carroll

[Daily Caller](#), March 28, 2016

Retired Cuban President Fidel Castro isn't pleased with President Barack Obama's trip to Cuba, insisting "we don't need the empire to give us anything."

Castro's Monday op-ed in the Cuban Communist Party's official newspaper Granma, titled "The Brother Obama," is a long-winded tirade about comments Obama made during his three-day trip to meet with President Raul Castro and tour Cuba in March.

Castro is critical of Obama stating Cuba was built by slave labor, saying there are also "native populations which in Obama's mind, don't exist." He proudly declares racism and discrimination were "swept away" in Cuba after "the Revolution."

Castro bemoans the 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion, which he calls a "Pro-Yankee assault brigade," stating that "nothing can justify this premeditated attack that cost our country hundreds of dead and wounded."

The U.S., says Castro, is also responsible for the failures of deceased Argentine Marxist Che Guevara who

failed in radicalizing Angola. Castro instead attributes the failure to the "military experience and power of this country [the U.S.]."

Towards the end of his piece, Castro rejects Obama's message of "forgetting about the past and looking to the future."

"What about those that died in mercenary attacks on Cuban ships and ports," Castro says. "An airplane filled with people which is made to crash mid-flight, mercenary invasions, multiple acts of violence and force?"

Castro concludes by dismissing the well-documented food shortages Cuba experienced after the fall of the Soviet Union. "We are able to produce food and material wealth we need the effort and intelligence of our people," he says, closing his piece by calling for "compromise with peace and fraternity with all human beings that live on this planet."

Cuba's Fidel Castro Knocks Sweet-talking Obama After 'Honey-Coated' Visit

By Marc Frank

[Reuters](#), March 28, 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 Had Nice Things To Say About Cuba During Historic Visit

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

After President Barack Obama returned from his visit to Cuba, former Cuban President Fidel Castro ripped the president for his comments about democracy and human rights.

Obama met with current Cuban President Raul Castro, but did not meet with his older brother Fidel.

While in Cuba last week, Obama talked about America's shortcomings and even compared the Cuban and American revolutions. Obama also praised Cuba's education and health care systems. But that wasn't enough to please the former dictator.

In El Granma, the official state newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, the elder Castro griped that Obama overlooked the positive aspects of the Cuban revolution.

"Native populations do not exist at all in the minds of Obama," Castro wrote. "Nor does he say that racial discrimination was swept away by the Revolution; that retirement and salary of all Cubans were enacted by this before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old."

The United States and Cuba normalized relations in 2014.

But demonstrating he isn't quite ready to move on, Castro also wrote the Bay of Pigs invasion by the Kennedy administration as a "mercenary force with cannons and

armored infantry, equipped with aircraft ... trained and accompanied by warships and aircraft carriers in the U.S. raiding our country. Nothing can justify this premeditated attack that cost our country hundreds of killed and wounded."

Castro also blasted America, bemoaning, "help that racist South Africa had received from [Ronald] Reagan and Israel."

"I do not know what Obama has to say on this story now," Castro wrote. He added, "My modest suggestion is to reflect and do not try now to develop theories about Cuban politics."

He further wrote, "Our efforts will be legal and peaceful, because it is our commitment to peace and brotherhood of all human beings living on this planet."

Fidel Castro Lashes Out At Obama After Cuba Visit

By Jordan Fabian

[The Hill](#), March 28, 2016

Fidel Castro rebuked President Obama in a lengthy diatribe Monday just days after the president's historic visit to Cuba.

The former Cuban revolutionary leader published a letter in state-controlled media titled "Brother Obama," in which he recalled the U.S.'s past efforts to overthrow his government.

"We do not need the empire to give us anything," Castro wrote.

It was the elder Castro's first response to Obama's two-and-a-half-day visit last week, during which the president said he came to the country to bury the final vestige of the Cold War in the Western Hemisphere.

Obama met with Cuban leader Raúl Castro, Fidel's younger brother, but did not meet with the revolutionary leader, who is reportedly in poor health. Fidel Castro handed over power in 2008.

The president's visit was designed to cement his push to normalize relations with Cuba after five decades of isolation. The U.S. government is trying to establish closer trade and travel ties with Cuba while persuading the country's leaders to enact political reforms and improve human rights.

At the same time, Obama sought to convince Cubans that the U.S. isn't interested in reprising past efforts to overthrow the Castro regime.

But Fidel Castro rattled off a laundry list of past U.S. aggression against Cuba, including the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. And he lectured the U.S. about its role in propping up South Africa's apartheid government, which Castro opposed.

"My modest suggestion is to reflect and do not try now to develop theories about Cuban politics," Castro wrote of Obama.

The president's efforts to allow U.S. businesses to operate in Cuba also appeared to have angered Castro, who seized American business and property during the 1959 Cuban revolution.

By most measures, Cuba's economy is on life support. But Castro insisted the communist system he put in place can provide for the island's citizens.

"No one should pretend the people of this noble and selfless country give up its glory and rights," he wrote. "We are able to produce food and material wealth we need with the effort and intelligence of our people."

White House press secretary Josh Earnest called Castro's op-ed "an indication that the trip had its intended effect" of pressuring the Cuban government to adopt economic and political reforms.

This story was updated at 2:18 p.m.

Fidel Castro Was Not Impressed With Obama

By Kate Sheehy

[New York Post](#), March 28, 2016

Fidel Castro — speaking out for the first time since President Obama's historic visit to Cuba — blasted the US leader for trying to meddle in his country's affairs.

In a letter titled "Brother Obama" and published Monday in *El Granma*, the official state newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, the island nation's former president scoffed, "We don't need the empire to give us any presents." Barack Obama is seen on television under a poster with pictures of Cuban President Raul Castro and his brother Fidel Castro as he addresses the Cuban people.

Castro, 89, ripped Obama for assuming that Cuba trusted him when he said the US government is done trying to overthrow the Communist regime and that this will help the island move more quickly toward economic and political reform.

"My modest suggestion is that he reflects and doesn't try to develop theories about Cuban politics," Castro said.

"No one should pretend that the people of this noble and selfless country will renounce its glory and its rights," he wrote. "We are capable of producing the food and material wealth that we need with the work and intelligence of our people."

He even took a swipe at Obama's relative youth.

"Native populations do not exist at all in the minds of Obama. Nor does he say that racial discrimination was swept away by the Revolution; that retirement and salary of all Cubans were enacted by this before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old," Castro said.

Obama had said in a speech that "it is time, now, for us to leave the past behind," but the diehard Commie retorted, "I imagine that any one of us ran the risk of having a heart attack on hearing these words from the President of the United States."

Castro ceded power to his brother Raul in 2008. Obama met with Raul last week, the first time a US president had been to Cuba since 1928.

The newspaper that published Fidel's letter takes its name from the yacht that Fidel and dozens of other rebels used to travel from Mexico to Cuba to launch their revolution in 1956.

Fidel Castro Blasts Obama's Cuba Trip

[AFP](#), March 28, 2016

The retired revolutionary, who has reacted tepidly to Cuba's rapprochement with the United States, scoffed at what he described as Obama's call to forgive and forget more than half a century of Cold War enmity.

"Listening to the words of the US president could give anyone a heart attack," Castro wrote in his first public reaction to the visit.

"My modest suggestion is that he think and not try to theorize about Cuban politics," said the 89-year-old leader of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, who handed power to his younger brother Raul in 2006.

He made the comments in a tortuous opinion piece headlined "Brother Obama" and published in Granma, the official newspaper of Cuba's communist party.

Obama, who met Raul but not Fidel Castro during his three-day visit last week, defied the regime's warnings not to wade into Cuba's internal affairs, meeting with anti-Castro dissidents and calling for democracy and greater freedoms.

"Voters should be able to choose their governments in free and democratic elections," he said in an unprecedented speech carried live on Cuba's tightly controlled state television.

Castro lashed out at that speech, the symbolically charged centerpiece of the first visit by a US president in 88 years.

"Obama gave a speech in which he used the most syrupy words," he wrote, recounting the long history of acrimonious relations between Havana and Washington as he defended the accomplishments of his 47-year rule.

"Nobody has any illusion that the people of this noble and selfless country will surrender glory and rights and the spiritual wealth that has come through the development of education, science and culture," Castro wrote.

"I would also warn that we are capable of producing the food and material wealth we need with the labor and the intelligence of our people. We don't need any gifts from the empire."

– PR problem –

Obama's visit posed an awkward public relations problem for the Castro regime, juxtaposing a charismatic, 54-year-old leader known for the political brand of "change" with the octogenarian brothers who have ruled the island since 1959.

The fact that Obama is black and the Castros are white was not lost on Cubans, many of whom also have African roots, and Castro appeared to take particular umbrage both at the US president's relative youth and his description of both countries as New World nations "built in part by slaves."

"He doesn't mention that racial discrimination was erased by the Revolution, that retirement benefits and salaries for all Cubans were decreed before Mr Barack Obama was 10 years old," he wrote.

Castro remained out of sight during Obama's visit, which aimed to cement the thaw announced in December 2014 by the US president and Raul Castro, who has proven more reform-minded than his older brother.

Fidel Castro waited a month and a half to publicly give his blessing to the US-Cuban rapprochement, and then gave it only a lukewarm embrace.

Since announcing their landmark rapprochement, the United States and Cuba have reopened embassies in each other's capitals and are slowly normalizing ties.

But several thorny issues remain unsettled, including the fate of the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, which Cuba wants back, and Washington's more than five-decade-old embargo on the island, which Obama again called on Congress to lift.

Since stepping down, Fidel Castro has spent part of his time writing reflections that occasionally appear in the communist party press.

His last public appearance was in July 2015.

Cuba After Obama's Visit

By Moses Patterson

[Havana \(CUB\) Times](#), March 28, 2016

HAVANA TIMES — President Obama's speech had a profound impact on the Cuban people. It was a powerful act of demystification. We had spent decades seeing US presidents only as part of bad news and suddenly seeing one, in the flesh, here in Cuba, telling us he was our friend, was an unforgettable experience.

It was perfect, but the most sensational experience was his meeting with entrepreneurs and the self-employed. His words to them were as powerful as his already classic speeches. Every phrase, every idea, every gesture was correct. The message was clear and encouraging.

At home, as in nearly all others, we followed Obama closely. My family is a mixed lot, politically speaking, though not that much. My father and my aunt are radical communists and the rest oscillate between moderate socialism and critical revolutionaries. It was almost impossible to listen to Obama, with the constant comments of approval in response to his precise and clear words.

No sooner had he finished speaking than they cut to the television studio set up to follow the events of the day, with two hosts. Some political analysts were on standby, ready to

comment on Obama's words. It was unbelievable. Everything that Obama had said and seemed so on the nose meant the opposite to them.

They used every imaginable, manipulative argument to discredit him. A young and talented journalist, Cristina Escobar, which spares no effort to position herself as the spearhead of a journalism committed to the system, stood out in this. Of course, this technique works and has been proven successful throughout the decades. Many people were left confused and they've re-broadcasted the criticism [not the speech] so much that no few people have been persuaded.

The speech was described as meddling in the internal affairs of Cuba only because Obama said that democracy is the way to overcome problems in any society.

Despite his explanations, despite acknowledging Cuba's achievements and the United States' mistakes, despite using his own life as an example, despite suggesting that Cubans draw ideas from other countries, not his own (owing to the mistrust that remains), despite all this they said he was meddling in Cuba's internal affairs and had double standards.

In a few minutes' time, my own family had changed its opinion. My father became defensive and began to quote Che Guevara, who said "one shouldn't make the slightest concession to imperialism." He can't let go of such a mindset, he was trained to think this way. My aunt supported him. My mother continued to praise Obama, but she was already starting to feel she had gotten carried away some. My sisters and I continued to refuse to be influenced by the brainwashers.

Since that day, the Cuban media has maintained the same attitude. The more ethical journalists speak only of the positive aspects of the speech, without refuting the arguments of those who impel a campaign of misinformation and manipulation. It's the power of the media at work and we all know it's a force to be reckoned with.

Despite this, Obama had a deep impact on people. Not everyone can be deceived easily. Yesterday, I got on a horse-drawn carriage and Obama's visit immediately came up in conversation. The driver said: "that blonde reporter [referring to Cristina] is really getting on my nerves. She's torn apart everything Obama said. The skinny fellow who talks about prices and markets, I like him, but this woman is a brownnose."

A passenger, who was apparently a successful self-employed person, said: "the black fellow gave a good speech, but no one can get to these people. They've been suckling at the teat for 50 years and they're afraid of losing it."

A young woman who I've seen before, for she used to be a nurse and now she sells pork at a market, said: "the blockade that we care about is the internal one; the other blockade only affects them in their businesses. The thing that holds me back and screws me over is the State itself."

A rather vulgar gentleman said: "the one who looked scared was Diaz Canel. He didn't even say a word to Obama, because, if what Obama suggests comes to pass, it's goodbye to the position these people want to give him. This guy didn't do a single good thing in this province, so, what can we expect him to do in charge of the entire country?"

Raul Castro received Barack Obama in the Palace of the Revolution for private talks. Photo: Ismael Francisco/cubadebate

I listened to all those comments analytically and smiled. People are waking up, it's no longer easy to keep everyone deceived.

A famous quote from a US politician who Fidel Castro used to mention a lot, perhaps it was Lincoln, came to mind. I'm not sure now and I have no way of verifying this, so you'll have to excuse me. It is something to the effect that you can deceive all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but not all the people all the time. It's not an exact quote, but that's the idea, and I think it fits what's going on here in Cuba well.

The concrete repercussions of Obama's visit remain to be seen. However, there is no doubt it will give great impetus, not only to the policy of rapprochement he's implemented, but also to change in Cuba.

He laid a number of issues that are taboo on the table. He opened a discussion at the street level. He put the ball on the government's side of the court and helped dissident and alternative voices be heard.

The legacy is positive. Fear has been broken and secrecy ended. A US president has come to visit us, spoken to our people on an equal footing and claims to be our friend. This heralds better times ahead.

Cover photo: John Shaw

As Life Returns To Normal In Cuba, Residents Reflect On Obama's Historic Visit And What's Next

By Maria Perez

[Naples \(FL\) Daily News](#), March 28, 2016

HAVANA — A week after President Barack Obama visited his country, Roberto Hernandez sits with friends drinking a beer now that life is back to normal here.

It was quite a week. Obama toured Old Havana with his family and met with Cuba leader Raul Castro. There also was a Major League Baseball game Tuesday with the Tampa Bay Rays and The Rolling Stones concert on Friday.

But things are quieter now as Hernandez visits at a cafe with friends, Juan Dominguez and Maritza Perez. The three relaxed, reflecting on Obama's historic visit.

Hernandez, a 52-year-old shoemaker, made a point of staying home last week to watch Obama's visit on television.

"I was interested in what he was going to say," Hernandez said. "I wanted to listen to it in his own voice, what he wants to do."

At an unprecedented news conference with Castro, Obama said the U.S. still has differences with Cuba in several areas, like freedom of expression, assembly and religion. And he said only Cubans can chart their future.

"He spoke well," Hernandez said. "It's true that the future of Cuba has to be determined by all the Cubans."

A few feet away, holding their bikes filled with boxes of flowers in a busy street near the Colon cemetery, Michael Cardoso, 37, and Yusniel Tabares, 32, said they didn't watch the news conference or Obama's speech. They, like many Cubans, were working. But they have heard what he said.

"What he has to do is to take us to the U.S.," Tabares said, half joking.

Tabares said he has heard Obama talking about ways the U.S. can help the Cuban people. Asked if he thinks those promises will be fulfilled, Tabares said, "Let's see."

Cardoso said he has heard people comment about Castro's brash response during the news conference with Obama that there aren't political prisoners in Cuba.

"What happens is that freedom of expression is tighter here than in other places," Cardoso said.

And he likes that Obama mentioned the issue.

"I think it's good that he mentioned it," he said. "It's true."

Cardoza said he hopes for economic opportunities in Cuba, so he liked hearing Obama promote American businesses that will come to the island. Cardoza said the embargo is not to blame for all of Cuba's economic problems. Supplies from the U.S., he says, are bought through third countries, although at a higher price. But there are also Cuba products that are unaffordable.

"And I am middle class, I have a business," he said. "Those who live out of retirement can't do anything."

Many Cubans received Obama warmly, giving him high marks for his visit and the efforts he's making to improve relations with the country.

Dominguez, 59, who sat with Hernandez as he drank a beer, said he always thought Obama was a smart man.

"He is a brave man," Dominguez said.

"That, above everything. He is very, very brave," Perez agrees.

Perez, 44, used to work in a restaurant and would like to set up a paladar, a private restaurant. She said she liked that Obama had a meal at a paladar in Old Havana.

"We know a waiter who served him," she said. "He was so glad. He didn't know whether to sit down or stand."

Obama, during his visit, told Cubans he supports removing the trade embargo, but he said Congress must act to lift it.

Perez said she wants the embargo lifted and would like both countries to start communicating and negotiating again to reach an understanding.

"Everything can be achieved with respect," she said. "He spoke with a lot of respect."

Sabrina Valdes, 65, said she is surprised Obama cannot end the embargo.

"How is it that a Congress is worth more than a president?" she asked.

Valdes, who said she didn't pay much attention to Obama, said she owes many things to the Cuban revolution and stands by Fidel Castro. She is from the countryside, she said, and is about to retire.

The U.S. embargo, she said, hit the country hard since she was a child, and that's something she won't forget. She said she doesn't mind not having freedom of expression, and that every country has its human rights problems. Cubans have free education and health care, she said, while some U.S. children go to school hungry.

But Lili Blanco has a different view. Blanco, Tabares' wife who sells flowers with him, said Obama's visit was a positive thing for the country.

"People say he is good, that he is bringing good things," she said.

Related stories:

25 Cuban Migrants Land In The Keys

[Miami Herald](#), March 28, 2016

More than 20 migrants from Cuba came ashore in the Lower Keys Monday morning.

The group of 24 men and one woman was spotted by a passing boater on Cook Island, off Big Pine Key, around 6:30 a.m., said Deputy Becky Herrin, spokeswoman for the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

The sheriff's office helped ferry the migrants to the Dolphin Marina on Little Torch Key, where they were turned over to U.S. Border Patrol agents. They were in good condition, Herrin said.

On Saturday, 26 migrants, seven of them with gunshot wounds, were found on a raft off Key West.

Also, in separate incidents last week, 58 Cuban migrants intercepted at sea on several vessels were repatriated.

According to Coast Guard figures, so far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, 2,562 Cubans have been intercepted, sighted or have landed in Florida.

In fiscal year 2015, about 4,476 Cuban migrants were intercepted, spotted or arrived by sea, the largest number in more than seven years.

According to the Coast Guard, uncertainty about a possible change in U.S. immigration policy with Cuba has led to a larger number of Cuban immigrants since President

Barack Obama in December 2014 ordered the restoration of relations with the island.

Obama To Meet With Japan, South Korea Leaders On North Korea

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) – President Barack Obama will discuss the threat posed by North Korea during a meeting this week with the leaders of Japan and South Korea.

Obama will meet with South Korean President Park Geun-hye (goon-hay) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (shin-zoh ah-bay) on Thursday on the sidelines of a nuclear security summit in Washington. The White House says they'll discuss common responses to North Korea and regional security cooperation.

The meeting follows recent announcements by North Korea that the U.S. and treaty allies Japan and South Korea see as provocative and threatening. Earlier this month, Pyongyang said it had made more progress in missile development and also ordered its military on standby for nuclear strikes at any time.

Dozens of world leaders are heading to Washington for the nuclear summit.

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Obama, Park And Abe To Discuss North Korea On Thursday

[Reuters](#), March 29, 2016

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

In Japan And South Korea, Bewilderment At Trump's Suggestion They Build Nukes

By Anna Fifield

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Donald Trump's suggestion that South Korea and Japan should have their own nuclear arsenals so they can protect themselves — and so the United States doesn't have to — has been met with bewilderment in the region.

Government officials on all three sides stressed that there would be no change in the alliance, while newspapers shook their editorial heads.

"We are dumbfounded at such myopic views of a leading candidate in the U.S. presidential race, who tries to approach such critical issues only from the perspective of

expenses," the JoongAng Ilbo, one of South Korea's biggest newspapers, said in a punchy editorial. "Trump must refrain from his penny-wise and pound-foolish approach."

The left-leaning Hankyoreh urged Park Geun-hye's administration to protest. "The South Korean government needs to express its firm opposition to Trump's foreign policy plan, which constitutes a threat to security on the Korean Peninsula," the paper said, warning that Trump's comment could complicate efforts to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

The Republican presidential front-runner candidate argues that the United States' defense alliances with Japan and South Korea cost too much money.

The U.S. military has about 54,000 troops stationed in Japan and 28,500 in South Korea, and the alliances form the cornerstone of its military presence in Asia. The presence is meant to keep North Korea, as well as China, in check.

But Trump has been complaining that these two rich countries should be paying for their own defense. "Now, does that mean nuclear? It could mean nuclear. It's a very scary nuclear world," Trump told the New York Times.

With the irascible North Korean regime threatening more nuclear and missile tests, some politicians and opinion leaders in Seoul have been talking about the need for South Korea to develop its own nuclear weapons, but this does not have mainstream support.

The spokesman for South Korea's defense ministry, Moon Sang-gyun, said Monday that he had no comment on Trump's remarks on nuclear weapons. He did, however, tell reporters that the alliance with the United States remained strong.

In Tokyo, Yoshihide Suga, the chief cabinet secretary, said that there would be no change in Japan's policy of not having nuclear weapons.

"Whoever becomes president of the United States, the Japan-U.S. alliance, based on a bilateral security agreement, will remain the core of Japan's diplomacy," Suga told reporters. "We will adhere to our three principles that prohibit Japan from owning, developing and transporting a nuclear arsenal."

Obama Said Nuclear Nonproliferation Was A Top Priority. How Did He Do?

By Steven Mufson

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

A group of nuclear nonproliferation experts gathered in the White House Situation Room last Halloween to talk about how President Obama could still make nuclear security an important part of his legacy.

The timing was coincidental, but the location reflected the sensitivity and gravity of the agenda: loose nuclear material, superpower nuclear arsenals, nuclear terrorism,

tensions with Russia and the unpredictability of North Korea. The administration also was hunting for ideas about what might be still doable in the president's waning days in office.

The muted, closed-door White House meeting was a far cry from the rousing speech Obama delivered on April 5, 2009, before a crowd in Prague's Hradcany Square. There, a hopeful Obama set high goals for reducing the risk of nuclear weapons. He vowed to shrink the U.S. nuclear arsenal, secure poorly guarded nuclear materials such as uranium and plutonium, convene international nuclear summits, and confront and contain North Korea, which just that morning had tested a long-range missile.

His goal, he said, was "to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," while acknowledging that "this goal will not be reached quickly — perhaps not in my lifetime."

Seven years later, on the eve of the last of four nuclear summits, Obama's track record is mixed on the issue that he elevated to a top priority. He has won an agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, persuaded about a quarter of the countries with loose nuclear materials to move them off their soil, and signed with Russia a new START treaty that includes new weapons limits.

But in his fiscal 2017 budget, Obama has proposed deep cuts in spending on programs to stop nuclear proliferation while leaving intact military spending on a new generation of weapons. The countries that have not given up stockpiles of nuclear material include the riskiest ones, such as Pakistan and India. And this week's summit will have a glaringly empty chair, Russia. The world's other nuclear superpower, amid tensions with the United States, has chosen not to attend.

"Presidents George W. Bush and Obama both noted during their campaigns that the United States and Russia are still postured on what they called a hair trigger," said former senator Sam Nunn, who sponsored legislation when he was still in the Senate to assist Russia and former Soviet republics secure and destroy nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. "We still have the ability to destroy each other in 30 minutes to an hour's time. Both of them said they would improve that, and as far as I can tell, neither has."

"The president has only accomplished a fraction of what he hoped to achieve," said Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund. And now, he said, especially after the exhausting talks with Iran, "some of the steam has gone out."

The White House, which did not reply to a request for comment, will likely argue that its achievements are substantial and that there is still time for more progress. It can use the nuclear summit to highlight improved training for nuclear industry workers, including a Chinese safety center created with U.S. help. The administration can also boast of a Latin American declaration that the continent will be a

nuclear-weapons-free zone. Before Obama leaves office, Poland, Australia and Indonesia also might rid themselves of nuclear material.

The summit will also coincide with the arrival of a shipment of plutonium from Japan to the Savannah River storage facility run by the Energy Department, fulfilling a commitment Japan made at the 2014 summit to better safeguard dangerous materials.

But the Obama administration has also fallen short of many expectations.

The military's weapons: Cirincione laments that "there wasn't a single nuclear weapons program inherited from the Bush administration that Obama has stopped. In fact, he's added to them." He points to new land-based ballistic missiles, nuclear cruise missiles, a new generation of bomber planes and weapons capable of penetrating deep underground.

"We are building a new bomber that we don't need, and then we're going to outfit it with a new cruise missile we don't need," Cirincione said. "It is a redundancy on top of a redundancy."

Budget cuts: For fiscal 2017, the Obama administration has proposed its smallest nuclear security budget ever. The proposal would slash spending for the National Nuclear Security Administration's international program by roughly two-thirds, to a level last seen in the mid-1990s.

One reason for the cut is that a portion of budgets over the past two decades went to securing material in the former Soviet Union. But that does not explain the entire reduction; plus, there are new needs.

"The administration is now projecting lower spending year after year for years to come, postponing or canceling a wide range of nuclear security activities that had been included in earlier plans," said a new report by Harvard University's Belfer Center.

"Nuclear weapons are up, up, up, and controlling them is down, down, down," Matthew Bunn, a Harvard professor and one of the Belfer Center co-authors, said in an interview.

Securing nuclear materials: Though the security for nuclear materials has improved "modestly" since the last summit, "the capabilities of some terrorist groups, particularly the Islamic State, have grown dramatically, suggesting that in a net calculation, the risk of nuclear terrorism is higher than it was two years ago," William H. Tobey, a professor at Harvard's Belfer Center, said in recent congressional testimony.

Last December's discovery of a video of the home of a senior official of a Belgian nuclear research center has heightened fears. The video was taken by people linked to the Paris terrorist attacks and to the Islamic State.

Japan's plutonium delivery to the United States will slip in just in time to meet Japan's pledge. But if Japan finishes its Rokkasho reprocessing facility, it will produce even more

plutonium, adding to its large stockpiles and creating new security risks.

"So we've made some modest progress . . . but there are some countries that are going in the other direction," Carl Robichaud, a program officer at the Carnegie Corp. of New York, said in a recent briefing. The new material could be "as many as tens of weapons' worth each year that would quickly dwarf the amount that has been blended down and eliminated," he said.

Ending reprocessing: Reprocessing plants, which can produce tons of dangerous material, have been shut down in Britain, France and Belgium, and one in the United States may never be finished.

However, in addition to Japan's plant, new reprocessing plants have been completed or are under construction in Pakistan and India. China, which was given a green light in a nuclear cooperation agreement that the Obama administration approved, is considering construction of commercial-scale reprocessing plants. Russia is planning to build a new reprocessing plant, too, the Belfer Center report said.

These costly projects aren't just bad commercially. They may also herald a new arms race in Northeast Asia, some fear, and heighten the danger of material finding its way into a terrorist bomb.

"The real issue is the U.S. failure to address the threat posed by growing stockpiles of plutonium," Robert Gallucci, a former special envoy for nonproliferation at the State Department, wrote last year. "The president's approach to nuclear security may well make matters worse."

Russia: Russia poses many challenges, including corruption. From 2009 to 2012, the state nuclear company Rosatom fired 276 managers and executives for corruption. One helped run a reprocessing facility. "It makes you nervous," said Bunn.

With its economy under pressure from low oil prices and international sanctions, Russia says it will cut budgets across the board and fire 10 percent of state employees this year. Rosatom's budget will not escape, meaning fewer funds to pay for security.

The level of U.S. assistance for securing Russia's nuclear material that Nunn championed is over. And Russia in December 2014 severed nuclear security cooperation after the United States, as part of sanctions, cut off other nuclear energy cooperation.

Even as terrorist threats grow, conventional ones remain. Bruce Blair, a nuclear security expert at Princeton University, says the United States and Russia still have 1,700 weapons on launch ready alert. Blair has been urging both governments to "relax their postures," but he said two senior administration officials told him it was not prudent. "It was a bogus analysis," Blair said.

"Dealing with Russia is the key to dealing with nuclear issues. We have to dance on the dance floor together, otherwise things don't happen," said Nunn. "With both countries having the ability to destroy each other in a short time, the continuing posture, in my view, is very, very dangerous over a long period of time. We've been fortunate."

Russia's violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and its "refusal to negotiate reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons, together with the growth of nuclear weapons arsenals in North Korea, Pakistan, and perhaps elsewhere, leave this goal [of nuclear security] more distant today than it was seven years ago, and with no visible path to achieving it," Tobey said.

Japan Opens Radar Station Close To Disputed Isles, Drawing Angry China Response

By Nobuhiro Kubo And Tim Kelly

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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An Israeli Soldier Is Accused Of Killing A Disarmed Palestinian. But Many Think He's A Hero.

By Ruth Eglash

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

JERUSALEM — A video appearing to show an Israeli soldier fatally shooting an alleged Palestinian assailant as he lay injured on the ground has opened a fierce debate among Israelis over whether the soldier's actions constitute murder or heroism.

It is a question that has divided some of Israel's political and military leaders and has sparked a wider discussion about what it means to serve on the front line of a low-intensity conflict with a surge of violence in recent months.

Since Oct. 1, 29 Israelis and five foreign citizens have been killed in stabbing, shooting and vehicular attacks by Palestinians, while more than 180 Palestinians have been killed, either carrying out attacks against Israelis or during clashes with the Israeli military.

Some political leaders and tens of thousands of citizens have voiced support for the soldier, even as military prosecutors investigate him on suspicion of murder.

Solidarity rallies are being planned in at least two cities. Social-media campaigns, some using the soldier's name and photo, proclaim his innocence, and an online petition demanding that he receive a citation for his actions had garnered more than 50,000 names by Monday.

Thursday's shooting in Hebron, which was caught on video by a field worker from the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, shows the injured Palestinian, Abdul Fattah al-

Sharif, on the ground minutes after he attacked and wounded an Israeli soldier. As Israeli medical teams evacuate the soldier, military personnel wander around the wounded Palestinian. A few minutes later, a shot is heard, and blood is seen streaming from Sharif's head.

Another video taken at the scene and published online shows paramedics screaming at soldiers not to touch the wounded Palestinian, because, at that point, he was still alive, might have been booby-trapped or still posed a threat.

Still another clip purports to show the suspected soldier shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries with an extreme right-wing Hebron activist, U.S.-born Baruch Marzel, just after the shooting.

Using the incident as an example of illegal Israeli actions, the Palestinian Authority announced Monday that it asked the United Nations to launch an official investigation into extrajudicial killings of Palestinians by Israelis. To Palestinians, including Sharif's relatives who were interviewed by local media, the case is clearly murder.

Israel Defense Forces leaders condemned the shooting, saying the action of one soldier should not be held against an entire army.

"This is not the IDF, these are not the values of the IDF, and these are not the values of the Jewish people," an Israeli army spokesman, Moti Almoz, said at a news conference Thursday.

Israel's defense minister, Moshe Yaalon, said the shooting was an "utter breach of the army's values and its code of ethics in combat."

The accused soldier's family plans to protest outside his military hearing Tuesday, and his mother sent a letter to Yaalon accusing the military of "abandoning her son."

The debate has reached the Israeli cabinet, where an argument broke out Sunday between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition partner, Education Minister Naftali Bennett.

Bennett demanded that the government intervene on behalf of the soldier and slammed the military for releasing information about the soldier to the media. He also accused the prime minister of not giving enough support to Israeli soldiers.

According to the Haaretz newspaper, Netanyahu responded: "I have always given support to soldiers and have led more soldiers into battle than you. So don't preach to me on this matter."

ISIS Fails To Gain Much Traction In Yemen

Al Qaeda's local branch thrives in war's chaos while Islamic State loses ground

By Asa Fitch And Saleh Al Batati

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

Saudis Announce Prisoner Swap With Houthis In Yemen Conflict

By Rick Gladstone

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Saudi Arabia announced a large prisoner swap on Monday with its Houthi rebel adversaries in the Yemen war — 109 Yemenis for nine Saudis — in what appeared to be meant as a signal that the two sides would honor a cease-fire planned for April 10.

The Saudi announcement, conveyed in a terse dispatch by the official Saudi Press Agency, said the prisoner exchange was completed on Sunday. It did not specify the location; presumably it took place somewhere along the Saudi-Yemeni frontier.

The dispatch described the prisoners Saudi Arabia released as "Yemeni citizens arrested in operations areas near the Saudi southern border," but did not say whether they were fighters or civilians. Neither did it further describe the Saudis who were released.

The exchange was only the second to be announced since a Saudi-led coalition began a campaign of aerial bombings aimed at the Houthi rebels and their allies in Yemen a year ago. The first announced prisoner exchange took place earlier this month, with seven Yemenis freed in exchange for one Saudi.

International pressure has been building on Saudi Arabia to end the war, which has turned Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, into a humanitarian disaster. The Saudis have been seeking to reinstate the government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, routed into exile last year by the Houthis, who are regarded by Saudi Arabia as proxies of Iran, its regional rival.

Mr. Hadi returned to Yemen in September from exile in Saudi Arabia, re-establishing himself in the southern Yemeni port of Aden. The Houthis still control much of the country, though, including Sana, the capital. Islamic extremist groups, including the Islamic State, have also exploited the vacuum of authority to build their presence in Yemen.

Last week, a United Nations mediator seeking to broker an end to the conflict announced that the antagonists had agreed to halt hostilities on April 10, to be followed by a new round of peace talks on April 18 in Kuwait. Although previous attempts at a cease-fire and peace talks have failed, the mediator, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, said he was more optimistic this time.

International relief agencies have expressed mounting alarm about the deteriorating situation in Yemen. Summarizing the past year of conflict, the World Health Organization said in a statement on Sunday that more than 6,200 people had been killed and 30,000 wounded. The organization also said that more than 21 million Yemenis — 82 percent of the population — were in need of humanitarian

aid, and that more than 14 million needed urgent health services, including more than two million malnourished children and women who are pregnant or lactating.

NATIONAL NEWS

Obama Slams ‘Divisive And Vulgar’ Rhetoric Of 2016 Campaign

[TIME](#), March 28, 2016

In a speech given at the ceremony for the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting, President Obama criticized the media’s coverage of the 2016 election season, noting that in 20 to 30 years, no one will remember which posts got the most retweets or likes.

Obama remarked on the discourse of the current political landscape, condemning “the divisive and often vulgar rhetoric,” “the coarsening of the debate” and “the sense that facts don’t matter.” “I was going to call it [a] carnival atmosphere,” he said, “but that implies fun.”

“Even as the appetite for information and data flowing through the internet is voracious, we’ve seen newsrooms closed, the bottom line has shrunk, the news cycle has as well, and all too often there is enormous pressure on journalists to fill the void and feed the beast,” he said. In this climate, he urged journalists to “not dumb down the news and to have higher aspirations for what effective news can do. Because a well-informed electorate depends on you.”

“The choice between what cuts into your bottom lines and what harms us as a society is an important one,” he said. “We have to choose which price is harder to pay.”

The award, in honor of the late journalist Robin Toner whom Obama described as a “reporter’s reporter,” went to ProPublica’s Alec MacGillis.

Obama Urges Journalists To Cover The Substance Of The Campaign

By Mark Landler

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — President Obama delivered a forceful critique on Monday of politicians and the journalists who cover them, lamenting the circuslike atmosphere of the presidential campaign and declaring, “A job well done is about more than just handing someone a microphone.”

Speaking at a journalism prize ceremony in honor of Robin Toner, a longtime political reporter for The New York Times who died in 2008, Mr. Obama said the 2016 campaign had become “entirely untethered to reason and facts and analysis,” a coarse spectacle that he said was tarnishing the “American brand” around the world.

“I was going to call it a carnival atmosphere,” the president said, “but that implies fun.”

“The No. 1 question I’m getting as I travel around the world or talk to world leaders right now is, ‘What is happening in America about our politics?’” Mr. Obama continued. “They care about America, the most powerful nation on earth, functioning effectively and its government being able to make sound decisions.”

Mr. Obama’s references to Donald J. Trump, the New York real estate developer turned Republican front-runner, were unmistakable in his criticism of “divisive and often vulgar rhetoric,” frequently aimed at women and at ethnic and racial minorities. But he also turned his fire on the news media, saying it had given an uncritical platform to those pronouncements, in part because of relentless economic pressures that have changed the way news organizations operate.

The president suggested that the news media had not done enough to question the promises made by politicians — an apparent reference not only to Mr. Trump, but also to Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the independent who is challenging Hillary Clinton, Mr. Obama’s former secretary of state, for the Democratic nomination. Mr. Sanders has promised free public college education and national health care coverage, ambitious social programs that critics say could never be enacted.

“When people put their faith into someone who can’t possibly deliver his or her own promises,” Mr. Obama said, “that only breeds more cynicism.”

The president denounced what he called the practice of drawing “false equivalences” between competing claims made by politicians. “If I say the world is round and someone else says it’s flat, that’s worth reporting,” Mr. Obama said. “But you might also want to report on a bunch of scientific evidence that seems to support the notion that the world is round.”

Addressing an audience that included newspaper proprietors in addition to editors and reporters, the president said that despite their shrinking newsrooms and profit margins, they needed to plow money into investigative journalism. He warned them to avoid the ephemeral blandishments of the digital age — “slapdash” Twitter posts that disappear from iPhone screens within seconds — in favor of in-depth coverage of the issues.

“Just because something is substantive doesn’t mean it is not interesting,” Mr. Obama said.

The president invoked the legacy of Ms. Toner, saying she had not shied from delving into the complexities of health care reform or the intricacies of the tax code. Nor did she shrink from asking tough questions of Mr. Obama when he was a young senator starting his aspirational bid for the presidency. “She cast a critical eye from the very beginning,” he said.

Mr. Obama has discussed the coarse tone of the campaign before, as well as the economic realities of the

corporate media world. But rarely has he spoken with such passion about what he views as the unmet promise of the news media. He spoke nostalgically about returning to his house in Chicago to sift through stacks of old newspapers, left on his desk, from the months before he was elected president.

"The curating function has diminished in this smartphone age," he said.

Mr. Obama acknowledged that his relationship with the news media had not been unruffled during his years in the White House, but he suggested that he followed daily news coverage closely, saying, "You should not underestimate the number of times I've read something that you did and called somebody up and said, 'What's going on here?'"

The president singled out Jeffrey Goldberg, the national correspondent for The Atlantic magazine, for a lengthy article he wrote on Mr. Obama's foreign policy that caused ripples around the world. Mr. Obama made clear the quotes attributed to him were accurate (they included blunt criticism of American allies like Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain).

The article, Mr. Obama said, had come up in a conversation he had with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Mr. Putin, evidently, was surprised by the candid tone of his comments.

"Unlike you, Vladimir, I don't get to edit the piece before it's published," Mr. Obama said with a grin.

Obama Calls For More Facts, Fewer Insults In Speech To Journalists

By Greg Jaffe

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

President Obama used a keynote speech at an annual journalism dinner in Washington Monday to lament the often divisive and sometimes vulgar state of American politics and to call on reporters to work harder to hold politicians accountable.

"Real people depend on you to uncover the truth," Obama told a crowd of nearly 450 at a dinner for the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting in Washington on Monday.

Obama has delivered a series of speeches this year in which he has expressed worry about the country's gridlocked, dysfunctional government and the angry tone of the current election season. Much of his State of the Union address in January was devoted to the country's deep partisan divide, which has worsened during his time in the White House. Obama returned to that theme a few weeks ago in a speech to the Illinois state legislature where he served before coming to Washington.

"As I go into my last year I spend a lot of time reflecting on how this system — how this crazy notion of self

government works," he said. "How can we make it work. And this is as important to making it work as anything. People getting information that they can trust and that has substance and truth and facts behind it."

Although Obama hasn't shied away from press criticism during his seven years in office, this was his first major speech on the role of the rapidly changing media in American democracy.

This year's prize for political reporting went to Alec MacGillis who covers politics and government for ProPublica, a nonprofit news organization that focuses on investigative journalism. MacGillis previously worked for The Washington Post.

Obama spent much of his remarks describing the example of Robin Toner, first female national political correspondent for The New York Times. Toner, for whom the journalism prize was named, died in 2008 and wrote frequently about Obama in the Senate and on the campaign trail.

"She treated the public with respect," Obama said, praising her ability to explain "complicated, esoteric political issues" in a way that Americans could understand.

Obama's remarks often sounded like a lament for a bygone era of fact-based journalism before Twitter, Facebook and even cable television news.

"What we're seeing right now does corrode our democracy and our society," he said. "When our elected officials and political campaigns become entirely untethered to reason and facts and analysis; when it doesn't matter what is true and what's not, that makes it all but impossible for us to make decisions on behalf of future generations."

Without mentioning Republican front-runner Donald J. Trump by name, he criticized news organizations for giving the former reality television star-turned-politician long hours of airtime to insult rivals or make suspect promises.

The country "would be better served if billions of dollars in free media came with serious accountability, especially when the politicians issue unworkable plans or make promises that they can't keep," Obama said, "and there are reporters here who know they can't keep them."

Obama Lets Loose, Is In Total DGAF Mode

[Huffington Post](#), March 28, 2016

President Barack Obama, admitting he can let loose a little in the twilight of his presidency, got candid on Monday about a recent conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

According to Obama, Putin objected to how he was portrayed in a recent article in The Atlantic about Obama's foreign policy.

"Unlike you, Vladimir, I don't get to edit the piece before it's published," Obama recalled telling him, a reference to Putin's control of Russian media.

"I wouldn't call it a carnival atmosphere, because that implies fun," he said.

"The number one question I am getting as I travel around the world and talk to world leaders is, 'What is happening in America?!' They understand that America is the one place in the world where you can't afford crazy politics."

Without specifically naming him, Obama called out the media's treatment of the real estate mogul Donald Trump's campaign. He criticized how much attention Trump receives, particularly from cable news networks.

"A job well done is about more than just handing someone a microphone," Obama said.

Unlike Trump, who frequently antagonizes the press, Obama praised journalists, calling them an important part of American democracy and telling them that while he may not always agree with their reporting, "you help me do my job better."

He marveled that a movie about investigative journalism, "Spotlight," won the Oscar for Best Picture last month, and reminded reporters that the work that they do will endure.

Good journalism "matters more than ever, and by the way, lasts longer than some slap-dash tweet that slides off our screens in the blink of an eye," he said.

Obama, in his final year in office, has spoken off the cuff about a range of topics, especially his views on the media and this year's campaign. His comments about the media's treatment of Trump and the divisive rhetoric of the GOP presidential race echoed earlier statements about his regret "that the tone of our politics has gotten worse."

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.

Suggest a correction

Obama Takes Media To Task For Coverage Of 'Untethered' Campaign

By Justin Sink

[Bloomberg Politics](#), March 29, 2016

President Barack Obama condemned politics "untethered to reason" and implored reporters to "not dumb down the news" in a harsh criticism of the media and the tenor of the 2016 presidential campaign.

In remarks delivered at a journalism awards ceremony Monday in Washington, Obama called on the press to have "higher aspirations" than the number of electronic "hits" stories may generate. And he warned that the coarsening political dialogue was eroding America's standing in the world.

The U.S. president didn't call out Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump by name, but made clear he was critiquing what he sees as superficial, ratings-focused coverage of the businessman's campaign.

"The number one question I am getting as I travel around the world or talk to world leaders right now is, 'What is happening to America?'" Obama said at the awards ceremony for Syracuse University's Toner Prize, named for the late Robin Toner, the first woman to be national political correspondent for the New York Times.

Obama said the U.S. was "the place where you can't afford completely crazy politics." He warned of the news media's role in letting politics become "entirely untethered to reason and facts and analysis," even as many journalism outlets struggle with shrinking budgets and seek to attract viewers and readers with shorter attention spans. **Vulgar Rhetoric**

In remarks that were among the president's sharpest to date on this year's race to succeed him, Obama decried "divisive and often vulgar rhetoric." That, he said, has led to a campaign he would describe as having a carnival atmosphere — except "that implies fun."

Obama said that while he took "some" responsibility for the worsening tone of politics, the media also needed to accept responsibilities. The president told reporters that the American people depended on them to sort through the theatrics of the presidential campaign and remained "hungry for the truth."

"These are folks who trust you when you tell them there's a problem in their schools or their water is poisoned or the political promises a candidate is promising don't add up," Obama said.

Reporting involves more than just handing someone "a microphone" or publishing some "slap-dash tweet," he said. Moreover, Obama said, in-depth investigative work would be remembered decades from now, rather than stories that got "the most hits."

In discussing the importance of a free press, he said there exists "an inherent tension between the president and journalists and added, "it's supposed to be that way." **Transparency Criticism**

He said that during a recent conversation with Russian president Vladimir Putin, they discussed an article for The Atlantic that had analyzed Obama's foreign policy doctrine. Obama said he disagreed on some areas with how his views had been described. He added wryly:

"I pointed out to him that unlike you, Vladimir, I don't get to edit the piece."

Although Obama spoke forcefully for media access, his administration has come under criticism for its handling of the press. Earlier this month, the Associated Press reported the Obama administration set a record for denying access to or censoring information within Freedom of Information Act

requests. The administration has aggressively prosecuted media leaks of classified information.

Administration officials defend their record on access, including its opening up of previously secret visitor logs at the White House.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said earlier this month the White House had “a lot to be proud of” on issues of transparency and had set “a standard that future administrations will have to live up to.”

Obama Scolds Media For Enabling Trump

By Sarah Wheaton

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

President Barack Obama spoke directly to political journalists on Monday night with a message that was part pep talk and part scolding to the Fourth Estate.

Obama delivered the keynote address at a dinner for this year’s winner of an award for political reporting named for the late Robin Toner, who served as The New York Times’ top political correspondent before her death in 2008, shortly after Obama’s historic election.

Obama used the speech as yet another chance to decry the politics of Donald Trump, this time highlighting the media’s role in the mogul’s fact-indifferent campaign.

“It’s worth asking ourselves what each of us — as politicians, as journalists, but most of all as citizens — may have done” to create the polarized political atmosphere, Obama said. “Some may be more to blame than others for the current climate, but all of us are responsible for reversing it.”

Obama’s White House, in the name of transparency, has made unprecedented levels of data available to the public at large, just as it has been pioneering in its efforts to get around the press corps’ filter and speak directly to the public through livestreams, social media and targeted interviews with niche publications. On Monday, he lamented the breakdown of that filter, however, when it comes to Trump, though he did not specially use the Republican frontrunner’s name.

The job of a political reporter, he said, is “more than just handing someone a microphone.”

Obama continued, “It’s to probe and to question and to dig deeper.”

Obama expressed sympathy for reporters who are grappling with the changes in their industry, acknowledging that market forces and changing technology make it harder than ever for those driven by a sense of small-D democratic mission to fulfill it.

“The choice between what cuts into your bottom lines and what harms us as a society is important. You have to choose which price is higher to pay, which cost is harder to bear,” Obama said.

“Good reporters,” he continued, “find yourselves caught between competing forces, I’m aware of that. You believe in the importance of a well-informed electorate. You’ve staked your careers on it. Our democracy needs you more than ever. You’re under significant financial pressures as well. So I believe the electorate would be better served if your networks and your producers would give you the room” to cover substance.

“In today’s unprecedented change in your industry, the job’s gotten tougher,” Obama said. “The appetite for information and data flowing through the Internet is voracious,” Obama said, yet “we’ve seen newsrooms closed, the bottom line has shrunk. The news cycle has as well.”

That creates pressures, he said, for journalists to “fill the void and feed the beast with instant commentary and Twitter rumors and celebrity gossip and softer stories. And then we fail to understand our world, or one another, as well as we should.”

America’s free press is not government-funded, the president noted, so news organizations must pursue profits. But they have “an obligation to invest a good chunk” of those profits back into the newsroom, he added, “and to not dumb down the news and to have higher aspirations for what effective news can do. Because a well-informed electorate depends on you.”

Obama has spoken derisively of political coverage that emphasizes the horse race, and in his view, that drives cynicism. He also repeated complaints on Monday about media creating “false equivalences,” saying that if a politician called the world flat, the media would dutifully post the “he said-she said” and bury scientific consensus about the globe’s shape in “paragraph five or six.”

The president did praise some journalism: the meticulous, pain-staking investigation detailed in the movie “Spotlight,” for example, and a POLITICO project to fact-check five hours of Trump speeches (though he did not cite the publication).

Obama also had praise for himself. He noted that he’d found old newspapers from right before his election in his home in Chicago.

“If you go back and see what I said in 2007 and you go back and see what I did, they match up,” Obama said. That was in part because “people asked me really tough questions.”

Obama also noted the press conference he held with Raul Castro last week, a first in the communist nation, and he recalled a conversation he had with Vladimir Putin about an interview with the Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg.

Obama suggested he’d been taken out of context, a problem Putin might not confront.

“Unlike you, Vladimir, I don’t get to edit the piece before it’s published,” the American president recounted telling the Russian leader.

Obama has taken steps in recent years to improve his relationship with the press. He replaced Jay Carney, a press secretary known for angrily calling journalists who wrote stories he didn't like, with Josh Earnest, who has worked to create a more open, collegial rapport. And the administration has made an effort to show the inner workings of the White House, including a database of all official visitors. But the Obama Justice Department's unprecedented prosecutions of journalists in leak investigations remain a sore point.

Obama offered a note of reassurance, telling journalists that their work has helped him keep tabs on the sprawling federal government.

"You should not underestimate the number of times that I've read something that you did, and I've called somebody up and said what's going on here," Obama said.

And to those feeling like their efforts to hold politicians accountable are falling on deaf ears, Obama said, "You have to believe that me getting it right matters, that it's not just sending something into the void."

At the same time, Obama acknowledged, "in an era in which attention spans are short, it is going to be hard because you're going to have to figure out ways to be more entertaining."

A year ago, Hillary Clinton used her Toner award keynote address to call for "new beginnings" with the press, just as news about her use of a private email server was starting to come out.

"No more secrecy, no more zone of privacy — after all what good did that do me," Clinton said.

'What Is Happening To America'

By Jessica Estepa

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

The rhetoric of U.S. politics may besmirch how the rest of the world sees the country, President Obama told journalists on Monday.

"The No. 1 question I'm getting is, 'What is happening to America?'" he said at the Robin Toner Prize dinner, according to pool reports.

During the president's half-hour speech, he called on journalists to hold politicians accountable and to fact-check the things they say.

"If I say that the world is round and someone else says it's flat, that's worth reporting," he said. "But you might also want to report on a bunch of scientific evidence that shows the world is round."

The political world has "always been rough and tumble." Still, "when it doesn't matter what's true and what's not, that makes it all but impossible to make good decisions on behalf of future generations."

The president didn't specifically mention any of the 2016 presidential candidates.

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Obama Plays Media Critic, Partly Blaming The Industry For 'Coarsening' Political Debate

By Michael A. Memoli

[Los Angeles Times](#), March 28, 2016

President Obama challenged journalists to maintain high standards and rigorous scrutiny of political figures despite increased competition and the pressures of the smartphone age, warning of the cost to the nation's democratic system if the press prioritized profit over the public good.

"When our elected officials and political campaigns become entirely untethered to reason and facts and analysis, when it doesn't matter what's true and what's not, that makes it all but impossible for us to make good decisions on behalf of future generations," the president said at a political journalism award ceremony Monday.

"A well-informed electorate depends on you, and our democracy depends on a well-informed electorate," he added.

The speech at an event awarding the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting, awarded by Syracuse University to honor the late New York Times reporter Robin Toner, offered Obama another opportunity to reflect on the presidential campaign, as he laid some blame on the news industry for what he called the coarsening of the political debate.

Without naming Donald Trump, the political outsider whose domination of the airwaves preceded his amassing of a delegate lead in the GOP race, Obama again expressed dismay at "vulgar rhetoric" often targeting women and minorities, and called on journalists to do more to question the feasibility of candidates' platforms.

"A job well done is about more than just handing someone a microphone," he said, challenging reporters "to probe and to question and to dig deeper."

Voters would be better served, he said, "if billions of dollars in free media came with serious accountability, especially when politicians issue unworkable plans or make promises they can't keep."

Obama acknowledged the pressures on the media industry and journalists specifically in trying to attract readers in the Internet era, but said the reaction should not be to "dumb down the news."

A sensational story might get more hits online today, but "won't stand up to the test of time," he said.

"For all the sideshows in a political season, Americans are still hungry for the truth," Obama argued. "It's just hard to find. It's hard to wade through. The curating function has diminished in this smartphone age. [But] people still want to know what's true."

The president also acknowledged some shortcomings on his part, saying that although he has not always agreed

with constructive criticism of him in the press, he still valued "great journalism."

"You should not underestimate the times I've read something that you did and I have called somebody up and said, 'What's going on here?'" he said.

But while he promised to lead the most transparent White House in history, a recent Associated Press review found his administration had set a record for failing to fulfill freedom of information requests. One in six such requests, 129,825 overall, resulted in no documents being provided, the review found.

Obama nonetheless encouraged reporters to keep up the difficult and oftentimes unglamorous work they do. In a year when Hollywood produced films about being stranded on Mars or battling grizzly bears, it was "Spotlight" – a portrayal of the Boston Globe's investigative reporting about the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic church – that won an Academy Award.

"I'm not suggesting all of you are going to win Oscars. But I am saying it's worth striving to win a Toner," he said.

michael.memoli@latimes.com

President Obama Calls On Journalists To Hold Candidates Accountable

[NBC News](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Monday again bemoaned the political environment surrounding this year's presidential elections and called on journalists to hold candidates and themselves to a higher standard.

Obama spoke at the presentation of the Toner Prize, named for Robin Toner, the first woman to be national political correspondent for The New York Times. During her nearly 25 years there, Toner covered five presidential campaigns. She passed away in 2008.

Obama said the No. 1 question he gets when traveling the world is "What is happening in America?" He said it's because people abroad understand America is the place where you "can't afford completely crazy politics," and they care about the most powerful nation on earth functioning effectively.

"We are all invested in making this system work. We are all responsible for its success, and it's not just for the United States that this matters, it matters for the planet," Obama said.

Obama called on media networks and producers to give reporters room to follow their instincts and dig deeper. He said Toner proved that just because something is substantive, doesn't mean it lacks interest.

"A job well done is about more than just handing someone a microphone. It's to probe and to question and to dig deeper and to demand more," Obama said. "The

electorate would be better served if that happened. It would be better served if billions of dollars in free media came with serious accountability, especially when politicians issue unworkable plans or make promises they cannot keep."

Obama says he understands there are pressures "to feed the beast" with more gossipy, softer stories, but that leads to consumers failing to understand the world as well as they should, which has consequences for the country.

The Toner Prize was awarded to ProPublica's Alec MacGillis for stories on campaign finance, lobbying and other influences on politics and governance.

President Obama Rails Against Vulgar Politics At Syracuse University Prize Event

[Syracuse \(NY\) Post-Standard](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama used a Syracuse University event here Monday night to condemn the "divisive and often vulgar rhetoric" that has taken hold in politics, and called on journalists and all Americans to help reverse the trend.

"The No. 1 question I get right now as I travel the world and speak to world leaders is: What is happening in American politics?" Obama said in a keynote speech at a national journalism prize event hosted by SU.

In his 45-minute speech, Obama talked about the increasingly caustic tone of political campaigns, and lamented the loss of substantive fact-based reporting in a news industry pressured by the forces of changing technology,

"I believe for all the side shows of the political season, Americans are still hungry for the truth," Obama told more than 450 people packed into the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium here for the annual Toner Prize ceremony sponsored by SU's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

"Ultimately I recognize the news industry is an industry, it's a business," Obama said, but he implored those in the news business to dedicate more resources to a "well-informed electorate."

The president said news organizations should have "higher aspirations" to inform the public.

"Good reporters like the ones in this room all too often find yourself trapped between competing forces," Obama said. "You believe in a well-informed electorate, but you are under significant financial pressures as well."

Among those in attendance were prominent media and political figures, including White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, New York Times Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr., and ESPN broadcaster Mike Tirico, a Newhouse graduate and member of the SU Board of Trustees.

Obama was introduced by SU Chancellor Kent Syverud, a day after Syracuse's men's basketball team pulled

off a dramatic NCAA tournament win over Virginia to advance to the Final Four championship this weekend.

"On behalf of Syracuse fans everywhere, I have to offer an apology," Syverud said. "We are sorry we blew both of the president's brackets."

Obama thanked Syverud for "reminding me how bad my bracket is going," but quickly added, "Congratulations Syracuse, you guys are doing great."

The Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting honors the late Robin Toner, a 1976 Newhouse School graduate who became the first woman to serve as national political correspondent for the New York Times.

Toner, who spent 25 years at the New York Times, died of cancer in December 2008. She covered the Clinton White House in the 1990s.

Alec MacGillis, a reporter for ProPublica, a nonprofit online investigative journalism organization, won this year's \$5,000 Toner prize for his 2015 series of stories titled "The Breakdown."

The judges said his stories revealed the influence of the oil industry and other corporations on public policy; examined why some voters make choices that can be considered against their own interests; and showed many assumptions about politics and governance no longer hold true.

"It defines what everyone wants to know: what happened to our system of politics and governance," said Toner Prize judge Tom Brokaw.

Toner's twin children – 18-year-olds Nora and Jake Gosselin – presented this year's award.

Obama was the latest in a string of prominent political figures to give the keynote address the prize ceremony in Washington. Hillary Clinton delivered the keynote address in 2015, just before the launch of her presidential campaign.

In 2014, Vice President Joe Biden, a 1968 SU Law School graduate, spoke of his deep respect for Toner, who he remembered as a tough but fair reporter who asked difficult questions.

Proceeds from the Toner Prize dinner help support an endowment for the Robin Toner Program in Political Reporting at the Newhouse School.

Contact Mark Weiner anytime: Email | Twitter | Facebook | 571-970-3751

Obama Says Journalists Partly To Blame For Tone Of Presidential Race

By Roberta Rampton

[Reuters](#), March 28, 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 Lectures News Media On Campaign Coverage: Don't 'Dumb Down The News'

[The Blaze](#), March 28, 2016

Speaking at a journalism awards dinner Monday, President Barack Obama called for the news media to do a more responsible job in covering political campaigns.

"The electorate would be better served if we didn't focus so much on the he said-she said back and forth of our politics, because, while fairness is the hallmark of good journalism, a false equivalency all too often these days can be a fatal flaw," Obama said. "If I say the world is round and someone else says its flat, that's worth reporting. But you might also want to report on a bunch of scientific evidence that seems to support that the world is round. That shouldn't be buried in paragraph five or six of the article."

Obama's remarks came during the Syracuse University Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporter, awarded in Washington.

Obama asserted that during the 2008 campaign the media "asked me really tough questions." However, he doesn't think today's candidates are getting the same scrutiny.

The president said news companies have an obligation to "invest a good chunk of that profit back into news, in public affairs and to maintain certain standards and to not dumb down the news."

"There is enormous pressure on journalists to fill the void and feed the beast with instant commentary and twitter rumors and celebrity gossip and softer stories," the president said. "Then we fail to understand our world and understand one another as well as we should."

He said a news media that sacrifices in-depth reporting for "slap dash tweets" is harmful to democracy.

"When our election campaigns and our political candidates become completely untethered from facts and analysis, when it doesn't matter what's true and what's not, that makes it all but impossible for us to make good decisions for future generations," Obama said.

Though his remarks included a positive note about America's free press when he recalled a conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin about an Atlantic article on Obama's foreign policy.

"He said, 'Well, I disagree with some of the things that you said in there.'" Obama recalled.

Obama continued: "Well, some of the things that were shaped may not fully reflect all of the nuance of my thoughts of the particular topic that President Putin was mentioning. But I pointed out to him, of course, that 'unlike you Vladimir, I don't get to edit the piece before it's published.'"

—

President Obama's Interview With Jeffrey Goldberg On Syria And Foreign Policy

By Jeffrey Goldberg

[The Atlantic](#), March 10, 2016

Friday, August 30, 2013, the day the feckless Barack Obama brought to a premature end America's reign as the world's sole indispensable superpower—or, alternatively, the day the sagacious Barack Obama peered into the Middle Eastern abyss and stepped back from the consuming void—began with a thundering speech given on Obama's behalf by his secretary of state, John Kerry, in Washington, D.C. The subject of Kerry's uncharacteristically Churchillian remarks, delivered in the Treaty Room at the State Department, was the gassing of civilians by the president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad. Obama on ...

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The necessity of pivoting from the Middle East to Asia and other regions

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Resisting John Kerry's requests to attack Syrian-regime targets

Why Saudi Arabia should share the Middle East with Iran

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Obama, in whose Cabinet Kerry serves faithfully, but with some exasperation, is himself given to vaulting oratory, but not usually of the martial sort associated with Churchill. Obama believes that the Manichaeism, and eloquently rendered bellicosity, commonly associated with Churchill were justified by Hitler's rise, and were at times defensible in the struggle against the Soviet Union. But he also thinks rhetoric should be weaponized sparingly, if at all, in today's more ambiguous and complicated international arena. The president believes that Churchillian rhetoric and, more to the point, Churchillian habits of thought, helped bring his predecessor, George W. Bush, to ruinous war in Iraq. Obama entered the White House bent on getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan; he was not seeking new dragons to slay. And he was particularly mindful of promising victory in conflicts he believed to be unwinnable. "If you were to say, for instance, that we're going to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and build a prosperous democracy instead, the president is aware that someone, seven years later, is going to hold you to that promise," Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national-security

adviser, and his foreign-policy amanuensis, told me not long ago.

But Kerry's rousing remarks on that August day, which had been drafted in part by Rhodes, were threaded with righteous anger and bold promises, including the barely concealed threat of imminent attack. Kerry, like Obama himself, was horrified by the sins committed by the Syrian regime in its attempt to put down a two-year-old rebellion. In the Damascus suburb of Ghouta nine days earlier, Assad's army had murdered more than 1,400 civilians with sarin gas. The strong sentiment inside the Obama administration was that Assad had earned dire punishment. In Situation Room meetings that followed the attack on Ghouta, only the White House chief of staff, Denis McDonough, cautioned explicitly about the perils of intervention. John Kerry argued vociferously for action.

"As previous storms in history have gathered, when unspeakable crimes were within our power to stop them, we have been warned against the temptations of looking the other way," Kerry said in his speech. "History is full of leaders who have warned against inaction, indifference, and especially against silence when it mattered most." From Our April 2016 Issue

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Kerry counted President Obama among those leaders. A year earlier, when the administration suspected that the Assad regime was contemplating the use of chemical weapons, Obama had declared: "We have been very clear to the Assad regime ... that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation."

Despite this threat, Obama seemed to many critics to be coldly detached from the suffering of innocent Syrians. Late in the summer of 2011, he had called for Assad's departure. "For the sake of the Syrian people," Obama said, "the time has come for President Assad to step aside." But Obama initially did little to bring about Assad's end.

He resisted demands to act in part because he assumed, based on the analysis of U.S. intelligence, that Assad would fall without his help. "He thought Assad would go the way Mubarak went," Dennis Ross, a former Middle East adviser to Obama, told me, referring to the quick departure of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in early 2011, a moment that represented the acme of the Arab Spring. But as Assad clung to power, Obama's resistance to direct intervention only grew. After several months of deliberation, he authorized the CIA to train and fund Syrian rebels, but he also shared the outlook of his former defense secretary, Robert Gates, who had routinely asked in meetings, "Shouldn't we finish up the two wars we have before we look for another?"

The current U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, who is the most dispositionally interventionist among Obama's senior advisers, had argued early for arming Syria's rebels. Power, who during this period served on the National Security Council staff, is the author of a celebrated book excoriating a succession of U.S. presidents for their failures to prevent genocide. The book, *A Problem From Hell*, published in 2002, drew Obama to Power while he was in the U.S. Senate, though the two were not an obvious ideological match. Power is a partisan of the doctrine known as "responsibility to protect," which holds that sovereignty should not be considered inviolate when a country is slaughtering its own citizens. She lobbied him to endorse this doctrine in the speech he delivered when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, but he declined. Obama generally does not believe a president should place American soldiers at great risk in order to prevent humanitarian disasters, unless those disasters pose a direct security threat to the United States.

Power sometimes argued with Obama in front of other National Security Council officials, to the point where he could no longer conceal his frustration. "Samantha, enough, I've already read your book," he once snapped.

Obama in the Oval Office, where, two and a half years ago, he shocked national-security aides by calling off air strikes on Syria (Ruven Afanador)

Obama, unlike liberal interventionists, is an admirer of the foreign-policy realism of President George H. W. Bush and, in particular, of Bush's national-security adviser, Brent Scowcroft ("I love that guy," Obama once told me). Bush and Scowcroft removed Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait in 1991, and they deftly managed the disintegration of the Soviet Union; Scowcroft also, on Bush's behalf, toasted the leaders of China shortly after the slaughter in Tiananmen Square. As Obama was writing his campaign manifesto, *The Audacity of Hope*, in 2006, Susan Rice, then an informal adviser, felt it necessary to remind him to include at least one line of praise for the foreign policy of President Bill Clinton, to partially balance the praise he showered on Bush and Scowcroft.

At the outset of the Syrian uprising, in early 2011, Power argued that the rebels, drawn from the ranks of ordinary citizens, deserved America's enthusiastic support. Others noted that the rebels were farmers and doctors and carpenters, comparing these revolutionaries to the men who won America's war for independence.

Obama flipped this plea on its head. "When you have a professional army," he once told me, "that is well armed and sponsored by two large states"—Iran and Russia—"who have huge stakes in this, and they are fighting against a farmer, a carpenter, an engineer who started out as protesters and suddenly now see themselves in the midst of a civil conflict ..." He paused. "The notion that we could have—in a clean

way that didn't commit U.S. military forces—changed the equation on the ground there was never true." The message Obama telegraphed in speeches and interviews was clear: He would not end up like the second President Bush—a president who became tragically overextended in the Middle East, whose decisions filled the wards of Walter Reed with grievously wounded soldiers, who was helpless to stop the obliteration of his reputation, even when he recalibrated his policies in his second term. Obama would say privately that the first task of an American president in the post-Bush international arena was "Don't do stupid shit."

Obama's reticence frustrated Power and others on his national-security team who had a preference for action. Hillary Clinton, when she was Obama's secretary of state, argued for an early and assertive response to Assad's violence. In 2014, after she left office, Clinton told me that "the failure to help build up a credible fighting force of the people who were the originators of the protests against Assad ... left a big vacuum, which the jihadists have now filled." When *The Atlantic* published this statement, and also published Clinton's assessment that "great nations need organizing principles, and 'Don't do stupid stuff' is not an organizing principle," Obama became "rip-shit angry," according to one of his senior advisers. The president did not understand how "Don't do stupid shit" could be considered a controversial slogan. Ben Rhodes recalls that "the questions we were asking in the White House were 'Who exactly is in the stupid-shit caucus? Who is pro-stupid shit?'" "The Iraq invasion, Obama believed, should have taught Democratic interventionists like Clinton, who had voted for its authorization, the dangers of doing stupid shit. (Clinton quickly apologized to Obama for her comments, and a Clinton spokesman announced that the two would "hug it out" on Martha's Vineyard when they crossed paths there later.) Video: Obama's "Red Line" That Wasn't

Inside the president's last-minute decision not to bomb Syria in 2013

Syria, for Obama, represented a slope potentially as slippery as Iraq. In his first term, he came to believe that only a handful of threats in the Middle East conceivably warranted direct U.S. military intervention. These included the threat posed by al-Qaeda; threats to the continued existence of Israel ("It would be a moral failing for me as president of the United States" not to defend Israel, he once told me); and, not unrelated to Israel's security, the threat posed by a nuclear-armed Iran. The danger to the United States posed by the Assad regime did not rise to the level of these challenges.

Given Obama's reticence about intervention, the bright-red line he drew for Assad in the summer of 2012 was striking. Even his own advisers were surprised. "I didn't know it was coming," his secretary of defense at the time, Leon Panetta, told me. I was told that Vice President Joe Biden repeatedly warned Obama against drawing a red line on

chemical weapons, fearing that it would one day have to be enforced.

Kerry, in his remarks on August 30, 2013, suggested that Assad should be punished in part because the “credibility and the future interests of the United States of America and our allies” were at stake. “It is directly related to our credibility and whether countries still believe the United States when it says something. They are watching to see if Syria can get away with it, because then maybe they too can put the world at greater risk.”

Ninety minutes later, at the White House, Obama reinforced Kerry’s message in a public statement: “It’s important for us to recognize that when over 1,000 people are killed, including hundreds of innocent children, through the use of a weapon that 98 or 99 percent of humanity says should not be used even in war, and there is no action, then we’re sending a signal that that international norm doesn’t mean much. And that is a danger to our national security.”

It appeared as though Obama had drawn the conclusion that damage to American credibility in one region of the world would bleed into others, and that U.S. deterrent credibility was indeed at stake in Syria. Assad, it seemed, had succeeded in pushing the president to a place he never thought he would have to go. Obama generally believes that the Washington foreign-policy establishment, which he secretly disdains, makes a fetish of “credibility”—particularly the sort of credibility purchased with force. The preservation of credibility, he says, led to Vietnam. Within the White House, Obama would argue that “dropping bombs on someone to prove that you’re willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force.”

American national-security credibility, as it is conventionally understood in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the cluster of think tanks headquartered within walking distance of the White House, is an intangible yet potent force—one that, when properly nurtured, keeps America’s friends feeling secure and keeps the international order stable.

In White House meetings that crucial week in August, Biden, who ordinarily shared Obama’s worries about American overreach, argued passionately that “big nations don’t bluff.” America’s closest allies in Europe and across the Middle East believed Obama was threatening military action, and his own advisers did as well. At a joint press conference with Obama at the White House the previous May, David Cameron, the British prime minister, had said, “Syria’s history is being written in the blood of her people, and it is happening on our watch.” Cameron’s statement, one of his advisers told me, was meant to encourage Obama toward more-decisive action. “The prime minister was certainly under the impression that the president would enforce the red line,” the adviser told me. The Saudi ambassador in Washington at the time, Adel al-Jubeir, told friends, and his superiors in Riyadh,

that the president was finally ready to strike. Obama “figured out how important this is,” Jubeir, who is now the Saudi foreign minister, told one interlocutor. “He will definitely strike.”

Obama had already ordered the Pentagon to develop target lists. Five Arleigh Burke-class destroyers were in the Mediterranean, ready to fire cruise missiles at regime targets. French President François Hollande, the most enthusiastically pro-intervention among Europe’s leaders, was preparing to strike as well. All week, White House officials had publicly built the case that Assad had committed a crime against humanity. Kerry’s speech would mark the culmination of this campaign.

But the president had grown queasy. In the days after the gassing of Ghouta, Obama would later tell me, he found himself recoiling from the idea of an attack unsanctioned by international law or by Congress. The American people seemed unenthusiastic about a Syria intervention; so too did one of the few foreign leaders Obama respects, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor. She told him that her country would not participate in a Syria campaign. And in a stunning development, on Thursday, August 29, the British Parliament denied David Cameron its blessing for an attack. John Kerry later told me that when he heard that, “internally, I went, Oops.”

Obama was also unsettled by a surprise visit early in the week from James Clapper, his director of national intelligence, who interrupted the President’s Daily Brief, the threat report Obama receives each morning from Clapper’s analysts, to make clear that the intelligence on Syria’s use of sarin gas, while robust, was not a “slam dunk.” He chose the term carefully. Clapper, the chief of an intelligence community traumatized by its failures in the run-up to the Iraq War, was not going to overpromise, in the manner of the onetime CIA director George Tenet, who famously guaranteed George W. Bush a “slam dunk” in Iraq.

Obama and Vice President Joe Biden meet with members of the National Security Council, including Susan Rice and John Kerry (second and third from left), in December 2014. (Pete Souza / White House)

While the Pentagon and the White House’s national-security apparatuses were still moving toward war (John Kerry told me he was expecting a strike the day after his speech), the president had come to believe that he was walking into a trap—one laid both by allies and by adversaries, and by conventional expectations of what an American president is supposed to do.

Many of his advisers did not grasp the depth of the president’s misgivings; his Cabinet and his allies were certainly unaware of them. But his doubts were growing. Late on Friday afternoon, Obama determined that he was simply not prepared to authorize a strike. He asked McDonough, his chief of staff, to take a walk with him on the South Lawn of

the White House. Obama did not choose McDonough randomly: He is the Obama aide most averse to U.S. military intervention, and someone who, in the words of one of his colleagues, “thinks in terms of traps.” Obama, ordinarily a preternaturally confident man, was looking for validation, and trying to devise ways to explain his change of heart, both to his own aides and to the public. He and McDonough stayed outside for an hour. Obama told him he was worried that Assad would place civilians as “human shields” around obvious targets. He also pointed out an underlying flaw in the proposed strike: U.S. missiles would not be fired at chemical-weapons depots, for fear of sending plumes of poison into the air. A strike would target military units that had delivered these weapons, but not the weapons themselves.

Obama also shared with McDonough a long-standing resentment: He was tired of watching Washington unthinkingly drift toward war in Muslim countries. Four years earlier, the president believed, the Pentagon had “jammed” him on a troop surge for Afghanistan. Now, on Syria, he was beginning to feel jammed again.

When the two men came back to the Oval Office, the president told his national-security aides that he planned to stand down. There would be no attack the next day; he wanted to refer the matter to Congress for a vote. Aides in the room were shocked. Susan Rice, now Obama’s national-security adviser, argued that the damage to America’s credibility would be serious and lasting. Others had difficulty fathoming how the president could reverse himself the day before a planned strike. Obama, however, was completely calm. “If you’ve been around him, you know when he’s ambivalent about something, when it’s a 51–49 decision,” Ben Rhodes told me. “But he was completely at ease.”

Not long ago, I asked Obama to describe his thinking on that day. He listed the practical worries that had preoccupied him. “We had UN inspectors on the ground who were completing their work, and we could not risk taking a shot while they were there. A second major factor was the failure of Cameron to obtain the consent of his parliament.”

The third, and most important, factor, he told me, was “our assessment that while we could inflict some damage on Assad, we could not, through a missile strike, eliminate the chemical weapons themselves, and what I would then face was the prospect of Assad having survived the strike and claiming he had successfully defied the United States, that the United States had acted unlawfully in the absence of a UN mandate, and that that would have potentially strengthened his hand rather than weakened it.”

The fourth factor, he said, was of deeper philosophical importance. “This falls in the category of something that I had been brooding on for some time,” he said. “I had come into office with the strong belief that the scope of executive power in national-security issues is very broad, but not limitless.”

Obama knew his decision not to bomb Syria would likely upset America’s allies. It did. The prime minister of France, Manuel Valls, told me that his government was already worried about the consequences of earlier inaction in Syria when word came of the stand-down. “By not intervening early, we have created a monster,” Valls told me. “We were absolutely certain that the U.S. administration would say yes. Working with the Americans, we had already seen the targets. It was a great surprise. If we had bombed as was planned, I think things would be different today.” The crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, who was already upset with Obama for “abandoning” Hosni Mubarak, the former president of Egypt, fumed to American visitors that the U.S. was led by an “untrustworthy” president. The king of Jordan, Abdullah II—already dismayed by what he saw as Obama’s illogical desire to distance the U.S. from its traditional Sunni Arab allies and create a new alliance with Iran, Assad’s Shia sponsor—complained privately, “I think I believe in American power more than Obama does.” The Saudis, too, were infuriated. They had never trusted Obama—he had, long before he became president, referred to them as a “so-called ally” of the U.S. “Iran is the new great power of the Middle East, and the U.S. is the old,” Jubeir, the Saudi ambassador in Washington, told his superiors in Riyadh.

Obama’s decision caused tremors across Washington as well. John McCain and Lindsey Graham, the two leading Republican hawks in the Senate, had met with Obama in the White House earlier in the week and had been promised an attack. They were angered by the about-face. Damage was done even inside the administration. Neither Chuck Hagel, then the secretary of defense, nor John Kerry was in the Oval Office when the president informed his team of his thinking. Kerry would not learn about the change until later that evening. “I just got fucked over,” he told a friend shortly after talking to the president that night. (When I asked Kerry recently about that tumultuous night, he said, “I didn’t stop to analyze it. I figured the president had a reason to make a decision and, honestly, I understood his notion.”)

The next few days were chaotic. The president asked Congress to authorize the use of force—the irrepressible Kerry served as chief lobbyist—and it quickly became apparent in the White House that Congress had little interest in a strike. When I spoke with Biden recently about the red-line decision, he made special note of this fact. “It matters to have Congress with you, in terms of your ability to sustain what you set out to do,” he said. Obama “didn’t go to Congress to get himself off the hook. He had his doubts at that point, but he knew that if he was going to do anything, he better damn well have the public with him, or it would be a very short ride.” Congress’s clear ambivalence convinced Biden that Obama was correct to fear the slippery slope. “What happens when we get a plane shot down? Do we not

go in and rescue?," Biden asked. "You need the support of the American people."

Amid the confusion, a *deus ex machina* appeared in the form of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. At the G20 summit in St. Petersburg, which was held the week after the Syria reversal, Obama pulled Putin aside, he recalled to me, and told the Russian president "that if he forced Assad to get rid of the chemical weapons, that that would eliminate the need for us taking a military strike." Within weeks, Kerry, working with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, would engineer the removal of most of Syria's chemical-weapons arsenal—a program whose existence Assad until then had refused to even acknowledge.

The moment Obama decided not to enforce his red line and bomb Syria, he broke with what he calls, derisively, "the Washington playbook." This was his liberation day.

The arrangement won the president praise from, of all people, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, with whom he has had a consistently contentious relationship. The removal of Syria's chemical-weapons stockpiles represented "the one ray of light in a very dark region," Netanyahu told me not long after the deal was announced.

John Kerry today expresses no patience for those who argue, as he himself once did, that Obama should have bombed Assad-regime sites in order to buttress America's deterrent capability. "You'd still have the weapons there, and you'd probably be fighting

isil" for control of the weapons, he said, referring to the Islamic State, the terror group also known as

isis. "It just doesn't make sense. But I can't deny to you that this notion about the red line being crossed and [Obama's] not doing anything gained a life of its own."

Obama understands that the decision he made to step back from air strikes, and to allow the violation of a red line he himself had drawn to go unpunished, will be interrogated mercilessly by historians. But today that decision is a source of deep satisfaction for him.

"I'm very proud of this moment," he told me. "The overwhelming weight of conventional wisdom and the machinery of our national-security apparatus had gone fairly far. The perception was that my credibility was at stake, that America's credibility was at stake. And so for me to press the pause button at that moment, I knew, would cost me politically. And the fact that I was able to pull back from the immediate pressures and think through in my own mind what was in America's interest, not only with respect to Syria but also with respect to our democracy, was as tough a decision as I've made—and I believe ultimately it was the right decision to make."

This was the moment the president believes he finally broke with what he calls, derisively, the "Washington playbook."

"Where am I controversial? When it comes to the use of military power," he said. "That is the source of the controversy. There's a playbook in Washington that presidents are supposed to follow. It's a playbook that comes out of the foreign-policy establishment. And the playbook prescribes responses to different events, and these responses tend to be militarized responses. Where America is directly threatened, the playbook works. But the playbook can also be a trap that can lead to bad decisions. In the midst of an international challenge like Syria, you get judged harshly if you don't follow the playbook, even if there are good reasons why it does not apply."

I have come to believe that, in Obama's mind, August 30, 2013, was his liberation day, the day he defied not only the foreign-policy establishment and its cruise-missile playbook, but also the demands of America's frustrating, high-maintenance allies in the Middle East—countries, he complains privately to friends and advisers, that seek to exploit American "muscle" for their own narrow and sectarian ends. By 2013, Obama's resentments were well developed. He resented military leaders who believed they could fix any problem if the commander in chief would simply give them what they wanted, and he resented the foreign-policy think-tank complex. A widely held sentiment inside the White House is that many of the most prominent foreign-policy think tanks in Washington are doing the bidding of their Arab and pro-Israel funders. I've heard one administration official refer to Massachusetts Avenue, the home of many of these think tanks, as "Arab-occupied territory."

Obama talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin prior to the opening session of the G20 in Antalya in November of 2015. (Cem Oksuz / Reuters)

For some foreign-policy experts, even within his own administration, Obama's about-face on enforcing the red line was a dispiriting moment in which he displayed irresolution and naïveté, and did lasting damage to America's standing in the world. "Once the commander in chief draws that red line," Leon Panetta, who served as CIA director and then as secretary of defense in Obama's first term, told me recently, "then I think the credibility of the commander in chief and this nation is at stake if he doesn't enforce it." Right after Obama's reversal, Hillary Clinton said privately, "If you say you're going to strike, you have to strike. There's no choice."

"Assad is effectively being rewarded for the use of chemical weapons, rather than 'punished' as originally planned." Shadi Hamid, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, wrote for *The Atlantic* at the time. "He has managed to remove the threat of U.S. military action while giving very little up in return."

Even commentators who have been broadly sympathetic to Obama's policies saw this episode as calamitous. Gideon Rose, the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, wrote recently that Obama's handling of this crisis—"first casually

announcing a major commitment, then dithering about living up to it, then frantically tossing the ball to Congress for a decision—was a case study in embarrassingly amateurish improvisation.”

Obama’s defenders, however, argue that he did no damage to U.S. credibility, citing Assad’s subsequent agreement to have his chemical weapons removed. “The threat of force was credible enough for them to give up their chemical weapons,” Tim Kaine, a Democratic senator from Virginia, told me. “We threatened military action and they responded. That’s deterrent credibility.”

History may record August 30, 2013, as the day Obama prevented the U.S. from entering yet another disastrous Muslim civil war, and the day he removed the threat of a chemical attack on Israel, Turkey, or Jordan. Or it could be remembered as the day he let the Middle East slip from America’s grasp, into the hands of Russia, Iran, and isis.

I first spoke with Obama about foreign policy when he was a U.S. senator, in 2006. At the time, I was familiar mainly with the text of a speech he had delivered four years earlier, at a Chicago antiwar rally. It was an unusual speech for an antiwar rally in that it was not antiwar; Obama, who was then an Illinois state senator, argued only against one specific and, at the time, still theoretical, war. “I suffer no illusions about Saddam Hussein,” he said. “He is a brutal man. A ruthless man ... But I also know that Saddam poses no imminent and direct threat to the United States or to his neighbors.” He added, “I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda.”

This speech had made me curious about its author. I wanted to learn how an Illinois state senator, a part-time law professor who spent his days traveling between Chicago and Springfield, had come to a more prescient understanding of the coming quagmire than the most experienced foreign-policy thinkers of his party, including such figures as Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, and John Kerry, not to mention, of course, most Republicans and many foreign-policy analysts and writers, including me.

Since that first meeting in 2006, I’ve interviewed Obama periodically, mainly on matters related to the Middle East. But over the past few months, I’ve spent several hours talking with him about the broadest themes of his “long game” foreign policy, including the themes he is most eager to discuss—namely, the ones that have nothing to do with the Middle East.

“isis is not an existential threat to the United States,” he told me in one of these conversations. “Climate change is a potential existential threat to the entire world if we don’t do

something about it.” Obama explained that climate change worries him in particular because “it is a political problem perfectly designed to repel government intervention. It involves every single country, and it is a comparatively slow-moving emergency, so there is always something seemingly more urgent on the agenda.”

At the moment, of course, the most urgent of the “seemingly more urgent” issues is Syria. But at any given moment, Obama’s entire presidency could be upended by North Korean aggression, or an assault by Russia on a member of

nato, or an

isis-planned attack on U.S. soil. Few presidents have faced such diverse tests on the international stage as Obama has, and the challenge for him, as for all presidents, has been to distinguish the merely urgent from the truly important, and to focus on the important.

My goal in our recent conversations was to see the world through Obama’s eyes, and to understand what he believes America’s role in the world should be. This article is informed by our recent series of conversations, which took place in the Oval Office; over lunch in his dining room; aboard Air Force One; and in Kuala Lumpur during his most recent visit to Asia, in November. It is also informed by my previous interviews with him and by his speeches and prolific public ruminations, as well as by conversations with his top foreign-policy and national-security advisers, foreign leaders and their ambassadors in Washington, friends of the president and others who have spoken with him about his policies and decisions, and his adversaries and critics.

Leon Panetta (left) attends a press briefing on military strategy in January 2012. Panetta, then Obama’s secretary of defense, has criticized the president’s failure to enforce the Syrian red line. (Aharaz N. Ghanbari / AP)

Over the course of our conversations, I came to see Obama as a president who has grown steadily more fatalistic about the constraints on America’s ability to direct global events, even as he has, late in his presidency, accumulated a set of potentially historic foreign-policy achievements—controversial, provisional achievements, to be sure, but achievements nonetheless: the opening to Cuba, the Paris climate-change accord, the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, and, of course, the Iran nuclear deal. These he accomplished despite his growing sense that larger forces—the riptide of tribal feeling in a world that should have already shed its atavism; the resilience of small men who rule large countries in ways contrary to their own best interests; the persistence of fear as a governing human emotion—frequently conspire against the best of America’s intentions. But he also has come to learn, he told me, that very little is accomplished in international affairs without U.S. leadership.

Obama talked me through this apparent contradiction. “I want a president who has the sense that you can’t fix

everything,” he said. But on the other hand, “if we don’t set the agenda, it doesn’t happen.” He explained what he meant. “The fact is, there is not a summit I’ve attended since I’ve been president where we are not setting the agenda, where we are not responsible for the key results,” he said. “That’s true whether you’re talking about nuclear security, whether you’re talking about saving the world financial system, whether you’re talking about climate.”

One day, over lunch in the Oval Office dining room, I asked the president how he thought his foreign policy might be understood by historians. He started by describing for me a four-box grid representing the main schools of American foreign-policy thought. One box he called isolationism, which he dismissed out of hand. “The world is ever-shrinking,” he said. “Withdrawal is untenable.” The other boxes he labeled realism, liberal interventionism, and internationalism. “I suppose you could call me a realist in believing we can’t, at any given moment, relieve all the world’s misery,” he said. “We have to choose where we can make a real impact.” He also noted that he was quite obviously an internationalist, devoted as he is to strengthening multilateral organizations and international norms.

I told him my impression was that the various traumas of the past seven years have, if anything, intensified his commitment to realist-driven restraint. Had nearly two full terms in the White House soured him on interventionism?

“For all of our warts, the United States has clearly been a force for good in the world,” he said. “If you compare us to previous superpowers, we act less on the basis of naked self-interest, and have been interested in establishing norms that benefit everyone. If it is possible to do good at a bearable cost, to save lives, we will do it.”

If a crisis, or a humanitarian catastrophe, does not meet his stringent standard for what constitutes a direct national-security threat, Obama said, he doesn’t believe that he should be forced into silence. He is not so much the realist, he suggested, that he won’t pass judgment on other leaders. Though he has so far ruled out the use of direct American power to depose Assad, he was not wrong, he argued, to call on Assad to go. “Oftentimes when you get critics of our Syria policy, one of the things that they’ll point out is ‘You called for Assad to go, but you didn’t force him to go. You did not invade.’ And the notion is that if you weren’t going to overthrow the regime, you shouldn’t have said anything. That’s a weird argument to me, the notion that if we use our moral authority to say ‘This is a brutal regime, and this is not how a leader should treat his people,’ once you do that, you are obliged to invade the country and install a government you prefer.”

“I am very much the internationalist,” Obama said in a later conversation. “And I am also an idealist insofar as I believe that we should be promoting values, like democracy and human rights and norms and values, because not only

do they serve our interests the more people adopt values that we share—in the same way that, economically, if people adopt rule of law and property rights and so forth, that is to our advantage—but because it makes the world a better place. And I’m willing to say that in a very corny way, and in a way that probably Brent Scowcroft would not say.

“Having said that,” he continued, “I also believe that the world is a tough, complicated, messy, mean place, and full of hardship and tragedy. And in order to advance both our security interests and those ideals and values that we care about, we’ve got to be hardheaded at the same time as we’re bighearted, and pick and choose our spots, and recognize that there are going to be times where the best that we can do is to shine a spotlight on something that’s terrible, but not believe that we can automatically solve it. There are going to be times where our security interests conflict with our concerns about human rights. There are going to be times where we can do something about innocent people being killed, but there are going to be times where we can’t.”

If Obama ever questioned whether America really is the world’s one indispensable nation, he no longer does so. But he is the rare president who seems at times to resent indispensability, rather than embrace it. “Free riders aggravate me,” he told me. Recently, Obama warned that Great Britain would no longer be able to claim a “special relationship” with the United States if it did not commit to spending at least 2 percent of its GDP on defense. “You have to pay your fair share,” Obama told David Cameron, who subsequently met the 2 percent threshold.

Part of his mission as president, Obama explained, is to spur other countries to take action for themselves, rather than wait for the U.S. to lead. The defense of the liberal international order against jihadist terror, Russian adventurism, and Chinese bullying depends in part, he believes, on the willingness of other nations to share the burden with the U.S. This is why the controversy surrounding the assertion—made by an anonymous administration official to *The New Yorker* during the Libya crisis of 2011—that his policy consisted of “leading from behind” perturbed him. “We don’t have to always be the ones who are up front,” he told me. “Sometimes we’re going to get what we want precisely because we are sharing in the agenda. The irony is that it was precisely in order to prevent the Europeans and the Arab states from holding our coats while we did all the fighting that we, by design, insisted” that they lead during the mission to remove Muammar Qaddafi from power in Libya. “It was part of the anti-free rider campaign.”

The president also seems to believe that sharing leadership with other countries is a way to check America’s more unruly impulses. “One of the reasons I am so focused on taking action multilaterally where our direct interests are not at stake is that multilateralism regulates hubris,” he explained. He consistently invokes what he understands to be

America's past failures overseas as a means of checking American self-righteousness. "We have history," he said. "We have history in Iran, we have history in Indonesia and Central America. So we have to be mindful of our history when we start talking about intervening, and understand the source of other people's suspicions."

Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro at the Summit of the Americas last spring (Pete Souza / White House)

In his efforts to off-load some of America's foreign-policy responsibilities to its allies, Obama appears to be a classic retrenchment president in the manner of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. Retrenchment, in this context, is defined as "pulling back, spending less, cutting risk, and shifting burdens to allies," Stephen Sestanovich, an expert on presidential foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, explained to me. "If John McCain had been elected in 2008, you would still have seen some degree of retrenchment," Sestanovich said. "It's what the country wanted. If you come into office in the middle of a war that is not going well, you're convinced that the American people have hired you to do less." One difference between Eisenhower and Nixon, on the one hand, and Obama, on the other, Sestanovich said, is that Obama "appears to have had a personal, ideological commitment to the idea that foreign policy had consumed too much of the nation's attention and resources."

I asked Obama about retrenchment. "Almost every great world power has succumbed" to overextension, he said. "What I think is not smart is the idea that every time there is a problem, we send in our military to impose order. We just can't do that."

But once he decides that a particular challenge represents a direct national-security threat, he has shown a willingness to act unilaterally. This is one of the larger ironies of the Obama presidency: He has relentlessly questioned the efficacy of force, but he has also become the most successful terrorist-hunter in the history of the presidency, one who will hand to his successor a set of tools an accomplished assassin would envy. "He applies different standards to direct threats to the U.S.," Ben Rhodes says. "For instance, despite his misgivings about Syria, he has not had a second thought about drones." Some critics argue he should have had a few second thoughts about what they see as the overuse of drones. But John Brennan, Obama's CIA director, told me recently that he and the president "have similar views. One of them is that sometimes you have to take a life to save even more lives. We have a similar view of just-war theory. The president requires near-certainty of no collateral damage. But if he believes it is necessary to act, he doesn't hesitate."

Those who speak with Obama about jihadist thought say that he possesses a no-illusions understanding of the forces that drive apocalyptic violence among radical Muslims,

but he has been careful about articulating that publicly, out of concern that he will exacerbate anti-Muslim xenophobia. He has a tragic realist's understanding of sin, cowardice, and corruption, and a Hobbesian appreciation of how fear shapes human behavior. And yet he consistently, and with apparent sincerity, professes optimism that the world is bending toward justice. He is, in a way, a Hobbesian optimist. Video: Jeffrey Goldberg speaks with Ben Rhodes

Jeffrey Goldberg speaks to Deputy National-Security Adviser Ben Rhodes about the United States' new ties with Cuba and its impact on American foreign policy at-large.

The contradictions do not end there. Though he has a reputation for prudence, he has also been eager to question some of the long-standing assumptions undergirding traditional U.S. foreign-policy thinking. To a remarkable degree, he is willing to question why America's enemies are its enemies, or why some of its friends are its friends. He overthrew half a century of bipartisan consensus in order to reestablish ties with Cuba. He questioned why the U.S. should avoid sending its forces into Pakistan to kill al-Qaeda leaders, and he privately questions why Pakistan, which he believes is a disastrously dysfunctional country, should be considered an ally of the U.S. at all. According to Leon Panetta, he has questioned why the U.S. should maintain Israel's so-called qualitative military edge, which grants it access to more sophisticated weapons systems than America's Arab allies receive; but he has also questioned, often harshly, the role that America's Sunni Arab allies play in fomenting anti-American terrorism. He is clearly irritated that foreign-policy orthodoxy compels him to treat Saudi Arabia as an ally. And of course he decided early on, in the face of great criticism, that he wanted to reach out to America's most ardent Middle Eastern foe, Iran. The nuclear deal he struck with Iran proves, if nothing else, that Obama is not risk-averse. He has bet global security and his own legacy that one of the world's leading state sponsors of terrorism will adhere to an agreement to curtail its nuclear program.

"Dropping bombs on someone to prove that you're willing to drop bombs on someone is just about the worst reason to use force."

It is assumed, at least among his critics, that Obama sought the Iran deal because he has a vision of a historic American-Persian rapprochement. But his desire for the nuclear agreement was born of pessimism as much as it was of optimism. "The Iran deal was never primarily about trying to open a new era of relations between the U.S. and Iran," Susan Rice told me. "It was far more pragmatic and minimalist. The aim was very simply to make a dangerous country substantially less dangerous. No one had any expectation that Iran would be a more benign actor."

I once mentioned to Obama a scene from *The Godfather: Part III*, in which Michael Corleone complains angrily about

his failure to escape the grasp of organized crime. I told Obama that the Middle East is to his presidency what the Mob is to Corleone, and I started to quote the Al Pacino line: "Just when I thought I was out—"

"It pulls you back in," Obama said, completing the thought.

The story of Obama's encounter with the Middle East follows an arc of disenchantment. In his first extended spree of fame, as a presidential candidate in 2008, Obama often spoke with hope about the region. In Berlin that summer, in a speech to 200,000 adoring Germans, he said, "This is the moment we must help answer the call for a new dawn in the Middle East."

The next year, as president, he gave a speech in Cairo meant to reset U.S. relations with the world's Muslims. He spoke about Muslims in his own family, and his childhood years in Indonesia, and confessed America's sins even as he criticized those in the Muslim world who demonized the U.S. What drew the most attention, though, was his promise to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was then thought to be the central animating concern of Arab Muslims. His sympathy for the Palestinians moved the audience, but complicated his relations with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister—especially because Obama had also decided to bypass Jerusalem on his first presidential visit to the Middle East.

When I asked Obama recently what he had hoped to accomplish with his Cairo reset speech, he said that he had been trying—unsuccessfully, he acknowledged—to persuade Muslims to more closely examine the roots of their unhappiness.

"My argument was this: Let's all stop pretending that the cause of the Middle East's problems is Israel," he told me. "We want to work to help achieve statehood and dignity for the Palestinians, but I was hoping that my speech could trigger a discussion, could create space for Muslims to address the real problems they are confronting—problems of governance, and the fact that some currents of Islam have not gone through a reformation that would help people adapt their religious doctrines to modernity. My thought was, I would communicate that the U.S. is not standing in the way of this progress, that we would help, in whatever way possible, to advance the goals of a practical, successful Arab agenda that provided a better life for ordinary people."

British Prime Minister David Cameron, flanked by U.K. officials, attends dinner at the White House in January 2015. (Pete Souza / White House)

Through the first flush of the Arab Spring, in 2011, Obama continued to speak optimistically about the Middle East's future, coming as close as he ever would to embracing the so-called freedom agenda of George W. Bush, which was characterized in part by the belief that democratic values could be implanted in the Middle East. He equated protesters

in Tunisia and Tahrir Square with Rosa Parks and the "patriots of Boston."

"After decades of accepting the world as it is in the region, we have a chance to pursue the world as it should be," he said in a speech at the time. "The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders ... Our support for these principles is not a secondary interest."

But over the next three years, as the Arab Spring gave up its early promise, and brutality and dysfunction overwhelmed the Middle East, the president grew disillusioned. Some of his deepest disappointments concern Middle Eastern leaders themselves. Benjamin Netanyahu is in his own category: Obama has long believed that Netanyahu could bring about a two-state solution that would protect Israel's status as a Jewish-majority democracy, but is too fearful and politically paralyzed to do so. Obama has also not had much patience for Netanyahu and other Middle Eastern leaders who question his understanding of the region. In one of Netanyahu's meetings with the president, the Israeli prime minister launched into something of a lecture about the dangers of the brutal region in which he lives, and Obama felt that Netanyahu was behaving in a condescending fashion, and was also avoiding the subject at hand: peace negotiations. Finally, the president interrupted the prime minister: "Bibi, you have to understand something," he said. "I'm the African American son of a single mother, and I live here, in this house. I live in the White House. I managed to get elected president of the United States. You think I don't understand what you're talking about, but I do." Other leaders also frustrate him immensely. Early on, Obama saw Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Turkey, as the sort of moderate Muslim leader who would bridge the divide between East and West—but Obama now considers him a failure and an authoritarian, one who refuses to use his enormous army to bring stability to Syria. And on the sidelines of a

nato summit in Wales in 2014, Obama pulled aside King Abdullah II of Jordan. Obama said he had heard that Abdullah had complained to friends in the U.S. Congress about his leadership, and told the king that if he had complaints, he should raise them directly. The king denied that he had spoken ill of him.

In recent days, the president has taken to joking privately, "All I need in the Middle East is a few smart autocrats." Obama has always had a fondness for pragmatic, emotionally contained technocrats, telling aides, "If only everyone could be like the Scandinavians, this would all be easy."

The unraveling of the Arab Spring darkened the president's view of what the U.S. could achieve in the Middle

East, and made him realize how much the chaos there was distracting from other priorities. "The president recognized during the course of the Arab Spring that the Middle East was consuming us," John Brennan, who served in Obama's first term as his chief counterterrorism adviser, told me recently.

But what sealed Obama's fatalistic view was the failure of his administration's intervention in Libya, in 2011. That intervention was meant to prevent the country's then-dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, from slaughtering the people of Benghazi, as he was threatening to do. Obama did not want to join the fight; he was counseled by Joe Biden and his first-term secretary of defense Robert Gates, among others, to steer clear. But a strong faction within the national-security team—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Susan Rice, who was then the ambassador to the United Nations, along with Samantha Power, Ben Rhodes, and Antony Blinken, who was then Biden's national-security adviser—lobbied hard to protect Benghazi, and prevailed. (Biden, who is acerbic about Clinton's foreign-policy judgment, has said privately, "Hillary just wants to be Golda Meir.") American bombs fell, the people of Benghazi were spared from what may or may not have been a massacre, and Qaddafi was captured and executed.

But Obama says today of the intervention, "It didn't work." The U.S., he believes, planned the Libya operation carefully—and yet the country is still a disaster.

Why, given what seems to be the president's natural reticence toward getting militarily ensnared where American national security is not directly at stake, did he accept the recommendation of his more activist advisers to intervene?

"The social order in Libya has broken down," Obama said, explaining his thinking at the time. "You have massive protests against Qaddafi. You've got tribal divisions inside of Libya. Benghazi is a focal point for the opposition regime. And Qaddafi is marching his army toward Benghazi, and he has said, 'We will kill them like rats.'"

"Now, option one would be to do nothing, and there were some in my administration who said, as tragic as the Libyan situation may be, it's not our problem. The way I looked at it was that it would be our problem if, in fact, complete chaos and civil war broke out in Libya. But this is not so at the core of U.S. interests that it makes sense for us to unilaterally strike against the Qaddafi regime. At that point, you've got Europe and a number of Gulf countries who despise Qaddafi, or are concerned on a humanitarian basis, who are calling for action. But what has been a habit over the last several decades in these circumstances is people pushing us to act but then showing an unwillingness to put any skin in the game."

"Free riders?," I interjected.

"Free riders," he said, and continued. "So what I said at that point was, we should act as part of an international coalition. But because this is not at the core of our interests,

we need to get a UN mandate; we need Europeans and Gulf countries to be actively involved in the coalition; we will apply the military capabilities that are unique to us, but we expect others to carry their weight. And we worked with our defense teams to ensure that we could execute a strategy without putting boots on the ground and without a long-term military commitment in Libya.

"So we actually executed this plan as well as I could have expected: We got a UN mandate, we built a coalition, it cost us \$1 billion—which, when it comes to military operations, is very cheap. We averted large-scale civilian casualties, we prevented what almost surely would have been a prolonged and bloody civil conflict. And despite all that, Libya is a mess."

Mess is the president's diplomatic term; privately, he calls Libya a "shit show," in part because it's subsequently become an

isis haven—one that he has already targeted with air strikes. It became a shit show, Obama believes, for reasons that had less to do with American incompetence than with the passivity of America's allies and with the obdurate power of tribalism.

"When I go back and I ask myself what went wrong," Obama said, "there's room for criticism, because I had more faith in the Europeans, given Libya's proximity, being invested in the follow-up," he said. He noted that Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, lost his job the following year. And he said that British Prime Minister David Cameron soon stopped paying attention, becoming "distracted by a range of other things." Of France, he said, "Sarkozy wanted to trumpet the flights he was taking in the air campaign, despite the fact that we had wiped out all the air defenses and essentially set up the entire infrastructure" for the intervention. This sort of bragging was fine, Obama said, because it allowed the U.S. to "purchase France's involvement in a way that made it less expensive for us and less risky for us." In other words, giving France extra credit in exchange for less risk and cost to the United States was a useful trade-off—except that "from the perspective of a lot of the folks in the foreign-policy establishment, well, that was terrible. If we're going to do something, obviously we've got to be up front, and nobody else is sharing in the spotlight."

Obama also blamed internal Libyan dynamics. "The degree of tribal division in Libya was greater than our analysts had expected. And our ability to have any kind of structure there that we could interact with and start training and start providing resources broke down very quickly."

Libya proved to him that the Middle East was best avoided. "There is no way we should commit to governing the Middle East and North Africa," he recently told a former colleague from the Senate. "That would be a basic, fundamental mistake."

President Obama did not come into office preoccupied by the Middle East. He is the first child of the Pacific to become president—born in Hawaii, raised there and, for four years, in Indonesia—and he is fixated on turning America's attention to Asia. For Obama, Asia represents the future. Africa and Latin America, in his view, deserve far more U.S. attention than they receive. Europe, about which he is unromantic, is a source of global stability that requires, to his occasional annoyance, American hand-holding. And the Middle East is a region to be avoided—one that, thanks to America's energy revolution, will soon be of negligible relevance to the U.S. economy.

It is not oil but another of the Middle East's exports, terrorism, that shapes Obama's understanding of his responsibilities there. Early in 2014, Obama's intelligence advisers told him that

isis was of marginal importance. According to administration officials, General Lloyd Austin, then the commander of Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East, told the White House that the Islamic State was "a flash in the pan." This analysis led Obama, in an interview with *The New Yorker*, to describe the constellation of jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria as terrorism's "jayvee team." (A spokesman for Austin told me, "At no time has General Austin ever considered

isil a 'flash in the pan' phenomenon.")

Mess is the president's diplomatic term for what U.S. intervention left behind in Libya; privately, he calls it a "shit show."

But by late spring of 2014, after

isis took the northern-Iraq city of Mosul, he came to believe that U.S. intelligence had failed to appreciate the severity of the threat and the inadequacies of the Iraqi army, and his view shifted. After

isis beheaded three American civilians in Syria, it became obvious to Obama that defeating the group was of more immediate urgency to the U.S. than overthrowing Bashar al-Assad.

Advisers recall that Obama would cite a pivotal moment in *The Dark Knight*, the 2008 Batman movie, to help explain not only how he understood the role of

isis, but how he understood the larger ecosystem in which it grew. "There's a scene in the beginning in which the gang leaders of Gotham are meeting," the president would say. "These are men who had the city divided up. They were thugs, but there was a kind of order. Everyone had his turf. And then the Joker comes in and lights the whole city on fire.

isil is the Joker. It has the capacity to set the whole region on fire. That's why we have to fight it."

The rise of the Islamic State deepened Obama's conviction that the Middle East could not be fixed—not on his watch, and not for a generation to come.

On a rainy

Wednesday in mid-November, President Obama appeared on a stage at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (

apec) summit in Manila with Jack Ma, the founder of the Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba, and a 31-year-old Filipina inventor named Aisa Mijeno. The ballroom was crowded with Asian CEOs, American business leaders, and government officials from across the region. Obama, who was greeted warmly, first delivered informal remarks from behind a podium, mainly about the threat of climate change.

Obama made no mention of the subject preoccupying much of the rest of the world—the

isis attacks in Paris five days earlier, which had killed 130 people. Obama had arrived in Manila the day before from a G20 summit held in Antalya, Turkey. The Paris attacks had been a main topic of conversation in Antalya, where Obama held a particularly contentious press conference on the subject.

The traveling White House press corps was unrelenting: "Isn't it time for your strategy to change?" one reporter asked. This was followed by "Could I ask you to address your critics who say that your reluctance to enter another Middle East war, and your preference of diplomacy over using the military, makes the United States weaker and emboldens our enemies?" And then came this imperishable question, from a CNN reporter: "If you'll forgive the language—why can't we take out these bastards?" Which was followed by "Do you think you really understand this enemy well enough to defeat them and to protect the homeland?"

As the questions unspooled, Obama became progressively more irritated. He described his

isis strategy at length, but the only time he exhibited an emotion other than disdain was when he addressed an emerging controversy about America's refugee policy. Republican governors and presidential candidates had suddenly taken to demanding that the United States block Syrian refugees from coming to America. Ted Cruz had proposed accepting only Christian Syrians. Chris Christie had said that all refugees, including "orphans under 5," should be banned from entry until proper vetting procedures had been put in place.

This rhetoric appeared to frustrate Obama immensely. "When I hear folks say that, well, maybe we should just admit the Christians but not the Muslims; when I hear political leaders suggesting that there would be a religious test for which person who's fleeing from a war-torn country is admitted," Obama told the assembled reporters, "that's not American. That's not who we are. We don't have religious tests to our compassion."

"Aren't the Saudis your friends?" the Prime Minister asked. Obama smiled. "It's complicated."

Air Force One departed Antalya and arrived 10 hours later in Manila. That's when the president's advisers came to understand, in the words of one official, that "everyone back home had lost their minds." Susan Rice, trying to comprehend the rising anxiety, searched her hotel television in vain for CNN, finding only the BBC and Fox News. She toggled between the two, looking for the mean, she told people on the trip.

Later, the president would say that he had failed to fully appreciate the fear many Americans were experiencing about the possibility of a Paris-style attack in the U.S. Great distance, a frantic schedule, and the jet-lag haze that envelops a globe-spanning presidential trip were working against him. But he has never believed that terrorism poses a threat to America commensurate with the fear it generates. Even during the period in 2014 when

isis was executing its American captives in Syria, his emotions were in check. Valerie Jarrett, Obama's closest adviser, told him people were worried that the group would soon take its beheading campaign to the U.S. "They're not coming here to chop our heads off," he reassured her. Obama frequently reminds his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do. Several years ago, he expressed to me his admiration for Israelis' "resilience" in the face of constant terrorism, and it is clear that he would like to see resilience replace panic in American society. Nevertheless, his advisers are fighting a constant rearguard action to keep Obama from placing terrorism in what he considers its "proper" perspective, out of concern that he will seem insensitive to the fears of the American people.

Obama and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry look on during a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the World Climate Change Conference 2015 (COP21), in Paris in December. (Kevin Lamarque / Reuters)

The frustration among Obama's advisers spills over into the Pentagon and the State Department. John Kerry, for one, seems more alarmed about

isis than the president does. Recently, when I asked the secretary of state a general question—is the Middle East still important to the U.S.?—he answered by talking exclusively about

isis. "This is a threat to everybody in the world," he said, a group "overtly committed to destroying people in the West and in the Middle East. Imagine what would happen if we don't stand and fight them, if we don't lead a coalition—as we are doing, by the way. If we didn't do that, you could have allies and friends of ours fall. You could have a massive migration into Europe that destroys Europe, leads to the pure destruction of Europe, ends the European project, and everyone runs for cover and you've got the 1930s all over again, with nationalism and fascism and other things breaking

out. Of course we have an interest in this, a huge interest in this."

When I noted to Kerry that the president's rhetoric doesn't match his, he said, "President Obama sees all of this, but he doesn't gin it up into this kind of—he thinks we are on track. He has escalated his efforts. But he's not trying to create hysteria ... I think the president is always inclined to try to keep things on an appropriate equilibrium. I respect that."

Obama modulates his discussion of terrorism for several reasons: He is, by nature, Spockian. And he believes that a misplaced word, or a frightened look, or an ill-considered hyperbolic claim, could tip the country into panic. The sort of panic he worries about most is the type that would manifest itself in anti-Muslim xenophobia or in a challenge to American openness and to the constitutional order

The president also gets frustrated that terrorism keeps swamping his larger agenda, particularly as it relates to rebalancing America's global priorities. For years, the "pivot to Asia" has been a paramount priority of his. America's economic future lies in Asia, he believes, and the challenge posed by China's rise requires constant attention. From his earliest days in office, Obama has been focused on rebuilding the sometimes-threadbare ties between the U.S. and its Asian treaty partners, and he is perpetually on the hunt for opportunities to draw other Asian nations into the U.S. orbit. His dramatic opening to Burma was one such opportunity; Vietnam and the entire constellation of Southeast Asian countries fearful of Chinese domination presented others.

In Manila, at

apec, Obama was determined to keep the conversation focused on this agenda, and not on what he viewed as the containable challenge presented by

isis. Obama's secretary of defense, Ashton Carter, told me not long ago that Obama has maintained his focus on Asia even as Syria and other Middle Eastern conflicts continue to flare. Obama believes, Carter said, that Asia "is the part of the world of greatest consequence to the American future, and that no president can take his eye off of this." He added, "He consistently asks, even in the midst of everything else that's going on, 'Where are we in the Asia-Pacific rebalance? Where are we in terms of resources?' He's been extremely consistent about that, even in times of Middle East tension."

After Obama finished his presentation on climate change, he joined Ma and Mijeno, who had seated themselves on nearby armchairs, where Obama was preparing to interview them in the manner of a daytime talk-show host—an approach that seemed to induce a momentary bout of status-inversion vertigo in an audience not accustomed to such behavior in their own leaders. Obama began by asking Ma a question about climate change. Ma, unsurprisingly, agreed with Obama that it was a very important issue. Then Obama turned to Mijeno. A laboratory

operating in the hidden recesses of the West Wing could not have fashioned a person more expertly designed to appeal to Obama's wonkish enthusiasms than Mijeno, a young engineer who, with her brother, had invented a lamp that is somehow powered by salt water.

"Just to be clear, Aisa, so with some salt water, the device that you've set up can provide—am I right?—about eight hours of lighting?," Obama asked.

"Eight hours of lighting," she responded.

Obama: "And the lamp is \$20—"

Mijeno: "Around \$20."

"I think Aisa is a perfect example of what we're seeing in a lot of countries—young entrepreneurs coming up with leapfrog technologies, in the same ways that in large portions of Asia and Africa, the old landline phones never got set up," Obama said, because those areas jumped straight to mobile phones. Obama encouraged Jack Ma to fund her work. "She's won, by the way, a lot of prizes and gotten a lot of attention, so this is not like one of those infomercials where you order it, and you can't make the thing work," he said, to laughter.

The next day, aboard Air Force One en route to Kuala Lumpur, I mentioned to Obama that he seemed genuinely happy to be onstage with Ma and Mijeno, and then I pivoted away from Asia, asking him if anything about the Middle East makes him happy.

"Right now, I don't think that anybody can be feeling good about the situation in the Middle East," he said. "You have countries that are failing to provide prosperity and opportunity for their people. You've got a violent, extremist ideology, or ideologies, that are turbocharged through social media. You've got countries that have very few civic traditions, so that as autocratic regimes start fraying, the only organizing principles are sectarian."

He went on, "Contrast that with Southeast Asia, which still has huge problems—enormous poverty, corruption—but is filled with striving, ambitious, energetic people who are every single day scratching and clawing to build businesses and get education and find jobs and build infrastructure. The contrast is pretty stark."

In Asia, as well as in Latin America and Africa, Obama says, he sees young people yearning for self-improvement, modernity, education, and material wealth.

"They are not thinking about how to kill Americans," he says. "What they're thinking about is How do I get a better education? How do I create something of value?"

He then made an observation that I came to realize was representative of his bleakest, most visceral understanding of the Middle East today—not the sort of understanding that a White House still oriented around themes of hope and change might choose to advertise. "If we're not talking to them," he said, referring to young Asians and Africans and Latin Americans, "because the only thing we're doing is

figuring out how to destroy or cordon off or control the malicious, nihilistic, violent parts of humanity, then we're missing the boat."

Obama's critics argue that he is ineffective in cordoning off the violent nihilists of radical Islam because he doesn't understand the threat. He does resist refracting radical Islam through the "clash of civilizations" prism popularized by the late political scientist Samuel Huntington. But this is because, he and his advisers argue, he does not want to enlarge the ranks of the enemy. "The goal is not to force a Huntington template onto this conflict," said John Brennan, the CIA director.

Both François Hollande and David Cameron have spoken about the threat of radical Islam in more Huntingtongesque terms, and I've heard that both men wish Obama would use more-direct language in discussing the threat. When I mentioned this to Obama he said, "Hollande and Cameron have used phrases, like radical Islam, that we have not used on a regular basis as our way of targeting terrorism. But I've never had a conversation when they said, 'Man, how come you're not using this phrase the way you hear Republicans say it?' " Obama says he has demanded that Muslim leaders do more to eliminate the threat of violent fundamentalism. "It is very clear what I mean," he told me, "which is that there is a violent, radical, fanatical, nihilistic interpretation of Islam by a faction—a tiny faction—within the Muslim community that is our enemy, and that has to be defeated."

He then offered a critique that sounded more in line with the rhetoric of Cameron and Hollande. "There is also the need for Islam as a whole to challenge that interpretation of Islam, to isolate it, and to undergo a vigorous discussion within their community about how Islam works as part of a peaceful, modern society," he said. But he added, "I do not persuade peaceful, tolerant Muslims to engage in that debate if I'm not sensitive to their concern that they are being tagged with a broad brush."

Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Washington, D.C., April 2015 (Pete Souza / White House)

In private encounters with other world leaders, Obama has argued that there will be no comprehensive solution to Islamist terrorism until Islam reconciles itself to modernity and undergoes some of the reforms that have changed Christianity.

Though he has argued, controversially, that the Middle East's conflicts "date back millennia," he also believes that the intensified Muslim fury of recent years was encouraged by countries considered friends of the U.S. In a meeting during

apec with Malcolm Turnbull, the new prime minister of Australia, Obama described how he has watched Indonesia gradually move from a relaxed, syncretistic Islam to a more fundamentalist, unforgiving interpretation; large numbers of

Indonesian women, he observed, have now adopted the hijab, the Muslim head covering.

Why, Turnbull asked, was this happening?

Because, Obama answered, the Saudis and other Gulf Arabs have funneled money, and large numbers of imams and teachers, into the country. In the 1990s, the Saudis heavily funded Wahhabist madrassas, seminaries that teach the fundamentalist version of Islam favored by the Saudi ruling family, Obama told Turnbull. Today, Islam in Indonesia is much more Arab in orientation than it was when he lived there, he said.

"Aren't the Saudis your friends?," Turnbull asked.

Obama smiled. "It's complicated," he said.

Obama's patience with Saudi Arabia has always been limited. In his first foreign-policy commentary of note, that 2002 speech at the antiwar rally in Chicago, he said, "You want a fight, President Bush? Let's fight to make sure our so-called allies in the Middle East—the Saudis and the Egyptians—stop oppressing their own people, and suppressing dissent, and tolerating corruption and inequality." In the White House these days, one occasionally hears Obama's National Security Council officials pointedly reminding visitors that the large majority of 9/11 hijackers were not Iranian, but Saudi—and Obama himself rails against Saudi Arabia's state-sanctioned misogyny, arguing in private that "a country cannot function in the modern world when it is repressing half of its population." In meetings with foreign leaders, Obama has said, "You can gauge the success of a society by how it treats its women."

His frustration with the Saudis informs his analysis of Middle Eastern power politics. At one point I observed to him that he is less likely than previous presidents to axiomatically side with Saudi Arabia in its dispute with its archrival, Iran. He didn't disagree.

"Iran, since 1979, has been an enemy of the United States, and has engaged in state-sponsored terrorism, is a genuine threat to Israel and many of our allies, and engages in all kinds of destructive behavior," the president said. "And my view has never been that we should throw our traditional allies—the Saudis—"overboard in favor of Iran."

But he went on to say that the Saudis need to "share" the Middle East with their Iranian foes. "The competition between the Saudis and the Iranians—which has helped to feed proxy wars and chaos in Syria and Iraq and Yemen—requires us to say to our friends as well as to the Iranians that they need to find an effective way to share the neighborhood and institute some sort of cold peace," he said. "An approach that said to our friends 'You are right, Iran is the source of all problems, and we will support you in dealing with Iran' would essentially mean that as these sectarian conflicts continue to rage and our Gulf partners, our traditional friends, do not have the ability to put out the flames on their own or decisively win on their own, and would mean that we have to

start coming in and using our military power to settle scores. And that would be in the interest neither of the United States nor of the Middle East."

One of the most destructive forces in the Middle East, Obama believes, is tribalism—a force no president can neutralize. Tribalism, made manifest in the reversion to sect, creed, clan, and village by the desperate citizens of failing states, is the source of much of the Muslim Middle East's problems, and it is another source of his fatalism. Obama has deep respect for the destructive resilience of tribalism—part of his memoir, *Dreams From My Father*, concerns the way in which tribalism in post-colonial Kenya helped ruin his father's life—which goes some distance in explaining why he is so fastidious about avoiding entanglements in tribal conflicts.

"It is literally in my DNA to be suspicious of tribalism," he told me. "I understand the tribal impulse, and acknowledge the power of tribal division. I've been navigating tribal divisions my whole life. In the end, it's the source of a lot of destructive acts."

While flying to Kuala Lumpur with the president, I recalled a passing reference he had once made to me about the Hobbesian argument for strong government as an antidote to the unforgiving state of nature. When Obama looks at swathes of the Middle East, Hobbes's "war of all against all" is what he sees. "I have a recognition that us serving as the Leviathan clamps down and tames some of these impulses," Obama had said. So I tried to reopen this conversation with an unfortunately prolix question about, among other things, "the Hobbesian notion that people organize themselves into collectives to stave off their supreme fear, which is death."

Ben Rhodes and Joshua Earnest, the White House spokesman, who were seated on a couch to the side of Obama's desk on Air Force One, could barely suppress their amusement at my discursiveness. I paused and said, "I bet if I asked that in a press conference my colleagues would just throw me out of the room."

"I would be really into it," Obama said, "but everybody else would be rolling their eyes."

Rhodes interjected: "Why can't we get the bastards?" That question, the one put to the president by the CNN reporter at the press conference in Turkey, had become a topic of sardonic conversation during the trip.

I turned to the president: "Well, yeah, and also, why can't we get the bastards?"

He took the first question.

"Look, I am not of the view that human beings are inherently evil," he said. "I believe that there's more good than bad in humanity. And if you look at the trajectory of history, I am optimistic."

"I believe that overall, humanity has become less violent, more tolerant, healthier, better fed, more empathetic, more able to manage difference. But it's hugely uneven. And

what has been clear throughout the 20th and 21st centuries is that the progress we make in social order and taming our baser impulses and steadying our fears can be reversed very quickly. Social order starts breaking down if people are under profound stress. Then the default position is tribe—us/them, a hostility toward the unfamiliar or the unknown.”

He continued, “Right now, across the globe, you’re seeing places that are undergoing severe stress because of globalization, because of the collision of cultures brought about by the Internet and social media, because of scarcities—some of which will be attributable to climate change over the next several decades—because of population growth. And in those places, the Middle East being Exhibit A, the default position for a lot of folks is to organize tightly in the tribe and to push back or strike out against those who are different.

“A group like

isil is the distillation of every worst impulse along these lines. The notion that we are a small group that defines ourselves primarily by the degree to which we can kill others who are not like us, and attempting to impose a rigid orthodoxy that produces nothing, that celebrates nothing, that really is contrary to every bit of human progress—it indicates the degree to which that kind of mentality can still take root and gain adherents in the 21st century.”

So your appreciation for tribalism’s power makes you want to stay away?, I asked. “In other words, when people say ‘Why don’t you just go get the bastards?’, you step back?”

“We have to determine the best tools to roll back those kinds of attitudes,” he said. “There are going to be times where either because it’s not a direct threat to us or because we just don’t have the tools in our toolkit to have a huge impact that, tragically, we have to refrain from jumping in with both feet.”

I asked Obama whether he would have sent the Marines to Rwanda in 1994 to stop the genocide as it was happening, had he been president at the time. “Given the speed with which the killing took place, and how long it takes to crank up the machinery of the U.S. government, I understand why we did not act fast enough,” he said. “Now, we should learn from that. I actually think that Rwanda is an interesting test case because it’s possible—not guaranteed, but it’s possible—that this was a situation where the quick application of force might have been enough.”

He related this to Syria: “Ironically, it’s probably easier to make an argument that a relatively small force inserted quickly with international support would have resulted in averting genocide [more successfully in Rwanda] than in Syria right now, where the degree to which the various groups are armed and hardened fighters and are supported by a whole host of external actors with a lot of resources requires a much larger commitment of forces.”

Obama-administration officials argue that he has a comprehensible approach to fighting terrorism: a drone air force, Special Forces raids, a clandestine CIA-aided army of 10,000 rebels battling in Syria. So why does Obama stumble when explaining to the American people that he, too, cares about terrorism? The Turkey press conference, I told him, “was a moment for you as a politician to say, ‘Yeah, I hate the bastards too, and by the way, I am taking out the bastards.’ “ The easy thing to do would have been to reassure Americans in visceral terms that he will kill the people who want to kill them. Does he fear a knee-jerk reaction in the direction of another Middle East invasion? Or is he just inalterably Spockian?

“Every president has strengths and weaknesses,” he answered. “And there is no doubt that there are times where I have not been attentive enough to feelings and emotions and politics in communicating what we’re doing and how we’re doing it.”

But for America to be successful in leading the world, he continued, “I believe that we have to avoid being simplistic. I think we have to build resilience and make sure that our political debates are grounded in reality. It’s not that I don’t appreciate the value of theater in political communications; it’s that the habits we—the media, politicians—have gotten into, and how we talk about these issues, are so detached so often from what we need to be doing that for me to satisfy the cable news hype-fest would lead to us making worse and worse decisions over time.”

Obama with Jack Ma, the chairman of Alibaba, at the APEC summit in the Philippines last November—days after ISIS killed 130 people in Paris (Aaron Favila / AP)

As Air Force One began its descent toward Kuala Lumpur, the president mentioned the successful U.S.-led effort to stop the Ebola epidemic in West Africa as a positive example of steady, nonhysterical management of a terrifying crisis.

“During the couple of months in which everybody was sure Ebola was going to destroy the Earth and there was 24/7 coverage of Ebola, if I had fed the panic or in any way strayed from ‘Here are the facts, here’s what needs to be done, here’s how we’re handling it, the likelihood of you getting Ebola is very slim, and here’s what we need to do both domestically and overseas to stamp out this epidemic,’ “ then “maybe people would have said ‘Obama is taking this as seriously as he needs to be.’ “ But feeding the panic by overreacting could have shut down travel to and from three African countries that were already crippling poor, in ways that might have destroyed their economies—which would likely have meant, among other things, a recurrence of Ebola. He added, “It would have also meant that we might have wasted a huge amount of resources in our public-health systems that need to be devoted to flu vaccinations and other things that actually kill people” in large numbers in America.

The plane landed. The president, leaning back in his office chair with his jacket off and his tie askew, did not seem to notice. Outside, on the tarmac, I could see that what appeared to be a large portion of the Malaysian Armed Forces had assembled to welcome him. As he continued talking, I began to worry that the waiting soldiers and dignitaries would get hot. "I think we're in Malaysia," I said. "It seems to be outside this plane."

He conceded that this was true, but seemed to be in no rush, so I pressed him about his public reaction to terrorism: If he showed more emotion, wouldn't that calm people down rather than rile them up?

"I have friends who have kids in Paris right now," he said. "And you and I and a whole bunch of people who are writing about what happened in Paris have strolled along the same streets where people were gunned down. And it's right to feel fearful. And it's important for us not to ever get complacent. There's a difference between resilience and complacency." He went on to describe another difference—between making considered decisions and making rash, emotional ones. "What it means, actually, is that you care so much that you want to get it right and you're not going to indulge in either impetuous or, in some cases, manufactured responses that make good sound bites but don't produce results. The stakes are too high to play those games."

"ISIS is not an existential threat to the United States. Climate change is a potential existential threat to the entire world if we don't do something about it."

With that, Obama stood up and said, "Okay, gotta go." He headed out of his office and down the stairs, to the red carpet and the honor guard and the cluster of Malaysian officials waiting to greet him, and then to his armored limousine, flown to Kuala Lumpur ahead of him. (Early in his first term, still unaccustomed to the massive military operation it takes to move a president from one place to another, he noted ruefully to aides, "I have the world's largest carbon footprint.")

The president's first stop was another event designed to highlight his turn to Asia, this one a town-hall meeting with students and entrepreneurs participating in the administration's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. Obama entered the lecture hall at Taylor's University to huge applause. He made some opening remarks, then charmed his audience in an extended Q&A session.

But those of us watching from the press section became distracted by news coming across our phones about a new jihadist attack, this one in Mali. Obama, busily mesmerizing adoring Asian entrepreneurs, had no idea. Only when he got into his limousine with Susan Rice did he get the news.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power (left) and Secretary of State John Kerry (center) listen

as Obama speaks about the Ebola epidemic in September 2014. (Pablo Martinez Monsivais / AP)

Later that evening, I visited the president in his suite at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in downtown Kuala Lumpur. The streets around the hotel had been sealed. Armored vehicles ringed the building; the lobby was filled with

swat teams. I took the elevator to a floor crowded with Secret Service agents, who pointed me to a staircase; the elevator to Obama's floor was disabled for security reasons. Up two flights, to a hallway with more agents. A moment's wait, and then Obama opened the door. His two-story suite was outlandish: Tara-like drapes, overstuffed couches. It was enormous and lonely and claustrophobic all at once.

"It's like the Hearst Castle," I observed.

"Well, it's a long way from the Hampton Inn in Des Moines," Obama said.

ESPN was playing in the background.

When we sat down, I pointed out to the president a central challenge of his pivot to Asia. Earlier in the day, at the moment he was trying to inspire a group of gifted and eager hijab-wearing Indonesian entrepreneurs and Burmese innovators, attention was diverted by the latest Islamist terror attack.

A writer at heart, he had a suggestion: "It's probably a pretty easy way to start the story," he said, referring to this article.

Possibly, I said, but it's kind of a cheap trick.

"It's cheap, but it works," Obama said. "We're talking to these kids, and then there's this attack going on."

The split-screen quality of the day prompted a conversation about two recent meetings he'd held, one that generated major international controversy and headlines, and one that did not. The one that drew so much attention, I suggested, would ultimately be judged less consequential. This was the Gulf summit in May of 2015 at Camp David, meant to mollify a crowd of visiting sheikhs and princes who feared the impending Iran deal. The other meeting took place two months later, in the Oval Office, between Obama and the general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong. This meeting took place only because John Kerry had pushed the White House to violate protocol, since the general secretary was not a head of state. But the goals trumped decorum: Obama wanted to lobby the Vietnamese on the Trans-Pacific Partnership—his negotiators soon extracted a promise from the Vietnamese that they would legalize independent labor unions—and he wanted to deepen cooperation on strategic issues. Administration officials have repeatedly hinted to me that Vietnam may one day soon host a permanent U.S. military presence, to check the ambitions of the country it now fears most, China. The U.S. Navy's return to Cam Ranh Bay would count as one of the more improbable developments in recent American history. "We just moved the Vietnamese

Communist Party to recognize labor rights in a way that we could never do by bullying them or scaring them," Obama told me, calling this a key victory in his campaign to replace stick-waving with diplomatic persuasion.

I noted that the 200 or so young Southeast Asians in the room earlier that day—including citizens of Communist-ruled countries—seemed to love America. "They do," Obama said. "In Vietnam right now, America polls at 80 percent."

Obama visits a refugee center in Kuala Lumpur on a tour through Southeast Asia last fall. He sees the region as more integral to America's future than the Middle East. (Susan Walsh / AP)

The resurgent popularity of America throughout Southeast Asia means that "we can do really big, important stuff—which, by the way, then has ramifications across the board," he said, "because when Malaysia joins the anti-

isil campaign, that helps us leverage resources and credibility in our fight against terrorism. When we have strong relations with Indonesia, that helps us when we are going to Paris and trying to negotiate a climate treaty, where the temptation of a Russia or some of these other countries may be to skew the deal in a way that is unhelpful."

Obama then cited America's increased influence in Latin America—increased, he said, in part by his removal of a region-wide stumbling block when he reestablished ties with Cuba—as proof that his deliberate, nonthreatening, diplomacy-centered approach to foreign relations is working. The

alba movement, a group of Latin American governments oriented around anti-Americanism, has significantly weakened during his time as president. "When I came into office, at the first Summit of the Americas that I attended, Hugo Chávez—the late anti-American Venezuelan dictator—was still the dominant figure in the conversation," he said. "We made a very strategic decision early on, which was, rather than blow him up as this 10-foot giant adversary, to right-size the problem and say, 'We don't like what's going on in Venezuela, but it's not a threat to the United States.'"

Obama said that to achieve this rebalancing, the U.S. had to absorb the diatribes and insults of superannuated Castro manqués. "When I saw Chávez, I shook his hand and he handed me a Marxist critique of the U.S.–Latin America relationship," Obama recalled. "And I had to sit there and listen to Ortega"—Daniel Ortega, the radical leftist president of Nicaragua—"make an hour-long rant against the United States. But us being there, not taking all that stuff seriously—because it really wasn't a threat to us"—helped neutralize the region's anti-Americanism.

The president's unwillingness to counter the baiting by American adversaries can feel emotionally unsatisfying, I said, and I told him that every so often, I'd like to see him give Vladimir Putin the finger. It's atavistic, I said, understanding my audience.

"It is," the president responded coolly. "This is what they're looking for."

He described a relationship with Putin that doesn't quite conform to common perceptions. I had been under the impression that Obama viewed Putin as nasty, brutish, and short. But, Obama told me, Putin is not particularly nasty.

"The truth is, actually, Putin, in all of our meetings, is scrupulously polite, very frank. Our meetings are very businesslike. He never keeps me waiting two hours like he does a bunch of these other folks." Obama said that Putin believes his relationship with the U.S. is more important than Americans tend to think. "He's constantly interested in being seen as our peer and as working with us, because he's not completely stupid. He understands that Russia's overall position in the world is significantly diminished. And the fact that he invades Crimea or is trying to prop up Assad doesn't suddenly make him a player. You don't see him in any of these meetings out here helping to shape the agenda. For that matter, there's not a G20 meeting where the Russians set the agenda around any of the issues that are important."

Russia's invasion of

Crimea in early 2014, and its decision to use force to buttress the rule of its client Bashar al-Assad, have been cited by Obama's critics as proof that the post-red-line world no longer fears America.

So when I talked with the president in the Oval Office in late January, I again raised this question of deterrent credibility. "The argument is made," I said, "that Vladimir Putin watched you in Syria and thought, He's too logical, he's too rational, he's too into retrenchment. I'm going to push him a little bit further in Ukraine."

Obama didn't much like my line of inquiry. "Look, this theory is so easily disposed of that I'm always puzzled by how people make the argument. I don't think anybody thought that George W. Bush was overly rational or cautious in his use of military force. And as I recall, because apparently nobody in this town does, Putin went into Georgia on Bush's watch, right smack dab in the middle of us having over 100,000 troops deployed in Iraq." Obama was referring to Putin's 2008 invasion of Georgia, a former Soviet republic, which was undertaken for many of the same reasons Putin later invaded Ukraine—to keep an ex-Soviet republic in Russia's sphere of influence.

"Putin acted in Ukraine in response to a client state that was about to slip out of his grasp. And he improvised in a way to hang on to his control there," he said. "He's done the exact same thing in Syria, at enormous cost to the well-being of his own country. And the notion that somehow Russia is in a stronger position now, in Syria or in Ukraine, than they were before they invaded Ukraine or before he had to deploy military forces to Syria is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of power in foreign affairs or in the world generally. Real power means you can get what you want without having

to exert violence. Russia was much more powerful when Ukraine looked like an independent country but was a kleptocracy that he could pull the strings on."

Obama's theory here is simple: Ukraine is a core Russian interest but not an American one, so Russia will always be able to maintain escalatory dominance there.

"The fact is that Ukraine, which is a non-nato country, is going to be vulnerable to military domination by Russia no matter what we do," he said.

I asked Obama whether his position on Ukraine was realistic or fatalistic.

"It's realistic," he said. "But this is an example of where we have to be very clear about what our core interests are and what we are willing to go to war for. And at the end of the day, there's always going to be some ambiguity." He then offered up a critique he had heard directed against him, in order to knock it down. "I think that the best argument you can make on the side of those who are critics of my foreign policy is that the president doesn't exploit ambiguity enough. He doesn't maybe react in ways that might cause people to think, 'Wow, this guy might be a little crazy.'"

"The 'crazy Nixon' approach," I said: Confuse and frighten your enemies by making them think you're capable of committing irrational acts.

"But let's examine the Nixon theory," he said. "So we dropped more ordnance on Cambodia and Laos than on Europe in World War II, and yet, ultimately, Nixon withdrew, Kissinger went to Paris, and all we left behind was chaos, slaughter, and authoritarian governments that finally, over time, have emerged from that hell. When I go to visit those countries, I'm going to be trying to figure out how we can, today, help them remove bombs that are still blowing off the legs of little kids. In what way did that strategy promote our interests?"

But what if Putin were threatening to move against, say, Moldova—another vulnerable post-Soviet state? Wouldn't it be helpful for Putin to believe that Obama might get angry and irrational about that? Video: Jeffrey Goldberg speaks with James Bennet about "The Obama Doctrine."

Jeffrey Goldberg speaks with James Bennet about the process of collecting interviews and writing "The Obama Doctrine."

"There is no evidence in modern American foreign policy that that's how people respond. People respond based on what their imperatives are, and if it's really important to somebody, and it's not that important to us, they know that, and we know that," he said. "There are ways to deter, but it requires you to be very clear ahead of time about what is worth going to war for and what is not. Now, if there is somebody in this town that would claim that we would consider going to war with Russia over Crimea and eastern Ukraine, they should speak up and be very clear about it. The idea that talking tough or engaging in some military action

that is tangential to that particular area is somehow going to influence the decision making of Russia or China is contrary to all the evidence we have seen over the last 50 years."

Obama went on to say that the belief in the possibilities of projected toughness is rooted in "mythologies" about Ronald Reagan's foreign policy.

"If you think about, let's say, the Iran hostage crisis, there is a narrative that has been promoted today by some of the Republican candidates that the day Reagan was elected, because he looked tough, the Iranians decided, 'We better turn over these hostages,' " he said. "In fact what had happened was that there was a long negotiation with the Iranians and because they so disliked Carter—even though the negotiations had been completed—they held those hostages until the day Reagan got elected. Reagan's posture, his rhetoric, etc., had nothing to do with their release. When you think of the military actions that Reagan took, you have Grenada—which is hard to argue helped our ability to shape world events, although it was good politics for him back home. You have the Iran-Contra affair, in which we supported right-wing paramilitaries and did nothing to enhance our image in Central America, and it wasn't successful at all." He reminded me that Reagan's great foe, Daniel Ortega, is today the unrepentant president of Nicaragua.

Obama also cited Reagan's decision to almost immediately pull U.S. forces from Lebanon after 241 servicemen were killed in a Hezbollah attack in 1983. "Apparently all these things really helped us gain credibility with the Russians and the Chinese," because "that's the narrative that is told," he said sarcastically. "Now, I actually think that Ronald Reagan had a great success in foreign policy, which was to recognize the opportunity that Gorbachev presented and to engage in extensive diplomacy—which was roundly criticized by some of the same people who now use Ronald Reagan to promote the notion that we should go around bombing people."

In a conversation at the end of January, I asked the president to describe for me the threats he worries about most as he prepares, in the coming months, to hand off power to his successor.

"As I survey the next 20 years, climate change worries me profoundly because of the effects that it has on all the other problems that we face," he said. "If you start seeing more severe drought; more significant famine; more displacement from the Indian subcontinent and coastal regions in Africa and Asia; the continuing problems of scarcity, refugees, poverty, disease—this makes every other problem we've got worse. That's above and beyond just the existential issues of a planet that starts getting into a bad feedback loop."

Terrorism, he said, is also a long-term problem "when combined with the problem of failed states."

What country does he consider the greatest challenge to America in the coming decades? "In terms of traditional great-state relations, I do believe that the relationship between the United States and China is going to be the most critical," he said. "If we get that right and China continues on a peaceful rise, then we have a partner that is growing in capability and sharing with us the burdens and responsibilities of maintaining an international order. If China fails; if it is not able to maintain a trajectory that satisfies its population and has to resort to nationalism as an organizing principle; if it feels so overwhelmed that it never takes on the responsibilities of a country its size in maintaining the international order; if it views the world only in terms of regional spheres of influence—then not only do we see the potential for conflict with China, but we will find ourselves having more difficulty dealing with these other challenges that are going to come."

Many people, I noted, want the president to be more forceful in confronting China, especially in the South China Sea. Hillary Clinton, for one, has been heard to say in private settings, "I don't want my grandchildren to live in a world dominated by the Chinese."

"I've been very explicit in saying that we have more to fear from a weakened, threatened China than a successful, rising China," Obama said. "I think we have to be firm where China's actions are undermining international interests, and if you look at how we've operated in the South China Sea, we have been able to mobilize most of Asia to isolate China in ways that have surprised China, frankly, and have very much served our interest in strengthening our alliances."

A weak, flailing Russia constitutes a threat as well, though not quite a top-tier threat. "Unlike China, they have demographic problems, economic structural problems, that would require not only vision but a generation to overcome," Obama said. "The path that Putin is taking is not going to help them overcome those challenges. But in that environment, the temptation to project military force to show greatness is strong, and that's what Putin's inclination is. So I don't underestimate the dangers there." Obama returned to a point he had made repeatedly to me, one that he hopes the country, and the next president, absorbs: "You know, the notion that diplomacy and technocrats and bureaucrats somehow are helping to keep America safe and secure, most people think, Eh, that's nonsense. But it's true. And by the way, it's the element of American power that the rest of the world appreciates unambiguously. When we deploy troops, there's always a sense on the part of other countries that, even where necessary, sovereignty is being violated."

Over the past year, John Kerry has visited the White House regularly to ask Obama to violate Syria's sovereignty. On several occasions, Kerry has asked Obama to launch missiles at specific regime targets, under cover of night, to "send a message" to the regime. The goal, Kerry has said, is

not to overthrow Assad but to encourage him, and Iran and Russia, to negotiate peace. When the Assad alliance has had the upper hand on the battlefield, as it has these past several months, it has shown no inclination to take seriously Kerry's entreaties to negotiate in good faith. A few cruise missiles, Kerry has argued, might concentrate the attention of Assad and his backers. "Kerry's looking like a chump with the Russians, because he has no leverage," a senior administration official told me.

The U.S. wouldn't have to claim credit for the attacks, Kerry has told Obama—but Assad would surely know the missiles' return address.

Obama has steadfastly resisted Kerry's requests, and seems to have grown impatient with his lobbying. Recently, when Kerry handed Obama a written outline of new steps to bring more pressure to bear on Assad, Obama said, "Oh, another proposal?" Administration officials have told me that Vice President Biden, too, has become frustrated with Kerry's demands for action. He has said privately to the secretary of state, "John, remember Vietnam? Remember how that started?" At a National Security Council meeting held at the Pentagon in December, Obama announced that no one except the secretary of defense should bring him proposals for military action. Pentagon officials understood Obama's announcement to be a brushback pitch directed at Kerry.

Obama has bet that the price of direct U.S. action in Syria would be higher than the price of inaction.

One day in January, in Kerry's office at the State Department, I expressed the obvious: He has more of a bias toward action than the president does.

"I do, probably," Kerry acknowledged. "Look, the final say on these things is in his hands ... I'd say that I think we've had a very symbiotic, synergistic, whatever you call it, relationship, which works very effectively. Because I'll come in with the bias toward 'Let's try to do this, let's try to do that, let's get this done.'"

Obama's caution on Syria has vexed those in the administration who have seen opportunities, at different moments over the past four years, to tilt the battlefield against Assad. Some thought that Putin's decision to fight on behalf of Assad would prompt Obama to intensify American efforts to help anti-regime rebels. But Obama, at least as of this writing, would not be moved, in part because he believed that it was not his business to stop Russia from making what he thought was a terrible mistake. "They are overextended. They're bleeding," he told me. "And their economy has contracted for three years in a row, drastically."

Obama meets with Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House in February of 2015. (Kevin Lamarque / Reuters)

In recent National Security Council meetings, Obama's strategy was occasionally referred to as the "Tom Sawyer approach." Obama's view was that if Putin wanted to expend

his regime's resources by painting the fence in Syria, the U.S. should let him. By late winter, though, when it appeared that Russia was making advances in its campaign to solidify Assad's rule, the White House began discussing ways to deepen support for the rebels, though the president's ambivalence about more-extensive engagement remained. In conversations I had with National Security Council officials over the past couple of months, I sensed a foreboding that an event—another San Bernardino-style attack, for instance—would compel the United States to take new and direct action in Syria. For Obama, this would be a nightmare.

If there had been no Iraq, no Afghanistan, and no Libya, Obama told me, he might be more apt to take risks in Syria. "A president does not make decisions in a vacuum. He does not have a blank slate. Any president who was thoughtful, I believe, would recognize that after over a decade of war, with obligations that are still to this day requiring great amounts of resources and attention in Afghanistan, with the experience of Iraq, with the strains that it's placed on our military—any thoughtful president would hesitate about making a renewed commitment in the exact same region of the world with some of the exact same dynamics and the same probability of an unsatisfactory outcome."

Are you too cautious?, I asked.

"No," he said. "Do I think that had we not invaded Iraq and were we not still involved in sending billions of dollars and a number of military trainers and advisers into Afghanistan, would I potentially have thought about taking on some additional risk to help try to shape the Syria situation? I don't know."

What has struck me is that, even as his secretary of state warns about a dire, Syria-fueled European apocalypse, Obama has not recategorized the country's civil war as a top-tier security threat.

Obama's hesitation to join the battle for Syria is held out as proof by his critics that he is too naive; his decision in 2013 not to fire missiles is proof, they argue, that he is a bluffer.

This critique frustrates the president. "Nobody remembers bin Laden anymore," he says. "Nobody talks about me ordering 30,000 more troops into Afghanistan." The red-line crisis, he said, "is the point of the inverted pyramid upon which all other theories rest."

One afternoon in late January, as I was leaving the Oval Office, I mentioned to Obama a moment from an interview in 2012 when he told me that he would not allow Iran to gain possession of a nuclear weapon. "You said, 'I'm the president of the United States, I don't bluff.'"

He said, "I don't."

Shortly after that interview four years ago, Ehud Barak, who was then the defense minister of Israel, asked me whether I thought Obama's no-bluff promise was itself a bluff. I answered that I found it difficult to imagine that the leader of the United States would bluff about something so

consequential. But Barak's question had stayed with me. So as I stood in the doorway with the president, I asked: "Was it a bluff?" I told him that few people now believe he actually would have attacked Iran to keep it from getting a nuclear weapon.

"That's interesting," he said, noncommittally.

I started to talk: "Do you—"

He interrupted. "I actually would have," he said, meaning that he would have struck Iran's nuclear facilities. "If I saw them break out."

He added, "Now, the argument that can't be resolved, because it's entirely situational, was what constitutes them getting the bomb. This was the argument I was having with Bibi Netanyahu." Netanyahu wanted Obama to prevent Iran from being capable of building a bomb, not merely from possessing a bomb.

"You were right to believe it," the president said. And then he made his key point. "This was in the category of an American interest."

I was reminded then of something Derek Chollet, a former National Security Council official, told me: "Obama is a gambler, not a bluffer."

The president has placed some huge bets. Last May, as he was trying to move the Iran nuclear deal through Congress, I told him that the agreement was making me nervous. His response was telling. "Look, 20 years from now, I'm still going to be around, God willing. If Iran has a nuclear weapon, it's my name on this," he said. "I think it's fair to say that in addition to our profound national-security interests, I have a personal interest in locking this down."

In the matter of the Syrian regime and its Iranian and Russian sponsors, Obama has bet, and seems prepared to continue betting, that the price of direct U.S. action would be higher than the price of inaction. And he is sanguine enough to live with the perilous ambiguities of his decisions. Though in his Nobel Peace Prize speech in 2009, Obama said, "Inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to more costly intervention later," today the opinions of humanitarian interventionists do not seem to move him, at least not publicly. He undoubtedly knows that a next-generation Samantha Power will write critically of his unwillingness to do more to prevent the continuing slaughter in Syria. (For that matter, Samantha Power will also be the subject of criticism from the next Samantha Power.) As he comes to the end of his presidency, Obama believes he has done his country a large favor by keeping it out of the maelstrom—and he believes, I suspect, that historians will one day judge him wise for having done so.

Inside the West Wing, officials say that Obama, as a president who inherited a financial crisis and two active wars from his predecessor, is keen to leave "a clean barn" to whoever succeeds him. This is why the fight against

isis, a group he considers to be a direct, though not existential, threat to the U.S., is his most urgent priority for the remainder of his presidency; killing the so-called caliph of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is one of the top goals of the American national-security apparatus in Obama's last year.

Of course,

isis was midwifed into existence, in part, by the Assad regime. Yet by Obama's stringent standards, Assad's continued rule for the moment still doesn't rise to the level of direct challenge to America's national security.

This is what is so controversial about the president's approach, and what will be controversial for years to come—the standard he has used to define what, exactly, constitutes a direct threat.

Obama has come to a number of dovetailing conclusions about the world, and about America's role in it. The first is that the Middle East is no longer terribly important to American interests. The second is that even if the Middle East were surpassingly important, there would still be little an American president could do to make it a better place. The third is that the innate American desire to fix the sorts of problems that manifest themselves most drastically in the Middle East inevitably leads to warfare, to the deaths of U.S. soldiers, and to the eventual hemorrhaging of U.S. credibility and power. The fourth is that the world cannot afford to see the diminishment of U.S. power. Just as the leaders of several American allies have found Obama's leadership inadequate to the tasks before him, he himself has found world leadership wanting: global partners who often lack the vision and the will to spend political capital in pursuit of broad, progressive goals, and adversaries who are not, in his mind, as rational as he is. Obama believes that history has sides, and that America's adversaries—and some of its putative allies—have situated themselves on the wrong one, a place where tribalism, fundamentalism, sectarianism, and militarism still flourish. What they don't understand is that history is bending in his direction.

"The central argument is that by keeping America from immersing itself in the crises of the Middle East, the foreign-policy establishment believes that the president is precipitating our decline," Ben Rhodes told me. "But the president himself takes the opposite view, which is that overextension in the Middle East will ultimately harm our economy, harm our ability to look for other opportunities and to deal with other challenges, and, most important, endanger the lives of American service members for reasons that are not in the direct American national-security interest."

If you are a supporter of the president, his strategy makes eminent sense: Double down in those parts of the world where success is plausible, and limit America's exposure to the rest. His critics believe, however, that problems like those presented by the Middle East don't solve

themselves—that, without American intervention, they metastasize.

At the moment, Syria, where history appears to be bending toward greater chaos, poses the most direct challenge to the president's worldview.

George W. Bush was also a gambler, not a bluffer. He will be remembered harshly for the things he did in the Middle East. Barack Obama is gambling that he will be judged well for the things he didn't do.

Obama Calls On Media To Get Tougher With Presidential Candidates

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

President Obama called on the news media Monday night to dig deeper for the truth in this election year, saying presidential candidates are facing less scrutiny than he did eight years ago.

Speaking at the annual Robin Toner journalism prize ceremony in Washington, Mr. Obama said the "coarsening" of this year's presidential campaign is hurting democracy, and journalists are failing to hold candidates accountable for false claims. He urged the media not to "dumb down the news."

"A well-informed electorate depends on you, and our democracy depends upon a well-informed electorate," he said.

The president said journalists are too focused on "he-said, she-said" reporting, a basic tenet of the profession to get "both sides of the story." He offered an example that might be based on his long-running battle with conservatives over climate change policy.

"While fairness is the hallmark of good journalism, false equivalency all too often these days can be a fatal flaw," Mr. Obama said. "If I say that the world is round, and someone else says it's flat, that's worth reporting, but you might also want to report on a bunch of scientific evidence that seems to support the notion that the world is round. And that shouldn't be buried in paragraph five or six of the article."

Mr. Obama also said the public would be "better served if billions of dollars in free media came with serious accountability, especially when politicians issue unworkable plans or make promises they can't keep."

"I know that's a shocking concept, that politicians would do that," said the president, who himself drew widespread condemnation in 2013 for his false promise, "if you like your health care plan, you can keep your health-care plan."

The president said he kept his campaign promises from 2007 and 2008 because a vigilant media was watching.

"If you go back and see what I said in 2007 and see what I did, they match up," Mr. Obama said. "There was a price if you said one thing and did something completely

different. The question is, in the current media environment, is that still true?"

The president said in-depth reporting "matters more than ever ... and lasts longer than some slap-dash tweet that slips off our screens in the blink of an eye."

No, The Media Didn't Create Trump

By Eugene Robinson

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

One of the more absurd things being said about the Donald Trump phenomenon is that the media created it. For the record, we didn't.

First of all, there is no "we." The news media operate in what should be every conservative ideologue's dream environment: an unfettered free market. Outlets compete every day — actually, in the Internet age, every hour — to provide consumers with information they need and want. Every editor and news director strives to beat the competition, and the fact is that audiences have decided they need and want to know about Trump.

No one understands this better than Trump himself. To understate by miles, he knows how to draw attention to himself — the late-night Twitter rants, the fire-breathing rallies, the gold-plated jet, the ridiculous hair. After decades in the public eye, he had more than 90 percent name recognition when he began his campaign. So it was no surprise that hordes of media flocked to Trump Tower last June 16 and watched him descend the shiny escalator for his kickoff announcement. Who doesn't love a good sideshow?

But any carnival barker can draw a crowd. Trump would have been sent home to his Fifth Avenue penthouse long ago if a substantial part of the Republican Party base didn't agree with what he is saying. If there is any sort of collective media failure, it's in paying not too much attention to Trump but instead too little to his message.

Were the morning news shows wrong to let Trump call in so often? Before you say "of course they were," think of the implications. Do those programs have an obligation to treat every candidate the same? If so, contenders such as Martin O'Malley and Jim Gilmore should have gotten as much coverage and airtime as, say, Hillary Clinton and Ted Cruz.

Were the cable networks wrong to carry live coverage of so many Trump rallies? Recall that the events themselves were newsworthy because of the extraordinary size of the crowds. I could buy the argument that the other candidate who drew unusually big crowds, Bernie Sanders, perhaps should have gotten more coverage, but not that Trump should have gotten less.

The "media created Trump" storyline ignores the fact that the "mainstream" media are about as popular among the Republican base as the Zika virus. And the one exception, Fox News, has been tougher on Trump than other outlets, not more accommodating. Chris Wallace, the host of "Fox News

Sunday," has long refused to let Trump call in. And anchor Megyn Kelly, with her sharp questioning and commentary, seems to have driven the blowhard billionaire up the wall.

It is true that Trump delivers huge television ratings and lots of website clicks. But that's irrelevant. News organizations have to cover the leading candidates, even if they're dull as dishwater.

The news media, it seems to me, are guilty only of reporting the news — which is that a candidate who has never held elective office, and who displays neither the base of knowledge nor the temperament necessary to serve as president, is leading all comers for the Republican nomination. Commentators should spend less time flattering themselves that the news media have the power to make such a thing happen — and more time trying to understand why Trump is succeeding.

Early in his campaign, Trump staked out extreme positions on illegal immigration: Deport the 11 million undocumented migrants already in the country, and build a "big, beautiful wall" along the Mexico border. Ridiculous, yes, but he got people's attention.

He followed up, after the San Bernardino, Calif., terrorist attack, with a call to ban all foreign Muslims from entering the country. It is another crazy idea — impossible to implement and counterproductive if attempted — but it resonated with millions of Americans who unfortunately view Islam with fear and loathing.

Trump rails against free trade agreements whose effect, in his view, has been to eliminate millions of manufacturing jobs. He pledges to reduce the cost and scope of U.S. involvement overseas. He denounces other politicians as lackeys who dance to the tune of rich and powerful campaign donors. And he plays on the anxieties and prejudices of white voters unnerved by demographic change in a nation that will soon have no racial majority.

With apologies to Marshall McLuhan, in this case the media are merely the messenger, not the message. Blaming ourselves for Trump's rise is just another way to ignore the voters who have made him the favorite for the GOP nomination.

Read more from Eugene Robinson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook. You can also join him Tuesdays at 1 p.m. for a live Q&A.

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Rush Limbaugh's Blessing Of Trump Is Killing Conservatism

By Michael Gerson

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

If Donald Trump becomes the Republican nominee, one of the main reasons will be that many in the conservative movement found him acceptable. And one of the main reasons that many conservatives are finding Trump acceptable is that the most influential political talk radio host in history, Rush Limbaugh, has provided his blessing.

Not his endorsement. Limbaugh takes pains to preserve neutrality between Trump and Ted Cruz, whom he describes as the obvious choice “if conservatism is the dominating factor in how you vote.”

But Limbaugh has also consistently defended Trump as a legitimate choice for those whose dominating factor is the humiliation of “the establishment.” Early in the campaign, when Trump attacked Sen. John McCain’s (R-Ariz.) status as a war hero, Limbaugh responded by praising Trump’s courage, defending him as “an embattled public figure” willing to “stand up for himself, double down and tell everybody to go to hell.” Through a long series of controversies, Limbaugh has excused Trump’s narcissism and bluster as an endearing “schtick.” Trump’s deviations from conservative orthodoxy are noted but considered secondary. “I think with the case of Trump,” argues Limbaugh, “there’s a much bigger upside than downside.”

The upside, in this view, is not just taking the political fight to liberalism; it is also overturning a failed and corrupt Republican political order. Limbaugh dismisses defenders of this order as fundamentally self-interested. “[Trump] has put together a coalition that’s exactly what the Republican Party says that it needs to win, and yet, look what they’re doing. They’re trying to get Trump out of the race, because they’re not in charge of it.” Opposing Trump is the work of a “cliquish, elitist club,” preserving its influence and employment prospects. This criticism is sometimes expanded to include the conservative intelligentsia. “I’m talking about the establishment,” says Limbaugh, “conservative media, the brainiacs, the think tanks, the professors.”

For decades, Limbaugh set the tone of popular conservatism by arguing for ideological purity. Now, the great champion of conservatism has enabled the rise of the “least conservative Republican presidential aspirant in living memory” (in the words of Yuval Levin, editor of *National Affairs*). Trump is a candidate who talks more of personal rule than of limited government. A candidate who praises a single-payer health system, proposes higher taxes on the wealthy, opposes entitlement reform and advocates the systematic destruction of Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy. This is the politician Limbaugh has given the ideological hall pass of a lifetime.

Why might this concern your average conservative brainiac? First it is necessary to dismiss Limbaugh’s consistent questioning of motives. Many men and women I know who work on Capitol Hill, in conservative media or in think tanks are hardly in it for the money or job security. Criticizing their venality from 30,000 feet in his Gulfstream jet rings particularly hollow.

Most in this Republican “establishment” believe they are serving a set of ideals, which includes market economics and limited government. There is no longer a Nelson Rockefeller wing of the GOP that is attempting to block the rise of the conservative movement. Leaders such as House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) are conservative by any serious measure. But they are forced to live within the constraints of our constitutional system. They don’t have the option of inhabiting a fantasy world where entitlements such as Obamacare can be undone by the legislature alone. Such utopianism is fundamentally at odds with constitutionalism.

And many Republicans, in Washington and elsewhere, do not view civility, inclusion and tolerance as forms of weakness or compromise. In fact, they view casual misogyny, racial stereotyping and religious bigotry as moral failings, in their children and in their leaders. And they oppose — as a matter of faith or philosophy — any form of populism that has exclusion, cruelty or dehumanization at its core.

In reading Trump’s recent interview with *The Post*’s editorial board, what is striking is not only his shallowness (though his policy depth must be measured in microns). It is also his utter rootlessness. None of his ideas or proposals is placed in the context of ideals or ideology, Republican or otherwise. Trump possesses impulses and instincts. He does not reason from first principles. Whatever the appeal of his authoritarian populism, it does not remotely resemble conservatism (see Russell Kirk’s 10 principles, which include belief in an enduring moral order, political prudence, and restraints on power and human passion).

Populist anti-intellectualism, on the rise at least since Sarah Palin, has culminated in Trump. It is the passing of conservatism, even if Limbaugh baptizes the dead.

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Obama Tackles Heroin And Prescription Drugs Addiction In New Initiative

By Tony Pugh

[McClatchy](#), March 28, 2016

President Barack Obama will announce a series of new public and private sector initiatives Tuesday designed to expand treatment, funding and education to combat the nation's prescription opioid and heroin abuse problem.

Opioids are a class of narcotic pain medications that include prescription drugs like OxyContin, Percocet and morphine, along with the illegal drug heroin.

From 2000 to 2014, the rate of opioid overdose deaths has increased 200 percent, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And in 2014, 61 percent of U.S. drug overdose deaths involved opioids.

The epidemic has led to a similar increase in heroin usage and overdoses since prescription opioids are often a gateway to heroin abuse.

Speaking at the National Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta on Tuesday, the president will discuss the problem with medical experts, community leaders and people struggling to overcome their addiction.

"They will talk about the challenges we face with prescription drug abuse and heroin use, and they will also talk about the actions we are taking and need to take to prevent more people from developing opioid use disorders and making sure those who want treatment can get it," said Michael Botticelli, director of National Drug Control Policy at the White House.

During his appearance, President Obama will announce plans to require Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program to provide mental health and substance abuse services for clients on par with both programs' medical and surgical benefits.

If the Department of Health and Human Services adopts the proposal, it would improve access to counseling and drug services for more than 23 million people enrolled in Medicaid, the national health plan for low-income Americans, and CHIP, which covers children from working-poor families.

Obama also will announce a new interagency task force, chaired by the Domestic Policy Council, that will be charged with ensuring implementation of the parity protections by Oct. 31.

President Obama's 2017 budget proposal calls for \$1.1 billion in new federal money to combat the growing abuse of heroin and prescription painkillers in the United States.

The president will also announce an HHS plan to double – from 100 to 200 – the number of patients to whom a qualified individual physician can prescribe buprenorphine, a medication that helps curb the addiction to heroin and other opiate-based pain relievers as part of a medication-assisted drug treatment program.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will also provide \$11 million for up to 11 states to expand the availability of medication-assisted treatment,

which treats addiction through drug and behavioral therapies along with counseling.

More than 60 medical schools also will announce that they're adding to their graduation requirements courses to improve physician education about prescriptions.

The move follows the recent release of new CDC guidelines that call for doctors to try less addictive painkillers, like aspirin and ibuprofen, before prescribing opioids to patients. The CDC guidelines are not mandatory, but they recommend that opioids be prescribed mainly for short-term pain episodes of three to seven days.

Private sector companies like Walgreens and CVS also have been enlisted to curb opioid abuse. By the end of March, CVS pharmacies in 23 states will be able to provide naloxone to patients without a prescription. Naloxone is an emergency drug that blocks or reverses the effects of opioid overdose. CVS stores in 35 states will provide the same access by the end of 2016.

Walgreens will do the same at stores in 35 states and Washington, D.C., throughout the year. Last month, Walgreens announced plans to place medication-disposal kiosks in more than 500 stores

Sorting Out A New Life Back Home

By Greg Jaffe

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Matt Sherman was in a hurry to get to Baghdad before the war ended, so he crammed the contents of his entire apartment in Rumson, N.J., into a climate-controlled storage shed.

It was 2003 and he had just quit his job with a big law firm for a position working for the American governing authority in Iraq.

Thirteen years later, almost all of that time spent working for the U.S. military and the State Department in Iraq and Afghanistan, Sherman, 44, was back at the shed. "This is my worst nightmare," he said as he yanked open the door earlier this month. A dead bird stuck to the metal grate just over his head.

It was an uncertain end for a civilian who had served in the two war zones longer than virtually any other American. There was no big military celebration and no family waiting for him when he landed two days earlier with his four-star military boss at Joint Base Andrews outside of Washington. Still jet-lagged, Sherman had only the storage shed and questions: Where would he live? What kind of work would he do? How would he build a life that felt as meaningful as his years at war?

Everything felt strange. Sherman stared up at the hastily packed boxes stacked on top of one another — a teetering time capsule from a life abandoned.

"What's in there, I have no idea," he said.

The longest stretch of war in U.S. history has left the White House and presidential hopefuls struggling to satisfy an electorate that is both alarmed by the prospect of another terrorist attack and exhausted at the thought of any more fighting. And it has left thousands of Americans battling to restart interrupted lives.

Sherman had expected to be gone for only six months, the length of his first Iraq contract, so he had saved everything. There were 13-year-old bottles of salad dressing, 13-year-old cans of beans and a half-empty bottle of DayQuil that has crystallized into a brilliant orange. There were notebooks from his law firm filled with his neat script. At the top of one page he had written "Subcoordination Agreement" and on the next page he had been trying to teach himself Arabic, scribbling "Nam — yes, Lam — no" and "as-salaamu-lay-kum."

There were suits and monogrammed shirts — still on the hangers — stuffed into boxes with the stereo from his apartment and old stationery from his law office desk. "It was a period in my life that I was making money and buying stuff I didn't need and taking on debt," he said. "I wasn't happy."

There were garbage bags of dress shoes and a talking George W. Bush doll — a gag gift from his mother, who died last year when Sherman was in Afghanistan.

Sherman tore into a box full of old copies of the Economist, New Republic and Foreign Affairs magazines. Before he left, he had been trying to read as much as he could on foreign policy, using all of his vacation time to work as a U.N. election observer in such places as Kosovo, Macedonia and Moldova.

"The Iraq thing was a way of getting rid of all this stuff and focusing on something else," he said. "I wanted to do international affairs, and Iraq was the big thing at that time."

He dug deeper, pulling out Christmas presents from 2002. There was an unopened shower radio and a bottle of wine, still in its wrapping paper, from "Michelle." "I have no idea who this is," he said.

Sherman and a couple of young men, hired to help him, separated his 2003 life into three piles: "trash," "donate" and "keep."

"You live around here?" one of the young men asked.

Sherman told him that he had spent most of the past 13 years in Iraq and more recently had been in Afghanistan.

"I just finished two days ago," he said.

"That must have been just insane," the young man replied. "Was it crazy hot over there?"

"It's fine this time of year, because it's winter," Sherman said.

"They have winter in the desert?" the young man asked.

"Actually I was in Kabul, which is in the mountains," Sherman said.

The young man asked the questions that people always ask: Had anyone ever shot at him? Had he seen anyone

killed? Sherman told him that there had been gunshots and roadside bomb attacks. A friend who had been standing next to him got shot.

The young man grabbed an Economist from 2002 that was sitting in a box atop the trash pile and held it up for Sherman. On the cover, Marines crouched for safety behind a mud wall.

"Did you ever see anything like this?" he asked.

Sherman had opened the shed a couple of times between tours, mostly to shove in new stuff before he headed back overseas. Near the front was a laundry basket with an unmatched brown sock, dirty shirts and a "Culture Smart Card" from Iraq that advised him not to talk about religion or use the "thumbs up" sign, which Iraqis consider "obscene."

Also in the laundry basket was a PowerPoint briefing from Sherman's first Iraq tour: "The 30 January 2005 election was a great success for Iraq," read one of the slides, which featured a photo of a grinning Iraqi policeman, posing with half-empty ballot boxes and flashing the "thumbs up" sign.

During that first tour, Sherman served as an adviser to four Iraqi interior ministers. His final minister, ushered into office by the January 2005 elections, had presided over a police commando force that built a secret prison in Baghdad to torture Sunnis and other political opponents. Sherman watched in late 2005 as the top U.S. general in Iraq dumped whips, shackles and other torture devices discovered in the secret facility on the interior minister's desk in an effort to shame him.

After the meeting, the Iraqi minister tried to justify his actions.

"No one was beheaded. No one was killed," Sherman recalled the minister saying. The Iraqis' actions were the same as the Americans' at the Guantanamo Bay prison facility, he insisted.

"That is fundamentally different!" Sherman remembered shouting at him.

Back in Washington, public sentiment was turning decisively against the war. Sherman returned home crushed, convinced that the rush to hold elections, arm security forces and withdraw U.S. troops had inadvertently helped create death squads intent on seeking revenge on minority Sunnis and sparking a civil war.

He was "flailing around," he said, his mind still focused on Iraq. So he accepted a job offer from a U.S. general to work as a civilian political adviser to the Army division assigned to Baghdad during President Bush's surge.

The second tour was war as he imagined. He saw a friend shot by an Iraqi sniper and attended dozens of battlefield memorial services for fallen soldiers and Marines. There were so many services that Sherman began tracking them in a file on his computer — a tally that would grow to 187 services over his years of war.

Sherman's parents threw a party for him to celebrate his homecoming from Iraq in 2008. "My mom and dad said some nice things, and they asked me to talk, and I couldn't speak," Sherman said. "I was just bawling. I tried for a bit, and I just couldn't."

He never emptied the storage shed because he assumed he would go back overseas. In early 2009, Sherman shifted to Afghanistan, where he served alongside U.S. forces in the provinces just south of Kabul. A big focus for him during that tour was the Taliban-dominated village of Baraki Barak.

Sherman was part of a brigade that overwhelmed the village with soldiers, who pushed out the insurgents; civilian aid workers, who built schools and wells; and money. Baraki Barak soon became a regular stop for the Pentagon brass, European diplomats and congressional delegations eager to see a counterinsurgency success story from the war.

"It was the perfect jelling of civilian and military," said Sherman, who oversaw the State Department aid workers in the region. "We really saw it as a model that we were all proud of."

Last month, Sherman and Gen. John Campbell, the sixth American commanding general to lead U.S. troops in the country since Sherman's 2009 arrival in Afghanistan, flew from Kabul to Sherman's old base near the village.

U.S. troops began pulling out of Baraki Barak several years ago, allowing the local Taliban commanders who had deep roots in the area to return. The American aid money dried up, and an important Afghan elder who worked with the Americans was killed.

U.S. troops advising Afghan forces in the area now described Baraki Barak as "the center of mass for insurgents" in the provinces around the capital.

Campbell and Sherman shared a farewell lunch with the Afghan general and police commander in charge of the region. "You've been fighting for 38 years," Campbell told them. "We've got a little more to go." The two then climbed back into the helicopter, which flew low over the barren rocky terrain.

Campbell had first come to Afghanistan in 2002 as a colonel when the mission was hunting down Osama bin Laden and Mohammad Omar, the Taliban leader. Soon his son, who was in elementary school during that first Afghanistan tour, will return for his third deployment in the country.

A lone, mud-walled compound clinging to the side of a mountain below caught Campbell's eye.

"You wonder how they can live like that," he said.

Sherman often had similar thoughts about the country where he had spent most of the past six years. "I always wish I could have a sense of perspective," he said. "I wish I could have visited Kabul or Kandahar during the Taliban regime just to have a sense of what it was like." He wanted to see Iraq

during Saddam Hussein's reign or Afghanistan during the brutal civil war of the 1990s.

He wished he could go back to Baraki Barak and try to piece together exactly what had happened. Why had a place that seemed so promising and received so much American attention and aid faltered? What had he missed?

"The war doesn't end, and that's why I am conflicted leaving," Sherman said. "There's still so much to do, and there's still so much more that I don't know. I don't know a smidgen of this country. Do I know a lot of Afghans? Absolutely. But in my mind what I don't know is the same as when I first got here."

Sherman thought he was leaving war zones for good four years ago when he and a woman who worked for the United Nations in Afghanistan decided to move in together in New York City.

During the 11 months back home, Sherman took boxing, meditation, cooking and improv comedy classes. He had one line in a Bollywood film called "English Vinglish" that was shooting in the city. Many days he just walked from his apartment in Brooklyn to the northern edge of Central Park and back, taking in the city and listening to audiobooks.

"I enjoyed doing that stuff, but I didn't have a purpose and that really ate on me a lot," he said. "I thought I would have a personal life and go to a lot of dinner parties, and I realized that's not me."

An American general offered him a job in Afghanistan, but Sherman turned him down and instead decided to drive across the country. Back on the East Coast a couple of months later, he called the general and said he would take the Afghanistan job, figuring he would remain there until the end of that general's one-year tour. Then the general's replacement asked him to stay, and so did the next general and the general after him.

Sherman liked the long hours and simplicity of war-zone life. His room in Kabul was smaller than his storage shed, just big enough for a bare mattress, a sleeping bag and a coat rack to hang his shirt and ties. His possessions could fit into his gray duffel bag.

"You don't have to worry about food or housing or laundry," he said. "The lifestyle allows you to stay completely focused on the job. You don't get that back home."

Sherman's even temperament, his analytical mind and his long time in country, meanwhile, made him an invaluable asset. The Army typically rotated officers through the country every 12 months, purging much of the institutional knowledge amassed over the previous year. A critique often leveled at the U.S. military was that it didn't fight a 15-year war in Afghanistan, but 15 separate wars in the country, each lasting one year.

Because Sherman didn't have a family or a career with the military or the State Department, he could stay as others

rotated home for rest or new assignments and had relationships with senior Afghans spanning years.

In late February, just before he left the country, Sherman received a phone call from a younger Afghan officer whom he met several years earlier and was widely respected by the U.S. military.

At the urging of top U.S. military officers, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had pushed the officer and several of his colleagues — all of whom had been sent to military schools in Europe and the United States — into positions of higher authority. Now the officer was complaining that he and his colleagues were being undermined by his superiors because they had not bribed them for their positions. The cellphone call cut off several times before Sherman promised that he would arrange a meeting for the officers with Campbell.

Sherman and other top military officers often described Afghanistan as “a generational conflict,” reasoning that it would take at least a decade or more to build up Afghan government institutions and replace corrupt Afghan military and police commanders with a new generation of younger leaders. The officer who called Sherman was part of the generation that the U.S. military hoped would survive.

A meeting with Campbell wouldn't fix his immediate problems, but it would give the young officer and his colleagues a chance to vent and the confidence that the U.S. military would protect them.

“Nothing here is easy,” Sherman said as he hung up the phone.

Campbell met with the Afghan president as often as three times a week, and always took Sherman with him. Unlike his predecessor, Hamid Karzai, Ghani was desperate for American assistance and worried that the West would tire of Afghanistan and abandon him. Sherman helped Ghani negotiate his relationship with a White House that often had higher priorities than Ghani's struggling government and the distant Afghan war.

Sherman played one other role for Campbell. Because he's not in the military chain of command and his career doesn't depend on a positive evaluation from the general, he can be both an adviser and friend; someone Campbell can talk to while sitting on helicopters or in his office late at night. “Sometimes you just want to scream and yell,” Campbell said. “Matt comes in here, and we can commiserate together.”

A few days before Sherman and Campbell left Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, the newly promoted four-star commander, arrived at the base. The two officers had known each other since they were 18-year-old West Point cadets. Campbell went out to greet him at the helicopter landing zone, hugging him and thumping his chest, which carried his new four-star rank.

“Looks good,” Campbell said. “Welcome back to Afghanistan.”

They walked a short distance past groaning generators, spools of razor wire and thick concrete blast walls to the American Embassy. Campbell's tour was done. He had turned down an offer from President Obama to head U.S. Africa Command and, according to the paperwork that the Army had sent him, would retire from the military with 36 years, 10 months and 25 days of active-duty service.

Sherman didn't have to leave Afghanistan. The new commander asked him to stay on in his current job for another year, but Sherman declined, knowing that the war in Afghanistan would grind on without him, its outcome still far from certain. During the 2015 fighting season, the Afghan army and police forces had lost ground to the Taliban in Helmand province and briefly surrendered the Afghan city of Kunduz before taking it back with help from the U.S. military.

“We can't let 2015 be like 2016,” Campbell testified to Congress earlier this year.

Sherman, however, also saw signs of hope. He was proud that the Afghan forces, despite heavy casualties in 2015, didn't crumble. He was proud that he and Campbell had helped persuade Obama to cancel plans to withdraw the vast majority of U.S. forces from the country before he left office. They had convinced a skeptical U.S. president that Afghanistan was still worth billions of dollars in aid and thousands of U.S. troops; that a country decimated by nearly 40 years of war was still worth trying to save.

Now, Sherman had concluded it was time for him to leave. “You can stay too long in these positions and lose perspective,” he said. “You can't keep your face pressed up against the glass forever.” He needed some distance to see Afghanistan; he needed to build a life that was bigger than the contents of a gray duffel.

That new life would start with the storage shed.

After a day of meetings at the Pentagon and the White House, he made the four-hour drive from Washington to southern New Jersey. His first stop before he got to the shed was the home of a childhood friend, Tom Van Glahn, who had agreed to store whatever was worth salvaging from the shed. Van Glahn ran a small body shop in the town where they had grown up, and he raised goats in his back yard to bring in a little extra money. Sherman rolled down his long gravel driveway a little bit after dark.

“That's it?” Van Glahn asked. “You'll never be back over there.”

“That's it. That's it,” Sherman said. “I'm done for now.”

Van Glahn peppered him with questions about his life in Afghanistan: Did he get off the U.S. military base much? Did he like the local culture? Did the women on the base wear body-covering burqas?

“On base it's not like that,” Sherman said. Even in Kabul, some women chose not to shroud themselves. “It's not mandatory like Saudi Arabia,” he said.

"Where did you get food?" Van Glahn's teenage daughter asked.

"Are you going to live in America?" Van Glahn's mother pressed. "Do you have a girlfriend?"

"Simplicity," Sherman replied.

Sherman's plan for the moment was to spend a week with his father, who had moved to North Carolina from New Jersey, and then walk the Appalachian Trail alone. "I'm going to walk until something comes up," he said. "If nothing comes up, I'll keep walking."

"Like Forrest Gump," Van Glahn joked.

Over the summer, Sherman's father had scattered his mother's ashes and erected a gravestone for her at the family plot in town where Sherman's brothers, both of whom died as infants, were buried. "Have you been to the grave yet?" Van Glahn's mother asked.

It had been decades since he had visited the grave site, Sherman said.

"Do you need directions?" she asked.

The storage shed was now mostly empty. In the back there was a copy of the 2001 indictment from former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic's war crimes trial at The Hague. Sherman had taken a mid-semester break from law school at the University of North Carolina to catch a few days of the five-year marathon of a trial. There was a case of motor oil that he kept because his 2003 car had a slow leak, some 20-year-old letters from a college girlfriend, a 1997 phone bill, and more boxes of foreign policy books and magazines.

"Why would I keep all this stuff," he said as he tossed the box onto the trash pile. "What was I thinking?"

When he was finished with the shed, he drove through town, past the house where he grew up and to the small cemetery where his mom and brothers were buried. "It's over here somewhere," he said, and then he spotted the gravestone with his mother's name in big block letters.

He stood over the stone for a few minutes and then got back into the car. Just before he turned onto the road leading back into town, he paused to call his father in North Carolina. Van Glahn's mother had mentioned the night before that she spoke with him on the phone at least once a week. "He needs to get out of the house," she told Sherman. "He needs to volunteer. Maybe at the library? Something quiet that suits his personality."

Sherman's father answered on the first ring.

"I just drove up to mom's place," Sherman told him. "The stone looked nice. I like how you placed it there next to Mark and Paul." They talked about the North Carolina-Duke basketball game and how the owners of their old house had kept the stained-glass windows that Sherman's mother designed for the front door.

A few minutes later he was back at Van Glahn's house, where his friend was handing him a beer.

"You're just going to start walking?" Van Glahn asked.

"That's the plan," Sherman replied.

"So do you think you accomplished something?" Van Glahn asked. It was not clear whether he was talking about Sherman's years in Afghanistan or the now-empty storage shed a short drive away in New Jersey.

Sherman took a swig of beer and stared out at the goats bleating in the back yard. He was exhausted and overwhelmed by the chaos of coming home and the decisions ahead.

"I feel like I got a monkey off my back," he said.

Soon he would drive to North Carolina, see his father and then walk the Appalachian Trail alone.

Beyonce, Easter Bunny Highlight Obama's Final Egg Roll

By Alana Wise

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Obamas Hold Last 'Easter Egg Roll' On White House Lawn

By Adam Edelman

[New York Daily News](#), March 28, 2016

President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama welcomed thousands of children to the South Lawn of the White House Monday morning for the annual Easter Egg Roll.

"We're just thrilled to have you all here," Michelle Obama told the gathered crowd of about 35,000 ahead of the morning's festivities. "Today is a little bit bittersweet for us, because this is the Obama administration's last Easter Egg Roll."

"We just want you to have fun. And the theme this year in our final year is pretty simple. It's: Let's celebrate. Let's celebrate all the good work that we've done, all the great messaging we've had. All the amazing change that we've seen in this country. And we want to celebrate our families," she added during a chipper address from a balcony overlooking the South Lawn with Presidential canines Bo and Sunny by her side.

Sipa USA

"We want to celebrate our nation – everything that makes us strong. It's our diversity, it's our values. That's what makes us strong."

Among the thousands in attendance were several celebrities including Beyoncé and Jay Z, as well as retired NBA players Shaquille O'Neal and Jason Collins.

The egg rolling tradition first began in 1878. But the annual event now includes storytelling, musical performances

and tips from professional athletes on how to play basketball, tennis, as well as cooking demonstrations and yoga.

And this year, the first lady added a fun run to the mix.

"I'm going to be running around the White House with a bunch of kids and any adults who feel like they can hang," she told as her husband jokingly signaled in the background that the run wasn't for him.

With News Wire Services Tags: barack obama , michelle obama , holidays , easter

White House Easter Egg Roll Adds Run With Michelle Obama

By Daniel McDonald

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — Calling the moment bittersweet, President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama welcomed thousands of children to the South Lawn of the White House Monday morning for the annual Easter Egg Roll.

The egg rolling began in 1878. Now the event includes storytelling, musical performances and tips from professional athletes on how to play basketball, tennis and other sports. There are cooking demonstrations and yoga. This year, the first lady added a fun run to the mix.

"I'm going to be running around the White House with a bunch of kids and any adults who feel like they can hang," the first lady told the crowd Monday morning as the president jokingly signaled in the background that the run wasn't for him.

The Obamas spoke from a balcony that overlooks the lawn with dogs Bo and Sunny and the Easter Bunny at their side.

More than 35,000 people received tickets that allow them to walk on the South Lawn of the White House, rain or shine. The sun broke through mid-morning after a night of scattered rain showers.

The theme of this year's event is "Let's celebrate." The first lady said she wanted to celebrate families and the nation in what will be the couple's last Easter in office.

"It's our diversity. It's our values," the first lady said. "That's what makes us strong."

The run is intended to highlight the first lady's "Let's Move!" initiative, which focuses on reducing childhood obesity.

LeBron James' Rehabilitation Going Well And On Track
James Impatient To Get Back On The Court

James said that the more time he spent away from the basketball court, the more impatient he got. However, with age catching up, he said that he sometimes thought about giving up. He thinks that his game is deteriorating, though he is still averaging 25.2 points, with 7.6 assists, 5.3 rebounds and 1.3 steals per game while shooting 48.8 percent from the

field this season. He conceded that he needs rest and was benefitting from it currently.

James Yet To Practice Basketball During Rehabilitation

Even though his rehabilitation is on course, he still has not done any kind of basketball related activities till date. He is thinking of rejoining the Cavaliers for their games in San Francisco, Sacramento and Phoenix before possibly being ready to play in L.A. The cities are warmer, and that will help him to heal more quickly. He added that it was better to go slow and attain a fully recovery rather than hurry up and risk any future injuries.

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Beyoncé And Blue Ivy Attend The Obama's Final White House Easter Egg Roll!

By Lauren Porter

[Essence Magazine](#), March 28, 2016

Beyoncé, Jay Z and their adorable daughter Blue Ivy were spotting helping the Obamas celebrate their eighth and final annual White House Easter Egg Roll. The Carters were also joined by Solange's 11-year old son, Julez, for the big event.

While it's hard to take your eyes off of Mrs. Carter, who donned a in a peek-a-boo lace dress designed by Marco De Vincenzo and a black-and-white coat by Alice And Olivia, it was little Blue who really stole the show. The 4-year-old was the epitome of Easter Bunny realness in a flurry white coat and a set of big bunny ears. Jay looked great as well in a black-and-white shirt, blazer, jeans and white sneakers while taking in all the festivities with his beautiful family.

Beyoncé and Blue Ivy Have the Best Tea Party Ever

The Annual White House Easter Egg Roll takes place on the South Lawn. This year marks the 138th event.

Attendees will see performances from sister singing duo, Chloe and Halle Bailey and Sesame Street characters as well as American Crime actor and singer Trevor Jackson.

Festivities for the afternoon-long event include Storytime with the President, the traditional Easter Egg hunt and other various games for children under the age of 13. This year will incorporate the First Lady's Let's Move! initiative with the first ever White House Fun Run.

A Bittersweet Farewell To The Obamas At Their Last White House Easter Egg Roll

By Petula Dvorak

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Zilch. Every. Dang. Year.

We've entered the White House Easter Egg Roll lottery for years now, hoping each time that we'd be one of 35,000

families lucky to get tickets to play on the South Lawn, to post those glorious Facebook pictures in front of the South Portico.

And every year, we came up snake eyes. Until now. Yesss!

And this was the year to win, not only because the boys are reaching tweendom, when eye-rolling will replace egg rolling and this will only be another occasion for me to embarrass them. But because it was the last chance we'll have to set foot on the grounds of the White House during the historic Obama presidency.

It was a common sentiment among families at the Easter Egg roll, and bittersweet for many.

"The truth is, we may not see this again in our lifetime, an African-American family in the White House," said Carla Backus, 51, a federal worker from Temple Hills, Md.

"With all the backlash, with all the bitterness they endured. It was important for us to be there today. It was emotional," said Backus, who came with her 9-year-old son, Robert Richardson. "It's important for me that my son see people who look like us in the White House."

For more than a century, the White House Easter Egg Roll has commanded a special place on Washington's calendar and in the hearts of people from around the region.

This year's egg roll was even a little memorable (and frightening) Monday afternoon, when the White House was put on lockdown; visitors were briefly not allowed to leave or enter 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue after a shooting at the Capitol Visitor Center, where one officer was injured and a suspect was in custody.

There wasn't that much drama at the first Easter Egg Roll, held in 1878, after Congress passed a law banning children from rolling eggs — this was a really big thing back then — on the Capitol lawn because they shredded the turf.

So in the eternal game of executive vs. legislative chess, President Rutherford B. Hayes invited the District's children to play on his lawn.

Take that, Congress.

It became a tradition for decades after that, with brief suspensions during wars or tough times. And for all those years, it was notoriously white event. In 1953, First Lady Mamie Eisenhower saw black children peering in from outside the White House gates and insisted that black families be included in events the following years.

In 2006, a coalition of gay and lesbian families sick of hiding in plain sight joined together to make their presence known at one of America's most family-friendly events and to show the Bush administration that they are no different from other American families.

Hundreds of gay and lesbian parents waited in line overnight — it used to be that the general public could snag tickets after camping out all night on the Ellipse — to get a good chunk of tickets. They wore rainbow leis to call attention to themselves, but otherwise did what every other American

family does at the event — they smiled, they suffered in long lines, rolled eggs and took a bazillion pictures.

First Lady Michelle Obama knows how much has changed in the 10 years since then.

"Today is a little bit bittersweet for us, because this is the Obama administration's last Easter Egg Roll," the First Lady said, as the crowd "awwwed" back to her.

"Yes. And if we think about what we've accomplished over these past seven years, it's pretty incredible," she said. "Because when Barack and I first got here, one of the goals that we had was to open up the White House to as many people from as many backgrounds as possible."

Mission accomplished. There were families from all 50 states on the lawn Monday and from every racial and ethnic background. But it was especially powerful for the African-American families in attendance.

Theresa Pope, 60, drove all night from Michigan.

"We really wanted to be here. And we wanted her to be here too, to be able to say she was here," Pope said, pointing to her 18-month-old granddaughter, Luna.

A retired school principal from Detroit, Pope had never been to the White House before.

For lots of African-Americans, the connection to the nation's seat of power has never been more tangible. More emotional.

"It's hard to believe he won't be there next year," Backus said, after she stepped outside the last of the White House gates and looked back. "I'd like to come back again next year. But it won't be the same."

Because next year, who knows?

As we waited in line to take a picture with some yellow Minions, my 9-year-old saw a woman wearing a hijab.

"Do you think Muslims will be allowed to come here next year?" he asked.

His older brother rolled his eyes.

"If Trump wins, it might be like the Hunger Games, and kids might have to fight each other for the eggs," the 11-year-old snarked.

Or if Hillary Clinton wins, the egg roll might another chance to witness another ground-breaking president.

Former Administration Pardon Attorney Suggests Broken System In Resignation Letter

By Gregory Korte

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration instructed Justice Department attorneys to neglect applications for presidential pardons to give priority to the Justice Department's initiative to release low-level offenders from prison, the former pardon attorney said in her resignation letter early this year.

That inaction was one of several issues that former Pardon Attorney Deborah Leff cited in her letter, which was obtained by USA TODAY after making a Freedom of Information Act request. Leff resigned in January after less than two years as the official responsible for making clemency recommendations for the president.

Her resignation letter suggests a broken and bureaucratic process at odds with President Obama's own aim to exercise his pardon power "more aggressively" in the final months of his presidency. Leff wrote that the administration's focus on the clemency initiative at the expense of traditional pardons and commutations "means that the requests of thousands of petitioners seeking justice will lie unheard."

"This is inconsistent with the mission and values to which I have dedicated my life, and inconsistent with what I believe the department should represent," she wrote.

It's the job of the U.S. pardon attorney to investigate all of those cases and make a recommendation to the deputy attorney general, who then forwards it to the White House Counsel's Office and, ultimately, the president. Because the pardon attorney advises the president on sensitive cases, the process is cloaked in secrecy, and officials rarely discuss the process publicly. So Leff's letter offers a rare glimpse into how the pardon office works in the Obama administration.

Unlike in previous administrations, where pardon office staffers and the White House had routine conversations, Leff said she was denied "all access to the White House Counsel's Office," which is the last step for a pardon application before being approved or denied by the president.

She said Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates had overruled her recommendations in an increasing number of cases — and that in those cases, the president was unaware of the difference of opinion. "I believe that prior to making the serious and complex decisions underlying clemency, it is important for the president to have a full set of views," she said.

And she said the Justice Department had not made good on its promise to put the required resources behind the clemency initiative. That initiative, part of a broader push for sentencing reform, was designed to use the president's constitutional pardon power to release federal inmates who would have received shorter sentences had they been sentenced under today's more lenient guidelines. It applies mostly to non-violent drug offenders serving sentences of 10 years or more, with good behavior while in prison.

Since the administration announced the initiative in 2014, applications for clemency have exploded. There are now 10,073 clemency cases pending — three times as many as in 2013. And that doesn't count thousands more cases seeking free legal help through the Clemency Project, an outside consortium set up to assist with the initiative.

When he announced the initiative in April 2014, then-Deputy Attorney General Jim Cole said the department had "pledged to provide the necessary resources to fulfill this goal expeditiously." While the administration didn't set a target for the number of cases, former Attorney General Eric Holder told the Washington Post last year that he had hoped that as many as 10,000 people could have their sentences reduced under the program. So far, Obama has granted less than 2% of those.

In modern times, presidential clemency usually takes one of two forms: pardons, which constitute a full forgiveness for a crime and restore civil rights like voting and gun ownership, and commutations, which shorten prison sentences and usually have conditions attached.

In the most recent round of clemency actions announced in December, Obama granted 95 commutations but only two pardons. And with 10 months to go in his presidency, Obama has granted just 70 pardons — fewer than any full-term president since John Adams, according to political scientist P.S. Ruckman Jr. He's been more generous with his 187 commutations, more than any president since Lyndon Johnson.

Leff's resignation letter was addressed to Yates, whom the Justice Department declined to make available for an interview. Instead, the department issued a written statement that said it was working with Congress to increase the budget for the Office of Pardon Attorney. The department has already posted job openings for 16 attorneys to process clemency petitions in hopes that Congress will approve the funding.

"The department is using its resources to recommend commutations of low-level offenders who are currently serving sentences received under outdated drug laws and do not pose a public safety risk if granted a commutation, as well as continuing to vet pardons and other commutations," said spokeswoman Dena Iverson.

Leff declined to comment on her resignation. But she also made clear in her letter that she agrees with the stated aims of Obama's clemency policy, even as she questioned the administration's commitment to it.

"I fully support and admire the administration's groundbreaking and much-needed launch of the clemency initiative and the possibility of justice it brings to so many deserving people," she wrote. "But given that the department has not fulfilled its commitment to provide the resources necessary for my office to make timely and thoughtful recommendations on clemency to the president, given your statement that the needed staff will not be forthcoming, and given that I have been instructed to set aside thousands of petitions for pardon and traditional commutation, I cannot fulfill my responsibilities as pardon attorney."

She also said she hoped that the Justice Department would make good on promises to allow her successor more

access to the White House — especially on cases overruled by the deputy attorney general — “for the integrity of the decision-making process.”

In February, the Justice Department named Robert Zausmer, a career prosecutor, as pardon attorney. The senior career-level job usually continues from one administration to the next.

The White House said Obama remains “deeply committed to the clemency initiative and continues to believe that clemency is an important way to spotlight, and remedy, injustices in our criminal justice system.”

“He is grateful for the work of the dedicated public servants at the Department of Justice in support of this important priority, including individuals in the Office of the Pardon Attorney and the Deputy Attorney General,” Assistant White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said in a statement.

Suit Seeks Report On Obama Interview In Blagojevich Probe

By Josh Gerstein

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

A lawsuit filed Monday demands public release of records of an interview President-elect Barack Obama did more than seven years ago with FBI agents and federal prosecutors pursuing a bribery probe into efforts by Gov. Rod Blagojevich (R-Ill.) to sell the U.S. Senate seat Obama was vacating.

The conservative group Judicial Watch is also seeking so-called FBI 302 reports on interviews Obama Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett and former White House Chief of Staff and current Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel gave during the Blagojevich investigation. The organization sought the reports under the Freedom of Information Act in 2012, but the FBI said at the time that the records could not be released because of ongoing enforcement proceedings.

That appeared to be a reference to the criminal prosecution of Blagojevich on corruption-related charges. A trial in 2010 resulted in a hung jury on most charges but a conviction on one count of lying to the FBI. The former governor was convicted on an additional 17 counts at a retrial the following year.

Before each trial, Blagojevich’s lawyers demanded access to the notes of an interview Obama gave investigators for two hours in December 2008, but a judge rejected both requests.

Judicial Watch filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Washington on the same day the Supreme Court announced it had turned down Blagojevich’s petition to review his convictions.

Last year, a federal appeals court overturned five of the 18 counts Blagojevich was convicted on, but left in place the 13 others.

The suit filed Monday says the enforcement proceedings have ended as a result of the Supreme Court action. Technically, Blagojevich is subject to re-sentencing and even the possibility of re-trial on the five counts the 7th Circuit overturned. However, a retrial is considered unlikely and his new sentence is not expected to be much different than the 14-year term he is already serving.

Separately Monday, Judicial Watch filed another FOIA suit seeking records of how the Justice Department handled a FOIA request Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington filed in 2012 seeking access to records on email addresses used by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

A State Department inspector general report released in January of this year said the agency mishandled that request when it prepared a response to CREW saying no records could be found regarding Clinton’s email addresses. In fact, dozens of State Department employees were aware that Clinton routinely used a private, clintonemail.com address for work-related correspondence.

Curiously, CREW never received a response to its request, one of many the watchdog group sent to various agencies seeking information on pseudonymous email accounts used by senior government officials.

CREW seems unlikely to follow up on its request. In 2014, new leadership was installed at the nonprofit group, bringing it into a constellation of pro-Clinton liberal organizations.

Supreme Court Rejects Illinois Ex-governor’s Corruption Appeal

By Lawrence Hurley

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Grassley Hits Back At Clinton: ‘The FBI’s Going To Question Her’

By Matthew Levitt

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

ESTHERVILLE, Iowa — Sen. Chuck Grassley preemptively swung back at Hillary Clinton ahead of her expected Monday speech in which she’s expected to hammer the Judiciary Committee chairman for his role in blocking the confirmation of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court.

“With all the troubles she’s getting on e-mail, and the FBI’s going to question her, I would imagine she’d want to change the tone of her campaign,” Grassley (R-Iowa) told POLITICO in an interview here. He was apparently referring

to a Los Angeles Times story Monday that indicated an FBI investigation of the private email server she used as secretary of state is entering a final phase that will include interviews with her advisers.

The Democratic presidential front-runner is poised to criticize Grassley during a speech later Monday at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The two have a contentious history: Grassley has led probes into Clinton's use of a private e-mail server during her time as secretary of state.

Grassley said Clinton's comments would have no bearing on his plans not to hold confirmation hearings for Garland.

"I want to spend my time on doing things we're going to accomplish and you know ahead of time that this isn't going to be approved," Grassley said, referring to Garland being confirmation. "So spend your time on things that ...we can do in a bipartisan way instead of in a partisan way."

Though she has spoken generally about the Senate Republican blockade of Garland, Clinton's speech Monday is expected to elevate the focus on Grassley and challenge the Judiciary Committee chairman to promptly hold hearings for Garland.

Clinton's speech Monday is intended to be just one marker in a broader campaign to shame Senate Republicans for blocking Garland's nomination this year. But for all her warm words for the appellate court judge, Clinton has not committed to re-nominating Garland should she win the White House this fall and his nomination continues to linger.

Her primary opponent, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, has said he would forgo Garland for someone more liberal. But aside from Sanders, few, if any, Democrats have been willing to openly entertain the prospect that Garland will still be in limbo until after the election. That's because Democrats don't want to give up so easily on trying to secure confirmation for Garland this year.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has been adamant that filling Justice Antonin Scalia's seat will be up to the next president and Senate, and Grassley has shown no signs of budging.

Grassley said that he is expecting a phone call from Garland once the senator returns to Washington next week. And the senator said he does not plan on sending the White House a questionnaire filled out by Supreme Court nominees that advances the confirmation process.

"If they want to fill out a questionnaire, they've got the questionnaire there," Grassley said. "But we aren't sending one out."

Grassley spoke with POLITICO at the Avera Holy Family Hospital in this rural northwest Iowa town. He also fielded questions from about three dozen hospital employees on topics ranging from the Supreme Court vacancy and rural health care to gun rights and the Republican presidential primary.

Clinton Email Probe Enters New Phase As FBI Interviews Loom

By Del Quentin Wilber

[Los Angeles Times](#), March 27, 2016

Federal prosecutors investigating the possible mishandling of classified materials on Hillary Clinton's private email server have begun the process of setting up formal interviews with some of her longtime and closest aides, according to two people familiar with the probe, an indication that the inquiry is moving into its final phases.

Those interviews and the final review of the case, however, could still take many weeks, all but guaranteeing that the investigation will continue to dog Clinton's presidential campaign through most, if not all, of the remaining presidential primaries.

No dates have been set for questioning the advisors, but a federal prosecutor in recent weeks has called their lawyers to alert them that he would soon be doing so, the sources said. Prosecutors also are expected to seek an interview with Clinton herself, though the timing remains unclear.

The interviews by FBI agents and prosecutors will play a significant role in helping them better understand whether Clinton or her aides knowingly or negligently discussed classified government secrets over a non-secure email system when she served as secretary of State.

The meetings also are an indication that much of the investigators' background work – recovering deleted emails, understanding how the server operated and determining whether it was breached – is nearing completion.

"The interviews are critical to understand the volume of information they have accumulated," said James McJunkin, former head of the FBI's Washington field office. "They are likely nearing the end of the investigation and the agents need to interview these people to put the information in context. They will then spend time aligning these statements with other information, emails, classified documents, etc., to determine whether there is a prosecutable case."

Many legal experts believe that Clinton faces little risk of being prosecuted for using the private email system to conduct official business when she served as secretary of State, though that decision has raised questions among some about her judgment. They noted that using a private email system was not banned at the time, and others in government had used personal email to transact official business.

The bigger question is whether she or her aides distributed classified material in email systems that fell outside of the department's secure classified system. But even if prosecutors determine that she did, chances she will be found criminally liable are low. U.S. law makes it a crime for someone to knowingly or willfully retain classified

information, handle it in a grossly negligent manner or to pass it to someone not entitled to see it.

Clinton has denied using the email account to send or receive materials marked classified. Though some emails have since been deemed to be too sensitive to release publicly, Clinton's campaign has attributed that to overzealous intelligence officials and "over-classification run amok."

Legally it doesn't matter if the emails were marked as classified or not, since government officials are obligated to recognize sensitive material and guard against its release. But legal experts noted that such labels would be helpful to prosecutors seeking to prove she knew the information was classified, a key element of the law.

"The facts of the case do not fit the law," said Stephen Vladeck, a law professor at American University. "Reasonable folks may think that federal law ought to prohibit what Hillary did, but it's just not clear to me that it currently does."

Even so, her use of the private server, which was based at her home in New York, has become fodder for Clinton's political foes as she campaigns to secure the Democratic nomination for president.

Though Sen. Bernie Sanders has largely declined to use the email scandal against her in the Democratic primary, Republicans have repeatedly said she should be indicted or disqualified from running for the nation's top office.

At a recent Democratic debate, Clinton grew exasperated when asked what she would do if indicted. "That's not going to happen," she said.

Her attorney, David Kendall, declined to comment. Her campaign spokesman, Brian Fallon, said in an email that Clinton is ready to work with investigators to conclude the investigation.

"She first offered last August to meet and answer any questions they might have," Fallon wrote. "She would welcome the opportunity to help them complete their work."

Lawyers for her closest aides – Huma Abdein, Jake Sullivan, Cheryl Mills and Philippe Renes – either did not respond to messages or declined to comment.

The Justice Department and FBI began their investigation after receiving what is known as a security referral in July from the inspector general for U.S. intelligence agencies, which at the time were in the midst of reviewing paper copies of nearly 30,500 emails Clinton turned over in 2014 that she said were work-related.

The State Department has since released all 3,871 pages of Clinton's emails in its possession and has determined that 22 of her emails contained "top secret" information, though they were not marked as such at the time. Hundreds of others contained material that was either secret or confidential, two lower levels of classification.

After stepping down as secretary of State, Clinton, who has said she used her personal email to conduct personal and official business as a matter of convenience, told her staff to delete 31,830 emails on the server that she felt were non-work-related.

In August, the FBI obtained the server and has since recovered most, if not all, of the deleted correspondence, said a person familiar with the investigation.

FBI agents have finished their review of the server and the correspondence turned over by Clinton to the State Department. They have interviewed a number of former aides so they could better understand how the system was used and why Clinton chose to use it, the person said.

Federal prosecutors granted immunity to one of those aides, Bryan Pagliano, who helped set up the server in Clinton's home. He has cooperated with the federal investigation and provided security logs that revealed no evidence of foreign hacking, according to a law enforcement official.

His lawyer, Mark MacDougall, did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The probe is being closely watched and supervised by the Justice Department's top officials and prosecutors. FBI Director James B. Comey has said he has been regularly briefed on the investigation, which is being overseen by prosecutors in the Justice Department's national security division.

The decision on whether to prosecute could be difficult. Vladeck, the law professor noted the differences between Clinton's email issue and two previous cases involving the mishandling of classified material that resulted in prosecutions and guilty pleas.

In 2005, Sandy Berger, a former national security advisor, pleaded guilty to the unlawful removal and retention of national security information after being caught trying to smuggle classified documents out of the National Archives.

In another case, Gen. David Petraeus, a former CIA director, was investigated for knowingly allowing a mistress to read classified material as she researched a book about him. Petraeus eventually pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of mishandling classified material and was spared prison time.

Legal experts said Petraeus' actions were far more serious than anything Clinton is accused of doing. Clinton's emails, even those later deemed classified, were sent to aides cleared to read them, for example, and not private citizens, they said.

Several of the lawyers involved in Clinton's case are familiar with the differences. Petraeus' defense lawyer was Kendall, who also represents Clinton. And a prosecutor helping oversee the Clinton email investigation was part of the team that obtained Petraeus' guilty plea.

"Those cases are just so different from what Clinton is accused of doing," Vladeck said. "And the Justice Department lawyers know it."

While she is not likely to face legal jeopardy, the emails could cause some political heartburn when the aides are questioned. However, short of an indictment or an explosive revelation, the controversy is not likely to alter the overall dynamics of the primary race or general election, political observers said.

"This is clearly disruptive to the campaign," said Mark Mellman, a Democratic pollster. "It will take her off message and coverage about important aides being questioned is not coverage you'd like to have. However, this issue is largely dismissed by Democratic primary voters and baked into the cake for the general electorate."

Grassley Says Clinton Using Supreme Court Fight To Dodge Negative Press

By Kelsey Snell

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

OCHEYEDAN, Iowa — Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley isn't worried that Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton is attacking him on the campaign trail; he thinks she's just doing it to avoid talking about her latest electoral losses and a possible FBI probe.

Clinton criticized Grassley (R-Iowa) on Monday for refusing to hold hearings on President Obama's nominee for the Supreme Court, Merrick B. Garland. Clinton joined the chorus of Democrats insisting that Grassley is failing to do his job by standing in the way. Grassley said he's just a "convenient" scapegoat to help Clinton dodge a string of bad press.

"I see a person who has recently been badly defeated in three states for the nomination," Grassley said on Monday afternoon. "I see a person that the FBI is getting ready to question her about the emails and about the Clinton Foundation and she's trying to change the story to something else."

Earlier in the day Clinton told an audience at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that Grassley should "step up and do his job" and linked his decision to the rise of outsider candidates like Donald Trump.

[Senate Democrats propose April hearings, May vote on Garland confirmation]

"The same obstructionism that we've seen from Republicans since the beginning of the Obama administration, the same disregard for the rule of law that's given rise to the extremist candidacies of Donald Trump and Ted Cruz," Clinton said. "What the Republicans have sown with their extremist tactics, they are now reaping with Donald Trump's candidacy."

Grassley has faced near-constant criticism from Democrats since he announced more than six weeks ago that he would not allow hearings on any Obama nominee this year. The attacks grew more intense after Obama nominated Garland who is a widely respected moderate.

[For Merrick Garland, a methodical life of ambition]

The issue followed Grassley back to Iowa on Monday where he faced dozens of questions about his decision not to allow the hearings during a pair of town hall meetings. Activists from the group Progress Iowa and other left-leaning groups peppered Grassley with questions about his position and demanded he explain how he could justify ignoring Garland's nomination.

Dave Damstrom of Spencer, Iowa, was one of around a half dozen Democrats who attended Grassley's town hall at a senior center here. He read from a letter he recently received from Grassley in response to his request for the Judiciary Committee to move forward on the Garland nomination.

Damstrom said he wanted Grassley to "stand up and be a leader" and forget the politics and do what's right by advising and consenting on Obama's nominee. It was a theme that repeated frequently over the course of the one-hour session and a second event that followed in a neighboring county.

Grassley repeated the response that he has maintained since February — no hearings until there is a new president.

"There has been broad consideration that when you have a lame duck president that during the last year the appointment should go over to a new president," Grassley said.

Garland is, however, meeting with other senators this week while Congress is in recess. He is set to meet with his first Republican, Sen. Mark Kirk of Illinois, on Tuesday and has met with several Democrats.

At UW-Madison, Hillary Clinton To Urge Hearing On Supreme Court Pick

[Wisconsin State Journal](#), March 28, 2016

Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton, speaking at UW-Madison this afternoon, will call on U.S. Senate Republicans to grant a hearing to Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's choice to fill the vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court.

According to an aide from Clinton's campaign, she also will personally call out one of the GOP senators blocking a hearing: Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh.

Such remarks would mark the first time Clinton has issued such a pointed rebuke on the Supreme Court vacancy, created by the recent death of former Justice Antonin Scalia.

Clinton is visiting Madison and Milwaukee today to kick off a two-day tour of Wisconsin in advance of its April 5 primary.

The state provides Clinton an opportunity, should she win here, to all but complete her case that she is her party's presumptive nominee. Clinton then could sharpen her focus on her three potential Republican foes in the general election: businessman Donald Trump, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas or Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

The summary of Clinton's expected remarks provided by her campaign before Monday's event suggested she already is making that pivot.

Clinton is expected to say "Americans should be greatly concerned about the kind of (Supreme Court) nominee that a President Trump might put forward," the aide said.

Wisconsin is regarded as a state that Clinton's rival, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., must win to preserve a viable path to the Democratic nomination.

Hillary Clinton To Push GOP On Court Nominee In Madison Speech

By Jason Stein

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), March 28, 2016

Madison— Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton comes to Madison Monday seeking to stop the recent surge of rival Bernie Sanders and to attack Republicans for blocking the Senate confirmation of a U.S. Supreme Court nominee.

In a speech Monday afternoon on the UW-Madison campus, Clinton is expected to single out GOP Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who is locked in a tough re-election battle, for preventing the confirmation of Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's appointment to the nation's highest court.

Clinton's speech in a modest campus venue comes a week ahead of the state's April 5 primary and two days after U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders rallied thousands in Madison, a liberal bastion that is as key to Sanders as Milwaukee is to Clinton.

The campaigning is intensifying, with Clinton and Republicans Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Gov. John Kasich of Ohio campaigning across the state on Monday and Tuesday, including in the Milwaukee area, and real estate mogul Donald Trump coming to Janesville on Tuesday. Sanders will be in Appleton and West Allis on Tuesday and Kenosha and Onalaska on Wednesday.

In her speech in Madison, Clinton is expected to point to the core pillars of liberal politics, from immigration and abortion rights to affirmative action and voting issues, and lay out how they depend on whether Democrats manage to push through a confirmation for Garland or for a new nominee next year by a new Democratic president.

The Journal Sentinel is seeking comment from the campaign for Johnson, who is running against Democrat and former U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold.

The unexpected death last month of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia has put long-term control of the court up for grabs and also left it more likely to deadlock 4-4 in the near term.

GOP senators like Johnson say the next president and Senate should decide the replacement, giving conservatives a chance to hold onto control of the high panel. Democrats say it's the right of the sitting president to name a nominee.

Garland, 63, is the chief judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, a court whose influence over federal policy and national security matters has made it a proving ground for potential Supreme Court justices.

If confirmed, Garland would be expected to align with the more liberal members, but he is not viewed as down-the-line liberal. Particularly on criminal defense and national security cases, he's earned a reputation as centrist.

Garland held a top-ranking post in the Justice Department when he was dispatched to Oklahoma City the day after the bombing at the federal courthouse to supervise the investigation. The case made his reputation. He oversaw the convictions of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, and later supervised the investigation into Unabomber Ted Kaczynski.

In the Democratic presidential Sanders notched wins Saturday in Washington, Alaska and Hawaii narrowing his delegate gap with Clinton. Next week's primary in Wisconsin will be the next chance for a

But the state won't be an easy win for Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist who serves as an independent in the Senate but is running as a Democrat in the presidential race. This past week, an Emerson College poll showed Clinton with a 6-point lead in the state — 50% to 44%.

About Jason Stein

Jason Stein covers the state Capitol and is the author with his colleague Patrick Marley of "More than They Bargained For: Scott Walker, Unions and the Fight for Wisconsin." His work has been recognized by journalism groups such as the American Society of News Editors, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers, and the Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors.

Despite Sanders Win, Clinton To Eye Trump As Republican Fight Brews

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Clinton: Supreme Court's Future Hangs In The Balance In 2016

By Ken Thomas

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

MADISON, Wis. (AP) – Hillary Clinton said Monday that the future of the Supreme Court would hang in the balance of the 2016 election, warning that Republican front-runner Donald Trump would bring division to the court if he was allowed to shape its future.

Clinton said Trump would roll back the rights of individuals and further empower corporations, pointing to his past statements about building a wall along the Mexican border and barring all non-citizen Muslims from entering the United States.

"In a single term, the Supreme Court could demolish pillars of the progressive movement," Clinton said at the University of Wisconsin. She pointed to the possibility of a Trump presidency, asking, "What kind of justice will a President Trump appoint?"

Clinton opened a two-day campaign trip in Wisconsin ahead of the state's April 5 primary with a topic certain to unite Democrats whether they support her or Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders: President Barack Obama's nomination of Judge Merrick Garland.

Republicans have said that the late Justice Antonin Scalia should not be replaced until the next president picks a nominee. But Clinton argued it was reminiscent of GOP-led gridlock that stymied Obama's two terms.

"We chose a president. We chose him twice," Clinton said. "And now Republicans in the Senate are acting like our votes didn't count and President Obama is not still our nation's leader."

She called on Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley of Iowa to commit to giving Garland a hearing and she rebuked Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, who is among the Republicans blocking the Garland nomination. "Tell him to stop playing games with the Supreme Court," Clinton said, noting Johnson's 2016 challenge from former Democratic Sen. Russ Feingold.

Grassley, speaking ahead of Clinton's remarks, said she was trying to divert attention from her "email troubles," referencing probes into her use of a private email system as secretary of state.

"This is simply a blatant attempt by Secretary Clinton to politicize the Supreme Court and to change the conversation," Grassley said in a statement. "Her actions as Secretary of State are under investigation by Congress, two Obama-appointed inspectors general, and the FBI."

Clinton holds a large lead among delegates against Sanders, her Democratic rival, but is trying to stamp out the Vermont senator's momentum following his victories in five of the last six states holding contests.

Sanders was also campaigning in the state this week and has identified upcoming contests in Wisconsin, New York and Pennsylvania as states where he could cut into Clinton's delegate lead.

– Alan Fram contributed to this report from Washington.

– Follow Ken Thomas on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/kthomasdc>

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Hillary Clinton Attacks G.O.P. For Not Acting On Obama's Supreme Court Pick

By Amy Chozick

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

MADISON, Wis. — Hillary Clinton seized on the struggle over the Supreme Court vacancy on Monday, issuing a scathing indictment of congressional Republicans and blaming their "extremist tactics" in opposing President Obama for Donald J. Trump's rise as the leading Republican candidate.

"If you want to know where that kind of obstructionism and recklessness leads, just look at the Republican race for the presidency," Mrs. Clinton said in a speech at the University of Wisconsin here as she sought to capitalize on the tumult unfolding in the Republican primary. She also offered an impassioned plea in support of Mr. Obama's nomination of Judge Merrick B. Garland to replace Justice Antonin Scalia, who died in February.

"They say a Trump nomination will set their party back decades. I agree," Mrs. Clinton told the crowd. "But Donald Trump didn't come out of nowhere."

She reminded the audience of Mr. Trump's previous calls to see Mr. Obama's birth certificate and of declarations by Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, that the Supreme Court vacancy should not be filled until after Mr. Obama leaves office.

"When you have a party dead set on demonizing the president," Mrs. Clinton said, "you may just end up with a candidate who says the president never legally was the president at all. Enough is enough."

Mrs. Clinton has often expressed support for Mr. Obama's policies, which can endear her to a president who remains widely popular among Democrats.

But extending that support to the Supreme Court vacancy also signals that she is looking beyond the

Democratic primary against Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and is seeking to use the issue to appeal to independents and even moderate Republicans who might be wary of a Trump administration.

"As scary as it might be, ask yourselves, what kind of justice will a President Trump appoint?" Mrs. Clinton asked, to gasps from the audience.

"As you know, he believes Muslims should be banned from entering the country because of their faith," she said. "What would that mean for a nation founded on religious freedom?" The struggle to replace Mr. Scalia has provided Mrs. Clinton with an opportunity to thrust the Supreme Court to the top of voters' concerns.

In her speech on Monday, she noted that two Supreme Court justices will be older than 80 when the new president takes office, and she urged voters to "please make sure the court factors into your decision."

"Whoever America elects this fall will help determine the future of the court for decades," Mrs. Clinton said, listing a range of issues — from voting rights and abortion, to immigration, climate change and money in politics — that could reach the court in coming years.

Republicans, she said "are fighting hard to make sure the Supreme Court includes as many right-wing justices as possible."

Fifty-three percent of Americans say the Senate should hold a vote on Mr. Obama's nominee, while 42 percent said the Senate should wait until next year for the new president to nominate someone, according to the latest CBS News/New York Times poll. And while most voters have not yet formed an opinion about Mr. Garland, a vast majority — 68 percent — said that who sits on the Supreme Court is at least very important to them.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Trump did not immediately return an email request for comment on Monday. But some conservatives quickly rebuffed Mrs. Clinton's speech, accusing her of politicizing the court. "If Hillary Clinton is criticizing you, you must be doing something right," said Adam Brandon, the chief executive of FreedomWorks, an advocacy group aligned with the Tea Party. "The Senate is performing its constitutional responsibility" in delaying the process until a new president takes office.

The issue is just the latest over which Mrs. Clinton has tried to portray Mr. Trump as dangerous. Last week, the day after the deadly terrorist attacks in Brussels, she took a break from fund-raising in Palo Alto, Calif., to deliver a sharp rebuttal of Mr. Trump's foreign policy prescriptions, saying that his proposals to rethink the United States involvement in NATO and to bar non-American Muslims from entering the country would alienate allies and empower enemies.

"Slogans aren't a strategy. Loose cannons tend to misfire," Mrs. Clinton said on Wednesday. "What America

needs is strong, smart, steady leadership to wage and win this struggle."

Hours after Mr. Scalia died last month, Mr. McConnell said he would not schedule hearings on a nominee until after Mr. Obama left office, a proposal endorsed by Mr. Trump, who declared, "Delay, delay, delay."

Mrs. Clinton promptly called Mr. McConnell's stance "totally out of step with our history and our constitutional principle."

But on Monday, she went further, accusing Mr. McConnell of undermining Mr. Obama and ignoring the American people.

"We chose a president. We chose him twice," Mrs. Clinton said. "And now Republicans in the Senate are acting like our votes didn't count and that President Obama is not, still, our nation's leader."

The Supreme Court vacancy also gave Mrs. Clinton a chance to take aim at another adversary, Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Grassley has been one of the key Republicans investigating Mrs. Clinton's use of a private email server while she was secretary of state and has focused on the "special government employee" status of one of her closest aides, Huma Abedin, now the vice chairwoman of the Clinton campaign.

"He says we should wait for a new president because, and I quote, 'The American people shouldn't be denied a voice,'" Mrs. Clinton said of Mr. Grassley. "Well, as one of the more than 65 million Americans who voted to re-elect President Obama, I'd say my voice is being ignored right now."

Hillary Clinton Warns What Will Happen If Donald Trump Gets His Hands On The Supreme Court

[Huffington Post](#), March 28, 2016

Hillary Clinton will make the case that the Supreme Court is at the center of the 2016 election in a speech Wednesday, warning what will happen if Donald Trump becomes president and is allowed to choose new justices.

"Based on his positions on a number of issues, there is good reason to believe a Trump nominee would seek to roll back our rights, further empower corporations, and undo so much of the progress we've achieved," a Clinton aide said, providing an advance look at the remarks the Democratic presidential candidate is set to deliver at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The former secretary of state will argue that the "core pillars of the progressive movement" are at risk of being overturned by the court during a single term if a Republican wins the White House in November.

Clinton will specifically call out Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), who refuses to hold a hearing for Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's nominee to the high court.

Grassley and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), joined by the vast majority of their caucus, have said the position left vacant by the late Justice Antonin Scalia should remain empty until there is a new president – hoping, of course, that the next president is a Republican who will choose a conservative justice.

Clinton will also name Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who recently told a Wisconsin radio station that Republicans “absolutely will not allow the Supreme Court to flip,” underscoring the political nature of the GOP obstruction. Johnson is considered one of the party's most vulnerable senators up for re-election in 2016. He's facing off against Democrat Russ Feingold, who lost to Johnson in 2010.

Clinton's speech will also include a bit of a dig – although perhaps not by name – at Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), her opponent in the Democratic primary. According to her aide, she will argue that the “breadth of progressive issues” likely to come before the court are “another reason why we're not a single issue country and we can't afford a single issue President.”

Both Clinton and Sanders praised Obama's choice of Garland, who is known as a moderate on the D.C. Circuit Court. Sanders, however, has said that if he wins in November and Republicans still haven't approved Garland, he would ask Obama to withdraw his nomination.

Clinton Would Impose Campaign Finance, Abortion Litmus Tests On Court Nominees

By Stephen Dinan

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton urged her supporters to demand that the Senate approve President Obama's Supreme Court pick — even though she herself seemed to undercut Judge Merrick Garland, saying she wanted justices with more varied “life experience” than what he brings to the bench.

Mrs. Clinton said she wouldn't second-guess Mr. Obama's decision to pick Judge Garland to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, but added that if she were in the Oval Office she would search for nominees in the mold of Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Mrs. Clinton said Justice Mayor's Hispanic heritage and underprivileged upbringing brought needed perspectives to the high court.

Mrs. Clinton also said she would impose litmus tests on abortion and campaign finance. Her nominees, she said, would have to prove that they would uphold the *Roe v. Wade* decision establishing a national right to abortion and would have to show that they would overturn the *Citizens United*

decision that established free speech campaign rights for interest groups.

“I would not appoint someone who didn't think *Roe v. Wade* is settled law,” Mrs. Clinton said while campaigning in Madison, Wisconsin, where the next primary is slated for next week.

Mrs. Clinton mixed her own call to inject more civility into the judicial selection process with combative rhetoric.

She specifically called out two Republicans, Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Both have joined the vast majority of their Republican colleagues in saying Scalia's seat should be filled by the next president, after voters have a say at the polls.

“You know, we chose a president. We chose him twice. And now Republicans in the Senate are acting like our votes didn't count and President Obama is not still the nation's leader,” she said. “Today, I'm adding my voice to the chorus asking Sen. Grassley to step up and do his job. He should hold a hearing, and he should schedule it as soon as the Senate returns from recess.”

Republicans counter that they scored huge victories in the 2014 midterm congressional elections, with voters signaling that they wanted a check on Mr. Obama. Senate Republicans say the president has the power to nominate, but it's the Senate's choice whether to act.

Mr. Grassley, in a statement Monday, said Mrs. Clinton's attack on him was a campaign ploy to try to divert attention away from her secret email account during her four years as secretary of state. Both Mr. Grassley and Mr. Johnson have been investigating her emails.

Republican National Committee spokesman Michael Short said Mrs. Clinton's attacks were odd because she herself took part in filibustering President George W. Bush's judicial picks, including an attempted blockade on Samuel A. Alito Jr.

“The only reason Hillary Clinton is calling on Republicans to breach decades of bipartisan precedent of not confirming election-year Supreme Court nominees is so she could have a liberal majority on the court to help her carry on President Obama's legacy of executive overreach if elected,” Mr. Short said.

Mrs. Clinton and her fellow Democrats appear to be getting the better of Republicans in the debate, though the matter is not settled among the public.

A Pew Research Center poll released Monday found that 46 percent of Americans surveyed wanted Judge Garland confirmed to the Supreme Court, while 30 percent opposed him. The rest had no opinion about the matter.

Democrats have predicted that Republicans will cave to public pressure and confirm Judge Garland, but just a few Senate Republicans have dissented from their leadership's blockade.

Mrs. Clinton said opposition to Judge Garland is born of the same fire that is spurring the insurgent campaign of Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump, who before the 2012 election challenged Mr. Obama's citizenship.

"Once you make the extreme normal, you open the door to even worse," Mrs. Clinton said. "When you have a party dead-set on demonizing the president, you may just end up with a candidate who says the president never was legally the president at all. Enough is enough. It's time for you to take a stand."

Still, she refused to say specifically whether she agreed with Mr. Obama's choice of Judge Garland, and even undercut his case when she criticized presidents for nominating judges who have taken the same path to the high court.

"I would really like to find appointments where people have not just been on one narrow track — you know, out of law school, to a clerkship, out of clerkship, to a firm, maybe to a U.S. attorney's office, and then to a firm, maybe, and into the Justice Department and then back to a firm," she said.

She mentioned Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Alito as candidates who were legally qualified but were on that "one narrow track."

Judge Garland falls into that same description, having graduated from Harvard College, then Harvard Law School, before taking two high-profile clerkships, serving in the Justice Department, then going into private practice at a prominent law firm in Washington. He rejoined the Justice Department as assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, then went back to his law firm and then back into the Justice Department before gaining his seat in 1997 on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

Mrs. Clinton said she wouldn't second-guess Mr. Obama's pick but hinted that it was made in part to try to politically isolate Republicans.

The Flaw In Democrats' Supreme Court Plan

By Jason Stein

[Christian Science Monitor](#), March 28, 2016

Harrisburg, Pa. — The wind was whipping, sending icy gusts down Walnut Street in Harrisburg, where Sen. Pat Toomey (R) of Pennsylvania has an office. But the cold didn't deter Deb Fulham-Winston, who stood on the steps of the federal building, holding up her sign urging the senator to #DoYourJob.

"This is a terrible precedent to be setting," she said of Senator Toomey and his Republican colleagues. They're refusing to hold a hearing or vote on President Obama's Supreme Court nominee until the next president is in place next year. "They are not stepping up to their responsibility. It's just wrong."

Two days after Ms. Fulham-Winston and a modest group of protesters chanted "Do your job! Do your job!" — a

scene that was repeated in several cities in the state last week — Senator Toomey inched toward the position of the demonstrators. On Wednesday, He announced that he would meet with nominee Merrick Garland as a courtesy to the president and Mr. Garland.

But don't expect him to go beyond that, or for the Senate Republican caucus to cave, or even for vulnerable Republicans such as Toomey to lose their seats over this particular issue.

With a few exceptions, Republicans are holding firm in their view that a presidential campaign is too heated a time to deal with such a key nomination — despite organized Democratic pressure as well as polls showing that a majority of Americans favor taking up a nominee now.

The reason Republicans can stand firm is because of voters such as Wendy, a mom from Camp Hill, Pa.

Wendy, who did not want her last name used, is following the issue in the news and volunteers that it's important to maintain the system of checks and balances on government that is provided by the courts. It's "weird" to keep that spot open for so long, she comments, speaking of the vacancy left by the passing of Justice Antonin Scalia in February.

But here's the thing. This Supreme Court vacancy is not a burning issue for her. It's not going to decide her vote. "I don't know that it would be one of my highest priorities," she says, about to enter a restaurant in a Harrisburg suburb.

Same thing for Tina Schellhorn, a registered nurse from Furlong, just north of Philadelphia. The Supreme Court nominee? "I'm not even following it," she says, though a likely contest between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton adds spice to her family's dinner table conversations.

The nomination to the highest court in the land is what Jennifer Duffy of the independent Cook Political Report calls a "base issue," not a "voting issue." That is, it lacks the saliency to move voters for or against a candidate — though it gins up the base on both sides.

You can see that difference in the polls.

In Pennsylvania, for instance, 62 percent of registered voters say the Senate should hold hearings to fill the Supreme Court vacancy, while 35 percent say this should wait until after the presidential election, according to a Franklin & Marshall College poll taken earlier this month. National polls also show a majority of voters favor moving on a nominee now.

But the most important problem facing Pennsylvania, according to the poll, is government and politicians (the state has had a severe disagreement over its budget and education funding), followed by education, joblessness, and finance issues. National polls show the economy, dissatisfaction with government, terrorism, and immigration among the top concerns.

At the same time, the Franklin & Marshall poll shows why this issue excites the base: 80 percent of Democrats say the Senate should hold hearings now; only 34 percent of Republicans agree (73 percent of Independents or something else also favor hearings now). National polls show a similar partisan divide.

"I'm not yet convinced that the Supreme Court becomes the dominant issue in this campaign," says pollster G. Terry Madonna, of Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa. There may be times when the issue could gain traction, for instance, when Supreme Court decisions come out in June, possibly highlighting a split court, he says.

But no decisions are rendered in the fall, the height of election season. Still, "Do I think Democrats will use this issue? Of course," says Mr. Madonna.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton will appear in Wisconsin on Monday afternoon, asking voters to keep the Supreme Court high on their priority list and to imagine what a nominee by a President Trump would mean.

Wisconsin has a primary April 5. It is also home to Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, who faces a tough election this fall. Like Toomey, he believes the nomination should wait until the next president.

In the two weeks that vulnerable GOP incumbents such as Senators Johnson and Toomey are home on recess, liberal activists are organizing protests, call-in campaigns, and press conferences at Republican senators' local offices and public events (when they can find out where they are). They're targeting senators in Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Texas.

But conservative activists have launched a counter campaign, using television ads to thank senators such as Toomey for holding his ground and to target Democratic senators in red or purple states like West Virginia, North Dakota, and Colorado.

After Sen. Terry Moran (R) of Kansas recently joined Sen. Mark Kirk (R) of Illinois and moderate Sen. Susan Collins (R) of Maine in calling for a hearing, tea partiers threatened to "primary" him – backing a conservative challenger in his next primary. The Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative group, is planning a TV ad campaign to warn Kansas voters about the stakes involved.

In Pennsylvania, Republican Joe Cullen calls President Obama's attempt to move a nominee in the middle of a presidential election "ridiculous" and faults him for acting as if government were a "one-legged stool."

But, being the vice chairman of the Bucks County Republican Committee, Mr. Cullen was already going to vote for Toomey, who, at the moment, is ahead in polls in this blue state.

"I don't think people are staying up at night" worrying about the Supreme Court nominee, says Cullen.

Political analysts would agree – noting the exception of the activists on both sides, who are busily working to motivate their base on the issue.

With Echoes Of 2008, Sanders Vows To Fight As Path Narrows

By Lisa Lerer And Ken Thomas

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

MADISON, Wis. (AP) – If there's anyone who understands how Bernie Sanders feels right now, it might just be Hillary Clinton.

The Democratic primary candidate is sweeping Western states but is struggling to overcome Clinton's significant lead with the delegates who ultimately will decide the party's nomination.

It's a situation that's oddly reminiscent of race eight years ago, when a frustrated and fatigued Clinton found herself fighting – and failing – to close then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama's early delegate lead.

Just as Clinton did in 2008, Sanders and his team are vowing to take their fight all the way to the party convention in July with an aggressive push for delegates in next month's contests in Wisconsin, New York and five northeastern states. They're ratcheting up focus on her weaknesses, particularly with independents and younger voters. And Sanders is casting himself as the most electable Democrat in the general election, an effort targeted at wooing superdelegates, the party insiders who play a big role in picking the nominee.

There's little question that Sanders has tapped into a powerful force within the Democratic party. He's still drawing tens of thousands to his rallies – attracting 17,300 in Seattle on Sunday – and has collected more than \$140 million in donations. His fundraising shows no signs of slowing down: Sanders raised more than \$4 million since his victories in Saturday's contests in Washington state, Hawaii and Alaska.

But his campaign has always had a fight ahead of it. And despite his wins in 15 contests that shot seems to have grown even longer in recent weeks.

Even top staffers acknowledge that the path forward isn't easy.

"We're going to have to win states by significant margins," said senior strategist Tad Devine. "It's not going to be a big lead."

Based on primaries and caucuses to date, Clinton has 1,243 delegates to Sanders' 975. Including superdelegates, Clinton has 1,712 delegates to Sanders' 1,004, leaving her shy of the 2,383 it takes to win.

According to an Associated Press analysis, Sanders needs to win 67 percent of the remaining delegates and uncommitted superdelegates through June to be able to

clinch the Democratic nomination. So far he's only winning 37 percent.

The difficult math is, at least in part, a reflection of how Clinton learned from her 2008 mistakes. One of her first hires was Jeff Berman, Obama's delegate guru. Her campaign invested early in their delegate strategy, a tactic that seems to have paid off. Her current lead of 268 pledged delegates is nearly double the margin that Obama held over Clinton during the 2008 primary.

Clinton's campaign believes they can knock out Sanders by the end of next month, arguing they will have racked up enough delegates after the April 26 contests in five northeastern states to make it mathematically impossible for him to win.

"He's going to contest these states, we're going to contest these states, but the truth is that after April 26 there is just not enough real estate for Senator Sanders to contest the lead that we've built," said Joel Benenson, Clinton's senior strategist.

While Clinton aides say they have no plans to push Sanders out of the race, they're eager to look past the primary. In interviews and speeches last week, Clinton largely focused on Tuesday's deadly attacks in Brussels, casting GOP front-runner Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz as unqualified to deal with complicated international threats.

She kicked-off her Wisconsin campaign with a Monday speech in Madison, where she urged voters to consider what Trump might do to shape the Supreme Court.

Sanders team plans to compete hard in Wisconsin and New York, hoping to not only win delegates but hit Clinton with the psychological blow of losing the state she represented in the Senate.

"Bernie is a native son of Brooklyn," said campaign manager Jeff Weaver, who called the Vermont senator the "voice of New York."

They also plan to try and persuade uncommitted superdelegates to back Sanders, arguing that his higher approval ratings and ability to motivate Democratic voters pose toughest challenge to Trump.

"This isn't an academic exercise now whether Trump could be the nominee. He's likely to be the nominee," said Ben Tulchin, Sanders pollster. "Democrats cannot win if we don't have an energized base."

His challenge, again, comes down to the numbers. There are only 216 uncommitted superdelegates out of 714 total, according to an Associated Press analysis.

Sanders also argues that superdelegates in states that he won will feel pressure to support his bid – a claim Clinton supporters dispute.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., said she faced similar questions in 2008 about her allegiances to Clinton as a superdelegate after then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama won her home state's primary.

Baldwin, who again endorsed Clinton, said she will be voting for the former secretary of state in next month's primary and it would be "odd" for her to vote for someone as a super delegate and then not pledge support for that candidate in the convention.

Besides, she noted, super delegates did not make the difference in the 2008 primaries.

"I do not necessarily believe that this one will be any different in that regard," she said.

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Bernie's Team Confronts Tough Questions

Coming off big wins, the Sanders campaign struggled to explain how it can overcome Clinton's lead.

By Gabriel Debenedetti

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

Coming off its best stretch of the campaign, having won six of seven contests over the last week, Bernie Sanders' campaign found itself on defense on Monday, forced to explain why the senator remains far behind even when top aides are saying that his path to the Democratic nomination is still viable.

A 45-minute conference call with reporters hosted by senior Sanders aides sent multiple confusing messages, starting with chief strategist Tad Devine's insistence that Sanders would be beating Hillary Clinton, except that his campaign chose not to compete in some of the big states that she won.

"We have a very good chance of beating her in every state where we compete with her," said Devine, blaming Clinton's wins in Texas, Alabama, Virginia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and Arkansas on Sanders' lack of investment there. "Ninety-seven percent of her delegate lead today comes from those eight states where we did not compete."

In fact, Sanders invested in television ads and spent three days in Florida shortly before it voted, including one three-stop swing just five days before the primary. He visited Texas for two huge rallies just three days before that primary. And, two weeks before the Georgia primary, he predicted a win if there was a high voter turnout. His staff was also playing up his chances in Virginia until shortly before Super Tuesday.

Meanwhile, campaign manager Jeff Weaver told reporters that Sanders has a number of super delegates on his side that will help him claim the nomination. But Weaver

wouldn't name these party power brokers, or even reveal how many there were.

It was an afternoon that captured the political moment: with replenished campaign coffers, including \$4 million in donations over the last two days alone, Sanders' campaign has a fresh burst of optimism heading into the April 5 Wisconsin primary. But it still must contend with the difficult delegate math that lies ahead of him.

"Reports of our death are greatly exaggerated," insisted Weaver to kick off the afternoon call. He, Devine and pollster Ben Tulchin then leapfrogged from Sanders' winning streak — victories in Idaho, Utah, Alaska, Hawaii, and Washington that have been central to his strategic plan ever since he lost Nevada — into an explanation of how he planned compete in big upcoming states like New York and California to dig out of his hole of roughly 250 pledged delegates.

Nonetheless, Sanders has to win 57 percent of the remaining pledged delegates — which will come primarily from primaries, not caucuses — to match the former secretary of state, explained Clinton's chief strategist Joel Benenson in his own call responding to the Sanders campaign's. That's even before super delegates are taken into account, Benenson said — and Sanders has only twice broken the 57 percent mark in primary contests so far.

After the Pennsylvania, Maryland, Connecticut, Delaware, and Rhode Island primaries on April 26, Benenson added, he expects Sanders' path forward to be impossible.

Sanders' top aides have acknowledged for weeks that his path to the nomination has been narrow and winding, and while his wide-margin wins in the caucus states helped him cut into Clinton's delegate lead, they didn't fundamentally change the terrain. But, staffers insisted, the candidate does well in states where he can spend time and money, and the \$4 million injection will help power his upcoming tour through Wisconsin, where he is already outspending Clinton on the airwaves.

While Clinton holds a slim lead in Wisconsin according to recent public polling, Sanders backers see an opportunity for a surprisingly large victory there, in a state where Devine said "Sanders' message resonates very strongly," and where independents can vote.

Sanders has been targeting Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who is deeply unpopular with Democrats, both in speeches and in a new fundraising email on Monday. While Clinton's team is looking to replicate its win in neighboring Ohio, relying on big turnout from minorities in Milwaukee, Sanders allies are hoping independents and middle class white voters turn out for him, like in Michigan.

But while the eyes of the political world turned to Wisconsin, his campaign team also started ramping up in California and New York, the two states he most needs to win by large margins to upend Clinton: the campaign opened its first New York office on Saturday at a party attended by

Devine, a space in Brooklyn. Sanders' effort for the April 19 New York primary is being overseen by some of the top staffers from his Iowa and New Hampshire operations. Meanwhile, the Sanders campaign dispatched another top aide who worked in New Hampshire and some of the early March states to open the operation in California, which votes on June 6.

The moves were long-term investments in a campaign against a front-runner who's already started pivoting to the general election. Clinton appeared in Wisconsin on Monday to bash Senate Republicans and Donald Trump, satisfied knowing that her wins in Florida, Georgia, and Texas netted more delegates in each state than Sanders reaped in Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii combined.

Yet to Weaver, the turn to New York and California was far from premature, or too little, too late.

The native Brooklynite Sanders, he insisted, is "in many ways, the voice of New York."

Some Women Don't Care That Clinton Would Be First Female President

By Anita Kumar

[McClatchy](#), March 28, 2016

In 2008, when Hillary Clinton ran for president the first time, she avoided talking about gender, repeatedly saying that she was running because she was the best-qualified candidate.

Eight years later, Clinton has embraced her place in history, sharing personal anecdotes about being a working mother and a grandmother and focusing on issues that could appeal to women, including equal pay, affordable child care and paid family leave.

Her strategy, however, isn't getting the expected response from women.

Female voters who once spoke excitedly about the possibility of electing the first female president in U.S. history are going out of their way not to talk about it this year, even though the prospects are better.

Dozens of female Democratic voters in several states, including those who support Clinton, say they aren't considering gender at all when deciding whom to support this year, even though they'd like to see a woman elected president someday. For some of them, it doesn't have to be this woman, this year.

"It's got to be the right woman," said Jan McGuire, 49, a high school English teacher from Council Bluffs, Iowa. McGuire, who supports Clinton, was far less excited about past vice-presidential candidates Republican Sarah Palin and Democrat Geraldine Ferraro.

Following a string of female Supreme Court justices, female Cabinet secretaries and the first female speaker of the House of Representatives, the prospect of electing a female

president doesn't seem as far out of reach as it once did. Clinton, the first woman to seriously vie for the presidency, was joined on the campaign trail this time by Republican Carly Fiorina, who dropped out last month.

"I want to see a woman as much as anyone," said Liliana Daly, a junior at the University of New Hampshire who backs Clinton's rival, a 74-year-old man, Bernie Sanders. But, she said, "I shouldn't automatically want to vote for a woman."

They don't want to be accused of voting for someone on a single issue like that.

Gibbs

Knotts, College of Charleston

In 1937, the first time Gallup polled about electing a woman to the White House, only 1 in 3 said they would support a female candidate. These days, 95 percent say they would back a well-qualified woman to lead the country.

Winning over women is crucial because they vote in greater numbers than men do. They've favored Democratic presidential candidates since 1980, but likely Republican nominee Donald Trump has won female voters in many primary contests and could appeal to them in a general election by focusing on some of his seemingly more moderate stances on health care and Planned Parenthood.

Barack Obama won the female vote by large margins in 2008 and 2012 as Democrats accused Republicans of waging a "war on women."

Clinton has won the female vote in many states, helping her amass a nearly insurmountable lead in the race for the Democratic nomination. But in New Hampshire, she lost women, 55 percent to 44 percent, and in other states, including Oklahoma and Michigan, she came close to losing them as hordes of frustrated young women flocked to Sanders.

A flurry of women-focused organizations, including Emily's List, Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood Votes, have made phone calls, knocked on doors, sent mailers and launched ad campaigns, all for Clinton.

Still, to some women, Clinton's wealth, fame and race make her part of the "establishment" politics they are fighting against.

"Nothing she says seems authentic to me," said Becca Iles, 30, a high school coach in Des Moines, Iowa. "I honestly don't believe her. Just because she's a female doesn't mean that she identifies with anything."

There is a generational split when it comes to Clinton.

Listen, I like her but I am not going to vote for her only because she's a lady. It's not going to be a draw.

Nicole Rand, 37, an X-ray technician in Des Moines

Younger women are certain they will see a female president in their lifetime, whether it's Clinton this year or someone else in the future. Older women are not as sure.

Emily Rice, a student at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire, praised Clinton for being the first to proclaim women's rights as human rights and human rights as women's rights in a speech she gave 20 years ago in Beijing. But Rice is quick to say she understands the reasons that some might not support someone like Clinton this year.

"People my age are very angry," she said, "and don't see a path forward."

Lesley Clark, William Douglas, David Lightman and Maria Recio contributed to this article.

Donald Trump On GOP War Over Wives: Ted Cruz 'Started It'

By Mary Spicuzza

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), March 28, 2016

Donald Trump is doubling down in his ongoing battle with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz over their wives, saying his opponent is the one who "started it."

The real estate mogul and Republican presidential front-runner on Monday defended his role in the increasingly ugly and personal dispute, saying his wife, Melania, was attacked first.

Trump made his comments in a confrontational interview with conservative radio host Charlie Sykes.

Sykes' talk show has long been a platform for Republican candidates and elected officials to promote their policies and positions. But Sykes has been a vocal critic of Trump, and is part of the #NeverTrump movement among conservatives — something Trump said he did not know when asked during the interview.

The war over wives between Trump and Cruz has distracted the GOP candidates from focusing more of their attention and campaign remarks on issues facing the country, and on events such as the terror attacks in Brussels, Belgium.

The dispute between the Republican front-runners heated up last week — as House Speaker Paul Ryan of Janesville was lamenting the "disheartening" state of politics and candidates who focused on fear and personal attacks over ideas and appeals to the best of the American people.

Trump tweeted a warning Tuesday that he would "spill the beans" on Cruz's wife, Heidi, then on Wednesday retweeted another attack on her. That tweet featured an unflattering picture of Heidi Cruz next to Melania Trump, and said that a "picture is worth a thousand words."

Trump repeatedly insisted the attacks came only because a racy photograph of his wife was featured in an attack ad targeting him.

"Is this your standard, that if a supporter of another candidate — not the candidate himself — does something despicable, that it's okay for you personally, a candidate for president of the United States, to behave in that same way?"

Sykes said sternly. "I mean, I expect that from a 12-year-old bully on the playground, not someone who wants the office held by Abraham Lincoln."

Despite repeated urging, Trump refused to apologize to Heidi Cruz. He said that Ted Cruz should apologize to him first.

"Ted Cruz knew totally about it," Trump said. "He says he didn't know about it. He totally knew about it."

Late last week, Cruz called Trump "a rat" during a campaign stop in Oshkosh.

And the Texas senator blamed Trump and "henchmen" for a National Enquirer story alleging Cruz had multiple extramarital affairs, a report he said was "garbage."

Cruz had no direct evidence either for his assertions that Trump or longtime political operative Roger Stone was responsible for the report.

Donald Trump On Taking Aim At Ted Cruz's Wife: "He Started It"

By Mark Sommerhauser

[Wisconsin State Journal](#), March 28, 2016

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump, speaking to Wisconsin radio host Charlie Sykes early Monday, blamed his GOP rival Ted Cruz for a recent exchange in which Trump used social media to mock the appearance of Cruz's wife and threaten to "spill the beans" on her.

"He started it," Trump told Sykes. "All this was was a response to what he did."

The raucous interview kicked off a week in which Trump is set to visit Wisconsin in advance of the state's April 5 primary. Trump plans a rally in Janesville Tuesday afternoon.

Sykes, a leading talk radio voice among Wisconsin conservatives, has endorsed Cruz. He also has criticized Trump for his crass tone and inconsistent record on supporting conservative candidates and causes.

Sykes launched the interview by asking Trump to apologize for his sharply personal exchange with Cruz. Trump mistakenly accused Cruz last week of posting a racy magazine photo of Trump's wife, Melania, in an ad. The photo actually was used by a super PAC that is independent of Cruz's campaign.

Trump's initial tweet also included an unspecified threat to Cruz in which Trump threatened to "spill the beans on your wife!"

The tweet prompted Cruz, during a campaign stop in Dane on Thursday, to call Trump a "sniveling coward" and tell him to "leave Heidi the hell alone."

During Monday's interview, Sykes blasted Trump for the exchange.

"I expect that from a 12-year-old bully on the playground, not somebody who wants to hold the office of Abraham Lincoln," Sykes said.

Trump told Sykes that Cruz "knew" about the super PAC using the photo of Melania Trump. Candidates are barred by federal law from working with such groups.

Trump also denied that he considered the picture of Heidi Cruz that he retweeted to be unflattering.

"I didn't know it was necessarily a very bad picture of her versus Melania," Trump said.

Sykes also asked Trump about his history of remarks ridiculing women and their appearance. Trump responded that he has been a leader "in terms of breaking the glass ceiling" by employing women at his businesses.

"Women are just going to have to see what I've done," Trump said. "I've hired tremendous numbers of women."

Wisconsin Radio Host's Combative Interview Surprises Donald Trump

By Ashley Parker

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Charlie Sykes, a popular radio host in Milwaukee, welcomed Donald J. Trump to his state in a phone interview on his program on Monday, explaining that "here in Wisconsin we value things like civility, decency and actual conservative principles."

And then, for Mr. Trump, the 17-minute interview went downhill from there.

Mr. Sykes, an outspoken conservative and opponent of Mr. Trump, began by pressing the Manhattan businessman to apologize to Heidi Cruz, the wife of Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, for resending a Twitter post juxtaposing an unflattering picture of Mrs. Cruz with a shot of his wife, Melania Trump, a former model.

The spat began after an anti-Trump "super PAC" produced an ad geared at Utah voters featuring an image of Mrs. Trump, then Melania Knauss, posing nude from a January 2000 GQ magazine pictorial.

On Mr. Sykes's program, Mr. Trump defended the photo of his wife — calling it "an artsy picture" — but blamed Mr. Cruz for starting the feud, even though the super PAC that produced the Texas ad is not connected to the Texas senator.

"I expect that from a 12-year-old bully on the playground, not somebody who wants the office held by Abraham Lincoln," Mr. Sykes said.

Later, when Mr. Trump again complained, incorrectly, that Mr. Cruz "started it," the radio host interjected: "Remember, we're not on a playground. We're running for president of the United States."

Mr. Trump said he was unaware the Twitter photo of Mrs. Cruz that he resent was unflattering. "I didn't even know

it was necessarily a very bad picture of her versus Melania,” he said.

Later, pressed on the gender gap he faces with female voters, as well as disparaging comments he has made about women — including Megyn Kelly of Fox News and Carly Fiorina, his former Republican rival — Mr. Trump defended himself.

“Women are just going to have to see what I’ve done,” he said. “I’ve hired tremendous numbers of women. Women are in the highest executive positions.”

He added he’s “not a fan of Megyn Kelly” and he’d be making the exact same criticisms if she were a man.

“I don’t think there should be a double standard if somebody’s a woman,” Mr. Trump said. “People have said, you know, in terms of breaking the glass ceiling, that I was a leader in it.”

Mr. Trump, who at moments seemed caught off guard by the combative tone of the interview, had gone on the program without realizing that Mr. Sykes is a Cruz supporter who has repeatedly criticized the billionaire and said he could never support him.

“Mr. Trump, before you called into my show, did you know that I’m a hashtag ‘NeverTrump’ guy?” Mr. Sykes asked near the end of the back-and-forth, referring to the #NeverTrump movement of Republicans who are trying to stop Mr. Trump from winning the party’s nomination.

“No, I didn’t know that,” Mr. Trump said. “But I assume you’re also an intelligent guy. I know you’re an intelligent guy, and you understand what’s going on. Our country is getting ripped off left and right by every country we do business with, even in NATO.”

Mr. Sykes concluded his interview by worrying he had not indoctrinated Mr. Trump into the Wisconsin way of life.

“Obviously I failed in my effort to introduce you to Wisconsin and our tradition of civility and decency by getting an apology from you for Heidi Cruz,” he said.

But, Mr. Sykes added, he had some “free advice” for Mr. Trump, eight days before his state’s primary on April 5: “If you stand up there and you say, ‘Folks let me just say this: I’m running for president, Ted Cruz is running for president, let’s leave our wives out of it. Both of us have married intelligent, beautiful women and from now on we are not going to be talking about one another’s wives,’ people in Wisconsin will love that, Mr. Trump,” he said.

Trump Looks To Decertify Louisiana Delegates

By Jill Colvin And Melinda Deslatte

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Donald Trump’s presidential campaign said Monday it plans to challenge Louisiana’s electoral delegate selection, a day after the GOP

candidate threatened to sue over the possibility that the state’s uncommitted delegates could back his rival, Ted Cruz.

Trump adviser Barry Bennett said that the campaign intends to file a complaint with the Republican National Committee protesting how the state’s delegates were chosen.

“The problem we’re having here is there was a secret meeting in Louisiana of the convention delegation, and apparently all the invitations for our delegates must have gotten lost in the mail,” Bennett said in an interview on MSNBC. After meeting with the campaign’s legal team most of the morning, he said they planned to move forward with “a complaint to decertify these delegates.”

While he did not provide a timeline on when the complaint would be filed, he said: “We’re going to protect our rights to the fullest extent possible.”

A day earlier, Trump shared his frustration with the process via Twitter, warning: “Lawsuit coming.” His threat serves as a taste of the kind of backroom procedural wheeling-and-dealing that could come to define the Republican convention if Trump, facing deep resistance from many in his party, fails to lock down the 1,237 delegates necessary to win the nomination outright.

Trump had not offered any details on the grounds of his proposed lawsuit, but Bennett later said Trump has been referring to the planned complaint.

“It’s not something you file with the court, it’s something you file inside the party,” he said. “That is the lawsuit that he talked about.”

Under RNC rules, Trump’s campaign can contest the seating of the state’s delegates by filing a complaint directly to the committee. If the campaign is unsatisfied with the outcome, it can file a complaint with the credentials committee, which meets at the national convention.

Trump won 41 percent of the vote in Louisiana’s March 5 primary, versus 38 percent for Cruz. But the process of allocating the state’s 46 delegates isn’t a matter of simple proportion.

After the primary election, Trump and Cruz each had 18 committed delegates, while Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who has since dropped out of the race, had five. Under state party rules, those delegates became free agents after Rubio suspended his campaign. Another five delegates also begin uncommitted.

Jason Dore, executive director of the Republican Party of Louisiana and one of the state’s uncommitted delegates, said he hadn’t yet decided whom to support. But he said that Cruz’s campaign has been working more aggressively than Trump’s to attract delegates since the beginning of the race.

As for Trump’s threat, Dore said: “I don’t know who he’d be suing because these 10 delegates are free to support whoever they want under the rules. The party or I can’t force them to vote any way.”

Dore added that Bennett appeared to be referring to a mandatory delegation meeting, held immediately following the state convention, which he said that Trump staffers in the state had attended.

Trump slammed the idea that a candidate who won fewer votes could end up with more delegates in an interview with ABC on Sunday, panning the process as a “crooked” and “rotten political system.”

Meanwhile, Cruz downplayed Trump’s threats before a campaign stop in Altoona, Wisconsin, telling reporters: “You know what? Who cares?”

Colvin reported from Jersey City, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Stephen Ohlemacher in Washington and Scott Bauer in Altoona, Wisconsin contributed to this report.

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Donald Trump, Ted Cruz Fight For Hidden Colorado Delegate Pool

By Eli Stokols

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

When Colorado Republicans scrapped their binding straw poll as part of the state’s March 1 caucuses, it looked like they were forfeiting their relevance in the GOP’s front-loaded nomination process.

Now, they’re back in the game.

With a still unsettled three-way primary fight appearing to be headed for a contested convention in July, Colorado’s GOP assemblies over the next week offer Donald Trump and Ted Cruz a major opportunity to win a significant pile of delegates chosen almost completely by party insiders. Now, it’s up to the three candidates to convince the party to pick delegates who promise to vote in their favor.

“It’s chaos. It’s a cluster. It’s the ultimate insider’s game,” said Josh Penry, a GOP operative in Denver who chaired Marco Rubio’s campaign in Colorado. “There are so many delegates in play.”

Cruz confirmed Monday that he will attend the Colorado GOP’s state assembly on April 9. And Trump and John Kasich are also tentatively planning to attend the confab of roughly 6,000 party activists in Colorado Springs, where 27 of the state’s 33 delegates to the RNC convention will be elected.

“We got a lot of flak when we nixed the caucus straw poll. Now, Colorado comes out looking like geniuses because

we’re probably going to get all three presidential candidates to our state convention,” said Chris Murray, general counsel to the Colorado GOP.

Cruz, whose campaign prides itself on its superior organization, is eyeing Colorado as an opportunity to notch another win and, more importantly, to prevent Trump from hitting the 1,237 delegate threshold needed to clinch the nomination before July’s convention in Cleveland.

“Trump claims he’s a great closer. Well closing in Colorado is happening on April 8 and 9,” said Congressman Ken Buck, who is Cruz’s campaign chairman in Colorado. “He’s like a batter who knocks the first pitch off the center field wall and stands there admiring it and forgets to run to first base.

“You can make great speeches, you can insult people, you can make enemies of women and every demographic group in the country, but if you don’t close, it doesn’t matter. And Cleveland is going to be the scoreboard.”

Republicans

Delegates Remaining:

944

Delegates

1,237 Delegates Needed for Nomination

There are more than 700 GOP activists running for the state’s 33 delegate slots (33 more will be elected as alternates). House has put all of their names, phone numbers and candidate allegiances on the state GOP website, which shows Cruz with more than 100 would-be delegates in his corner, compared to just over 70 for Trump.

“Cruz has the activists behind him, it’s pretty clear,” Penry said.

On Saturday, Cruz drew 71 percent of the more than 1,000 ballots cast in an unofficial presidential straw poll at the El Paso County GOP assembly, the largest county Republican gathering in the state. Trump, meanwhile, drew 18 percent and John Kasich won 11 percent.

“Trump has no operation here. Zero,” Murray said. “I see no evidence of organization from him. I see evidence of support; there are a lot of people who support him. There are people organizing and strategizing about slates at the county assemblies. I’ve seen no one from Trump.”

An early test of the campaign’s organization will come this Saturday, as two of Colorado’s seven congressional districts—each of them elects three delegates to the RNC—hold assemblies a week ahead of the state convention.

“Our system is probably unique in the country,” Buck said. “It’s a struggle to try to keep track with basically eight elections happening over a short period. You’ve got to be organized.”

More than 300 of the potential delegates are running as unbound—opting not to declare an allegiance to any candidate and to head to Cleveland as free agents. That may change, as campaigns look to convince the activists that their

best chance of getting a ticket to the convention will come from signing on to a slate of Cruz or Trump delegates.

"You win if you're well known and people like you or you're going to declare for a candidate and people will like that candidate," said Steve House, the Colorado GOP chairman. "I think the unbound delegates, if they're unknown, will have a tough time."

Although Cruz has no real operation in Colorado, he is benefiting from the organizing prowess of Rocky Mountain Gun Owners and its preferred U.S. Senate nominee, state Sen. Tim Neville, who is likely to make the ballot with a strong showing at the April 9 assembly.

"There's a natural alliance there between the people running the Neville campaign and the Cruz campaign," Murray said. "There are going to be some Trump delegates elected, but I would not be surprised to see Cruz have two-thirds of this delegation officially in his pocket or tacitly in his pocket."

Many of Colorado's best-known Republican establishment figures who have been part of past RNC delegations, from former Gov. Bill Owens to former Congressman Bob Beauprez and one-time U.S. Senate candidate Pete Coors, aren't even bothering to run to be delegates, opening up several slots to activists and political newcomers.

"I just decided I didn't want to be part of the process because it is really crazy," said former state Rep. B.J. Nikkel, who served as a Colorado co-chair for John Kasich before switching her support to Rubio. "I really don't care that much. I would support Trump or Cruz, but I don't feel passionate about either one of them. I have other things to do than be part of a big battle."

While campaigns would prefer that delegates head to Cleveland supporting their campaign, some establishment figures are intrigued by the idea of electing unbound delegates given the potential for a floor fight in Cleveland if anti-Trump forces opt to go to the mattresses to prevent the businessman from becoming the GOP nominee.

"Having a lot of delegates who are unbound going to Cleveland could make Colorado a kingmaker," said Ryan Call, the former state GOP chairman, likening the delegation's potential role at the convention to the one played by Mississippi Republicans in 1976, who went to the convention unbound and then threw their support to Gerald Ford, helping him clinch the nomination over Ronald Reagan.

"These unpledged delegates could end up being in the unique position of being part of a small pool at the national convention who are in position to be free agents on the first round of balloting and to place other names into nomination as we go on to multiple ballots."

Trump, Ryan Increasingly At Odds Over Future Of The GOP

By Julie Pace, Erica Werner And Bill Barrow
[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) – Donald Trump wants to win the White House in the fall. Paul Ryan wants to save his vision of the Republican Party for years to come.

Those goals put Trump and Ryan increasingly at odds over both tone and substance as the businessman barrels toward the GOP presidential nomination. While Ryan is appealing for political civility and a party rooted in traditional conservative principles, Trump is bucking campaign decorum and embracing policy positions that are sharply at odds with years of GOP orthodoxy.

Their starkly different visions for the Republican Party are a microcosm of the broader fissures roiling the GOP. And if Trump does become the Republican nominee, he and the House speaker's ability to work together could be the first test of whether a party in this much turmoil can stay together.

"Trump's obviously running on issues that are contrary to conservatives and at odds with what a lot of what Paul Ryan believes," said Peter Wehner, a former adviser to President George W. Bush.

For now, Trump and Ryan are engaged largely in a cold war, with the politicians only occasionally mentioning each other by name. Ryan has picked key moments to draw implicit contrasts with Trump, including condemning the billionaire's refusal to take responsibility for violence at his rallies. Trump will launch the next volley Tuesday when he campaigns in Ryan's hometown of Janesville, Wisconsin, ahead of the state's April 5 primary.

Trump, in his trademark contradictory style, has both praised Ryan and ominously warned the speaker against crossing him.

"Paul Ryan, I don't know him well, but I'm sure I'm going to get along with him, and if I don't, he's going to have to pay a big price, OK?" Trump said after his victories on Super Tuesday. A week later, after speaking with Ryan by phone, Trump said of the speaker: "I like him a lot. I respect him a lot."

People close to Ryan say the Wisconsin lawmaker is in disbelief about Trump's staying power. While he's publicly vowed to support whomever his party nominates, Ryan has privately said he's focused on trying to keep the GOP's House majority this fall and on fundraising for the party – leaving some friends with the impression that he would be a less-than-enthusiastic Trump backer in a general election.

Looming large are Ryan's own political ambitions. He passed on running for the White House in 2016, but some Republicans still harbor hopes that he could emerge as the nominee in a convention fight this summer if neither Trump nor Ted Cruz clinch the nomination by then.

"I would be less than honest with you if I said people are not mentioning a Ryan candidacy from time to time," said Rep. Charlie Dent, a Pennsylvania Republican who meets regularly with Ryan. "Clearly there are many in Congress who see Paul Ryan as a consensus candidate."

Ryan has vigorously denied that he's interested, though he was similarly definitive last year when he rebuffed calls to run for the speaker's job. He's also insists that his role as chairman of the July convention requires him to remain officially neutral despite his obvious displeasure with Trump.

Yet Ryan's refusal to fully disavow Trump has left him open to criticism that he either cares too much about keeping the real estate mogul's enthusiastic supporters in the Republican fold or that he doesn't fully understand the threat.

"The barbarian is at the gate, and Paul Ryan wants to talk sense to him?" wrote David D. Haynes, the editorial page editor of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the largest newspaper in Ryan's home state.

Trump, in private at least, has tried to soften such dire talk. A few weeks ago, he sent Ryan a copy of a Washington Post article that he'd marked up to show his disagreement with the piece's assertion that he was a threat to GOP orthodoxy. A Ryan aide confirmed that Trump sent the article, speaking on condition of anonymity because the aide was not authorized to speak publicly by name.

Ryan has been working behind the scenes to produce congressional plans on issues including health care, the economy and national security. Though not the original intent of Ryan's "agenda project," the effort could give Republicans something to run on if they can't or don't want to hitch themselves to their presidential nominee.

Trump's own policy proposals, though often vague, have sometimes sharply conflicted with where Ryan is trying to position the party, particularly on economic issues.

Ryan rose to prominence among Republicans for spending proposals that eventually would privatize government entitlement programs, gradually reducing those operations' share of federal spending. While Trump has joined Republicans in bemoaning alleged abuses of entitlement programs, he's long blasted proposals like Ryan's.

"As Republicans, if you think you are going to change very substantially for the worse Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security in any substantial way, and at the same time you think you are going to win elections, it just really is not going to happen," Trump said during a 2013 appearance at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Trump has also spent decades criticizing U.S. trade policy and advocating steep tariffs on Chinese imports. It's a protectionist argument that puts him at odds with decades of Republican support for international trade, though he's in line with a growing contingent of House Republicans who see

sweeping foreign trade deals as detrimental to American workers.

Before becoming speaker, Ryan was among the most vocal House Republicans in backing trade agreements, including President Barack Obama's Asia-Pacific pact. As speaker, Ryan has yet to schedule a vote on the Pacific Rim deal, saying he and other members are carefully vetting the details.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>, Erica Werner at <http://twitter.com/ericawerner>, and Bill Barrow at <http://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>

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Republican Rivals Talk Tough, But Even Presidents Have Limits

[New York Times](#), March 29, 2016

Senator Ted Cruz, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, has proposed surveilling Muslim neighborhoods. His chief rival, Donald J. Trump, says he would deport millions of undocumented immigrants and allow the use of torture. The campaign has also produced calls for carpet bombing in Syria and steps to rein in the press at home.

But you have to wonder: If elected, could a new president intent on pushing or exceeding the boundaries of the Constitution or the law actually follow through? Or would the Constitution, the Geneva Conventions and other long-established legal barriers leave the new president unable to turn heated and sometimes hyperbolic campaign talk into reality?

Reflecting the mood of a populist and often angry Republican primary electorate, Mr. Trump and to a lesser extent Mr. Cruz have at times suggested that they would not be constrained by political correctness or traditional boundaries.

Among their critics, the more provocative proposals from Mr. Trump and Mr. Cruz are viewed as hateful, ineffective and unlikely to ever become detailed policy proposals, much less American policy. President Obama, asked about Mr. Trump's proposals during a trip to Argentina last week, largely shrugged, saying the country's separation of powers imposes "a limit to some of the damage."

There is always a gap between what candidates say in the heat of the campaign, when they are not constrained by the realities of governance, and how they act after being

sworn into office. Asked about the likelihood of a Trump or Cruz presidency following through by successfully implementing primary campaign promises that raised serious constitutional or legal questions, some legal scholars said the probability is relatively low.

Noah Feldman, a Harvard law professor, said the greatest bulwark against presidential overreach would be the huge number of people needed to carry out the work.

Political appointees and career civil servants could refuse directives. Congress could refuse to pass and finance policies. The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel could declare initiatives unconstitutional.

But, Mr. Feldman added, another crisis — say, something like the Sept. 11 attacks — could change the dynamic. Officials might back down. A president could invoke President Lincoln's suspension, over the objection of the Supreme Court chief justice, of habeas corpus, the foundational right to protest one's detention.

"Could a president unilaterally suspend habeas corpus? Well, all you can say is: It happened once," Mr. Feldman said.

Some legal scholars have speculated about the potential for a candidate like Mr. Trump to shatter convention if elected and go well beyond the broad assertions of executive authority by President Obama and President George W. Bush in fighting terrorism.

Eric Posner, a law professor at the University of Chicago, has said the chance that a president would seize dictatorial powers is "extremely remote." But in his blog, he has also written about the ways it could happen, like "impounding" congressionally appropriated funds and using them for an unauthorized purpose.

Faiza Patel, co-director of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice in New York, said she worried most about the places where the checks and balances on a president are weakest — in the realms of foreign policy and security.

Since 2001, she said, executive branch officials and the courts have "too easily" allowed torture, surveillance and the rendition of prisoners.

Bruce Ackerman, a law professor at Yale, cited, above all, the 1944 Supreme Court ruling in *Korematsu v. United States*, upholding, by 6 to 3, the internment of American citizens of Japanese origin.

The court said then that it "cannot reject as unfounded the judgment of the military authorities and of Congress that there were disloyal members of that population," that "such persons could not readily be isolated," and, thus, that the demands of security outweighed those of rights.

Two years ago, Justice Antonin Scalia, normally a defender of precedent, declared *Korematsu* "wrong."

But the ruling has actually never been overturned, and as Mr. Scalia said then, "You are kidding yourself if you think

the same thing will not happen again." Continue reading the main story

Donald Trump's Success Upends Battle For Control Of Congress

By Alexander Burns

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

Donald J. Trump's dominance in the Republican primary is upending the campaign for control of Congress, as Republican lawmakers seek to distance themselves from him while Democrats seize on the chance to run against a candidate who has offended huge sections of the American electorate.

Nominating Mr. Trump could create a political battlefield of extraordinary breadth and volatility. Polling shows that he would enter the general election trailing badly against Hillary Clinton, and he has become deeply unpopular outside of his white, heavily male political base.

While Mr. Trump would most likely draw throngs of white, working-class voters in Democratic-leaning states like Michigan and Ohio, he would also drive away women, nonwhites and voters with college degrees in conservative-leaning states like Georgia and North Carolina.

Both parties are now racing to gauge the impact further down the ballot of a candidacy that could shatter traditional lines of combat in national politics.

Former Senator Norm Coleman of Minnesota, an influential Republican strategist and fund-raiser, said Mr. Trump's nomination could imperil even the party's seemingly iron grip on the House. Mr. Coleman said major donors were increasingly focused on building a "firewall" around Congress, because they believe Democrats would easily defeat Mr. Trump and keep control of the White House.

"Everything is in play: the presidency, the Supreme Court, the Senate and potentially the House," he said.

Mr. Coleman said Republicans would have to decide on a case-by-case basis how to handle Mr. Trump in their races. "If it were me and I were running, and Trump were going to be at the top of the ticket, I would disavow him," he said.

Republicans, who hold a four-seat edge in the Senate and a 30-seat majority in the House, believe it would be essential for candidates running in diverse or comparatively affluent areas to break with Mr. Trump on matters of policy, and perhaps to denounce his nomination in blunt terms.

With control of the Senate resting in large part on Democratic-leaning states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Republicans are preparing to run aggressively localized campaigns aimed at persuading voters to split their ballot for a Republican senator even if they support a Democrat for president.

Some party leaders remain hopeful that they can block Mr. Trump by denying him a majority of the delegates to the

July convention and coalescing support around another candidate.

But the National Republican Senatorial Committee has already conducted polling to test the message that Republicans must control the Senate as a check against a President Hillary Clinton, and also that Democrats must not be allowed to fully control the appointment and confirmation of Supreme Court judges, according to two people briefed on the research, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because it was intended to be confidential.

Democrats see Mr. Trump as increasing their chances, especially in diverse and fast-growing states like Arizona and Virginia, where the party often struggles to turn out Hispanic voters who can help its candidates. And the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee is mounting a late push to stretch the political map by recruiting candidates in as many as 10 conservative-leaning House districts, in states like Florida and Kansas, where analysts believe Mr. Trump will harm Republicans.

The Democratic committee, eager to cut into the Republicans' majority, has begun a large data project to model both support for and opposition to Mr. Trump. Meredith Kelly, a spokeswoman for the committee, confirmed that its data team was studying which of Mr. Trump's ideas and comments would be most offensive to key voting blocs, and how best to project those themes in congressional races.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut, chairman of the Democratic Governors' Association, said Republicans had a no-win situation on their hands: They could either run from Mr. Trump and risk depressing Republican turnout, or embrace him and have to defend "views that are abhorrent" to many people.

"Quite frankly, we're going to hold people accountable: Are you with Trump and his policies, or are you against him?" Mr. Malloy said.

Both sides believe it is too early to measure the precise effect Mr. Trump will have on other elections this fall, in part because Mr. Trump has shown himself to be an unpredictable candidate with few compunctions about changing proposals and themes of his candidacy.

Mr. Trump has said he anticipates that Republicans will ultimately embrace him in the general election; Hope Hicks, a spokeswoman for the Trump campaign, predicted he would buoy Republicans down the ballot.

"It is clear he has brought millions of voters to the party, received tremendous support and garnered millions more votes than any of his opponents," Ms. Hicks said.

Still, the hope among Republicans is that Mr. Trump will be seen by many voters as a self-contained phenomenon: a one-man celebrity road show who does not reflect the totality or the values of the Republican Party.

There is some optimism that Mr. Trump may prove useful to candidates in specific areas, helping draw out blue-

collar voters in places like western Wisconsin and eastern Ohio. Yet early public polling and primary results suggest he would struggle badly in suburban, educated areas, and especially with women, Hispanics and black voters. Even in states where he won Republican primaries, like Georgia and Virginia, he lost many affluent suburban communities.

In Virginia, for example — home to rapidly growing Hispanic and Asian populations, and multiple competitive congressional races — Mr. Trump won the primary by a few percentage points. But Senator Marco Rubio of Florida crushed him in densely populated Fairfax County, a diverse and relatively affluent Washington suburb where elections in the state are often decided.

A small number of Republicans in difficult races, like Representatives Robert J. Dold of Illinois and Carlos Curbelo of Florida, have said that they will not vote for Mr. Trump or that they are undecided about supporting him over Mrs. Clinton.

"Donald Trump's highly offensive comments toward millions of Americans — toward women, to Latinos, to Muslims, to veterans — have, in my view, really disqualified him from serving as our commander in chief," said Mr. Dold, who represents a moderate, highly educated district in suburban Chicago.

Of his own vote, Mr. Dold said, "I will probably be writing someone in."

Other Republicans have not yet gone that far, but have taken pains to stress their own, locally significant accomplishments.

And conservative groups tied to the billionaire donors Charles G. and David H. Koch are planning a major offensive this spring aimed at keeping the Senate in Republican hands, said James Davis, a spokesman for the Koch-backed group Freedom Partners.

Josh Holmes, a top political adviser to the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, said Republicans expected to be able to distinguish their candidates from Mr. Trump, who "has been introduced to the American electorate as a reality TV host and a lot of other things, besides a Republican, over 30 years."

"You could see a scenario where you've got suburban, center-right women supporting a Republican Senate candidate in droves, but not being there on the top of the ticket," Mr. Holmes said.

But Democrats have already begun a concerted push to link Republicans running for other offices to Mr. Trump. The Democratic group American Bridge, which assembles research and video files on Republican candidates, has kept track of which candidates have pledged to vote for the Republican presidential nominee, even if that person is Mr. Trump.

A handful of Democratic candidates have begun to exploit that opening. In North Carolina, the Democratic

nominee for governor, Roy Cooper, has criticized the incumbent Republican, Pat McCrory, by warning about the policies of a "Trump-McCrory administration." And in Arizona, Senator John McCain's Democratic challenger, Representative Ann Kirkpatrick, has rebuked Mr. McCain for repeatedly vowing to vote for the Republican nominee in November.

"His rhetoric is offensive and sexist," Ms. Kirkpatrick said, "and yet John McCain keeps saying he'll support Trump in a general election."

Tired Of Being Defined By Others, G.O.P. Women Speak For Themselves

By Carl Hulse

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — When Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers took a position in the House Republican leadership after the 2012 elections, she knew she had a lot of work to do. Her party had just lost multiple key constituencies, and she was particularly bothered by the party's poor standing with women.

"I found that our brand was so damaged that it was almost like they couldn't even hear us," said Ms. McMorris Rodgers, of Washington State, who juggles considerable responsibilities on Capitol Hill with three young children age 8 and under.

Acutely aware that the Democrats will most likely have a woman at the top of their ticket in 2016, Ms. McMorris Rodgers and some of her female colleagues undertook an ambitious campaign — and an unconventional one by Washington standards. They decided to reach out to women via women's magazines and new media, hoping to connect with them in grocery store aisles and through popular online forums.

They recorded some success with upbeat tales of Republican women scattered through the pages of publications such as *Glamour*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Marie Claire* and, most recently, *Elle*.

Now she and her colleagues face not only the prospect of Hillary Clinton as the Democratic nominee, but also the businessman Donald J. Trump as their own standard-bearer. They fear that his well-documented negative remarks about women could unravel all of their efforts to cast Republican women in a positive light.

A new CNN/ORC poll found that 73 percent of registered female voters in the United States had an unfavorable view of Mr. Trump, and 31 percent of Republican women would be upset if Mr. Trump won.

"I think his comments regarding women and other comments, I find them inappropriate," Ms. McMorris Rodgers said in an interview. "I find them hurtful and I think they are

hurtful to the party, a party that has been founded on equal opportunity for all."

In remarks that echoed Speaker Paul D. Ryan's call for a change in the harsh tone that has dominated the Republican primary season, she added: "We need to be focusing on a positive message and lifting the rhetoric up from the divisive rhetoric that is dominating now. It doesn't belong in politics, it doesn't belong in our homes and it doesn't belong in our workplace."

Ms. McMorris Rodgers, 46, is officially the chairwoman of the House Republican Conference, which makes her the No. 4 House Republican and the top Republican woman in congressional leadership. One of her jobs is to develop the overarching message of House Republicans — it is the position that former Speaker John A. Boehner first held on the leadership ladder. And when Mr. Boehner announced his retirement last year, she briefly considered trying to move up to the No. 2 slot, but quickly decided to stay where she was.

From her current position, she is pushing back against the idea that the Democratic Party, with Mrs. Clinton leading on the campaign trail and Representative Nancy Pelosi leading in the House, represents the default political home for women.

"I think it is important that we respect that women have different political views," said Ms. McMorris Rodgers, a strong conservative who grew up picking fruit in her family's orchard in eastern Washington and became the 200th woman ever elected to the House. "The idea that just because you are a woman you should be supporting Hillary Clinton I think is false. There is a broad base of political views."

Hoping to impart some of those to a wider audience, Ms. McMorris Rodgers and her advisers decided to go through popular women's magazines and websites such as *Refinery29*, a lifestyle site, and *BlogHer*. The latter site recently hosted a town-hall-style forum featuring Ms. McMorris Rodgers and Republican Representatives Kristi Noem of South Dakota and Mimi Walters of California discussing the Republican agenda.

Pam Stevens, a former CNN producer who is a media strategist for the House Republican conference, also began pitching stories about congressional Republican women to top women's magazines. It was not an easy sell, she recalled, noting that some editors at magazines with a history of strongly embracing abortion rights were not so sure that anti-abortion women lawmakers were a good fit for their audience.

"I really had to work it, work it, work it," Ms. Stevens said.

The effort has paid off. The story of how Representative Diane Black, Republican of Tennessee, struggled through a divorce and was raising three young children on her own before reconnecting with a Marine she first met at a high school dance was featured in January's *Good Housekeeping*. The January issue of *Elle* contained a profile on

Representative Martha McSally, a former fighter pilot from Arizona, and emphasized some of her practical political views under the headline: “Martha McSally is Not That Kind of Republican.”

The new issue of Elle includes Ms. McMorris Rodgers in a list of the “10 Most Compelling Women in Washington Now,” including her with the likes of Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood, and Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. It points out that Ms. McMorris Rodgers is the champion of legislation that would provide more funding for the National Institutes of Health and ease approval of new drugs.

“I think that it is important that we are reaching women on platforms where they are getting their news and information,” she said, adding that the effort was “pretty cool.”

“It gives you a different impression of Republicans, right?”

She just has to hope that impression overcomes the one Mr. Trump is leaving with some women voters.

Republican Strategy Of Stressing Local Issues To Defend Incumbents Gets Boost

Nonprofit spends heavily to defend senators in several states, particularly New Hampshire

By Siobhan Hughes

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

Arizona Election Official Apologizes For Long Wait At Polls

By Fernanda Santos

[New York Times](#), March 28, 2016

PHOENIX — A protester was led off in handcuffs from the visitors’ gallery of the Arizona Legislature on Monday amid a fractious debate over Primary Day last week, when a drastic cutback in polling locations left tens of thousands of Arizonans unable to vote, forced to cast provisional ballots or made to wait in long lines for hours in the high heat.

As the anger bubbled over within a packed State Capitol, a sheepish election official blamed the chaos on poor planning and a misguided attempt to save money by closing poll locations.

“I apologize profusely — I can’t go back and undo it,” said Helen Purcell, the Maricopa County recorder, during a hearing of the Arizona House Elections Committee on Monday as more than 100 voters listened.

Maricopa County, which is Arizona’s most populous and includes the greater Phoenix area, had slashed the number of polling places by 70 percent from 2012.

Ms. Purcell, a Republican holding the office since 1988, tried to offer explanations for what went wrong as the county

reduced the number of polling places to 60 from 200 — one site for roughly 21,500 voters — but the capacity crowd was having none of it.

One man said, “Not good enough.” The audience cheered.

More than 100 voters filled three interconnected rooms, and more than 30 signed up to testify. Security personnel stood on the sides, and at one point a handful of state troopers moved inside, threatening to remove anyone who was disruptive.

The hearing ended in mid-session at 1:30 p.m. because committee members had to move to another hearing to vote on a campaign finance bill. One of the members, Ken Clark, a Democrat, urged audience members to follow them, and they did. A masked man screamed from the gallery; troopers soon surrounded him and took him outside in handcuffs, delaying the hearing’s start.

Ms. Purcell had already said that her office would make new plans for November, presumably adding more polling sites.

Meanwhile, Michelle Reagan, the Arizona secretary of state — who told reporters before the hearing that she had known about the cutback in polling places, but had not wanted to “second-guess” the county’s decision — said she planned to hold four community meetings in the areas most affected by the long lines, all but one in heavily Hispanic parts of the county.

Election officials said the location and number of polling places in Maricopa County had been determined by informed assumptions, using turnout by mail and at the polls from 2008, when the state hosted its last contested primary.

In the end, the math did not hold up, foretelling some of the problems Arizona could face ahead of the November elections. Fewer voters mailed in their ballots, more people who had received ballots by mail showed up to vote in person and thousands of independents lined up to vote, unaware they were not allowed to participate in the state’s closed presidential primaries.

Though small, the discrepancies were significant enough to overwhelm the polling sites, proving that there just were not enough of them, Ms. Purcell said.

“There’s also the factor of money,” which was not going to be enough for a “full-blown election,” she said. “So we had to downsize.”

The changes that caused the havoc were some of the first made in Arizona since the Supreme Court annulled a provision of the Voting Rights Act requiring federal approval for modifications in elections rules and requirements here and in 15 other states.

Voters in majority-minority South Phoenix, a working-class enclave, stood in line for several hours; the last ballot at South Mountain Community Center, the area’s sole polling site, was cast at 12:12 a.m. on Wednesday, well past the

polls' closing time. In North Scottsdale, one of the county's most affluent communities, waits were nowhere nearly as long.

Some angry voters called for Ms. Purcell's resignation and even for a recount.

"Stop pretending you represent us," Patrick Seifter, 30, who lives in Central Phoenix, said at the hearing, pointing at Ms. Purcell. "We don't want platitudes — we want action and accountability."

The mayor of Phoenix, Greg Stanton, has sent a letter to the Justice Department seeking a federal investigation, a call echoed by many of the voters attending the hearing.

One after another, they stood up to register their complaints at the hearing as the committee's chairwoman, Representative Michelle Ugenti-Rita, a Republican, sometimes chided them, sometimes egged them on.

"See how messed up this is?" she said at one point.

Danny Robinson, 61, spoke on behalf of his daughter, whom he said could not vote because she ran out of time to wait in line — she had to go back to work.

The Rev. Jarrett Maupin, a Baptist pastor, urged the congregants who called him to "hold the line, hold the line," he said, even if it meant waiting well into the evening, as many of them did.

"We delivered water, we delivered fruits, we delivered granola bars and we delivered encouragement — do not give up," Mr. Maupin said. "Our right to vote is sacred and we have to keep on fighting for it."

Krista Pacion, 39, gave up twice before finally showing up ready for the long wait: She brought her 3-year-old daughter in a wagon loaded with water and snacks.

"Whatever it took, I was going to vote that day," Ms. Pacion said.

Gunshots Reported At U.S. Capitol Visitor Center

By Peter Hermann And Clarence Williams

[Washington Post](#), March 28, 2016

D.C. police and fire officials are responding to a report of shots fired at the Capitol Visitor Center at the U.S. Capitol complex, according to authorities.

The person believed to be the gunman has been shot by police, according to two D.C. police officials. He was taken to Washington Hospital Center.

An e-mail sent to U.S. Senate staff says "gunshots have been reported" and asked workers to shelter in place. The White House also was placed on lockdown.

"There has been an isolated incident at the U.S. Capitol Center," D.C. police tweeted. "There is no active threat to the public."

The visitor's center is an underground complex located east of the Capitol building. All visitors are screened through metal detectors as they enter the facility.

Man Shot By Police After Drawing Weapon At US Capitol

By Erica Werner

[Associated Press](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — Capitol Police shot a man on Monday after he pulled a weapon at a U.S. Capitol checkpoint. The suspect was taken to a local hospital and a female bystander sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

The U.S. Capitol was on lockdown for about an hour and the White House also was briefly locked down. As Washington teemed with spring tourists in town to view the cherry blossoms, staff members and visitors to the Capitol were rushed into offices and told to shelter in place.

The suspect was known to officers, Capitol Chief of Police Matthew R. Verderosa told reporters. However, he would not confirm reports that it was the same man who disrupted the House chamber last fall by shouting.

That man, Larry Dawson, was issued a "stay away order" by D.C. Superior Court in October, ordering him to keep away from the Capitol grounds, court documents show.

The event unfolded with Congress on recess and lawmakers back in their districts.

"We do believe this is an act of a single person who has frequented the Capitol grounds before and there is no reason to believe that this is anything more than a criminal act," Verderosa said. Initial reports said a police officer was injured but they proved erroneous.

Capitol office buildings and the Capitol itself were reopened for business about an hour after the initial reports of gunfire. The Visitors Center where the shooting occurred remained closed as the incident was being investigated.

Visitors were being turned away from the Capitol as emergency vehicles flooded the street and the plaza on the building's eastern side. Police, some carrying long guns, cordoned off the streets immediately around the building, which were thick with tourists.

Cathryn Leff of Temecula, California, in town to lobby with the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, said she was going through security at the main entrance to the Capitol Visitors Center when police told people to leave immediately.

Outside, on the plaza just to the east of the Capitol, other officers told those there to "get down behind this wall," she said. "I heard what sounded like two shots off to my left." After a while, police told her and others to keep running. "I felt like I was in a movie. It didn't feel real at all."

Amanda Smith of Columbus, Ohio, said she and her family were touring the Capitol and were in the Senate

visitors' gallery when she heard police officers' radios start talking about shots being fired.

"Sure, we were worried," she said. "But there were lots of kids around so we didn't make too big a deal of it."

Smith was visiting with her husband, William, and children Ian, 9, and Evan, 4.

From back home in their districts, many lawmakers got in touch with staff to ensure all were safe, and posted thanks on Twitter as it appeared they were.

Earlier in the day, officials conducted an unrelated shelter-in-place drill at the Capitol.

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Associated Press writers Mark Sherman, Mary Clare Jalonick and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

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Suspect In U.S. Capitol Shooting In Custody

[Roll Call](#), March 28, 2016

Shots were fired Monday afternoon at the Capitol Visitor Center, and Capitol Police said the shooter was in custody.

An ambulance sped away from the scene with a police escort shortly after the incident, and the House Sergeant at Arms Office said the suspect had been taken to the hospital.

A flurry of initial reports said a police officer had been shot, but the Sergeant at Arms found that wasn't true. NBC reported that the gun set off an alarm during the screening process, and the suspect pulled it out. An officer then shot him.

An alert sent to Senate offices said one suspect was in custody, and no others appeared to be at large. D.C. Police characterized the incident as isolated to the Capitol with no active threat to the public.

Officers swarmed through the Capitol complex and shut down roads after reports surfaced Monday that shots were fired. The Capitol was placed on lock down, and staff members were advised to shelter in place.

Diane Bilo from Cincinnati stood outside the visitors center with one of her children Monday afternoon, awaiting word on her husband and the other two children who were inside.

She said she received texts from her husband, who described hearing multiple gun shots and seeing police officers running down the hallway shouting "Cover in place."

Congress is in recess this week so most members are out of town.

"Gunshots have been reported in the CVC of the U.S. Capitol Building requiring staff and visitors in all buildings of

the U.S. Capitol Complex to immediately shelter in place," a Capitol Police statement read.

As the incident unfolded, Capitol Police found a propane tank on 2nd Street Northeast and were investigating further. Officers did not know whether the tank had anything to do with the shooting.

The shooting reverberated beyond Washington.

While entering a town hall meeting in Ocheyden, Iowa, Republican Sen. Charles Grassley was asked by a reporter if the shooting in the CVC raises concerns about safety at the Capitol.

"No," Grassley said. "I think you have to think that the police are going to do everything they can to keep people safe. But no one can guarantee a risk-free society."

Niels Lesniewski and Bridget Bowman contributed.

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Police Wound Gunman At US Capitol Security Checkpoint

By Stephen Dinan

[Washington Times](#), March 28, 2016

U.S. Capitol Police shot and wounded a gunman Monday at a security checkpoint at the Capitol Visitor Center complex after he brandished a weapon.

"It appears that the screening process worked the way it was supposed to," U.S. Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa said during a brief afternoon news conference.

Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's representative in Congress, praised the police force's efficiency in dealing with a potentially deadly threat.

"The U.S. Capitol Police deserve tremendous credit for disposing of today's shooting incident within an hour's time through quick action and a shelter-in-place directive, which was lifted expeditiously after the suspect was taken into custody ...," Ms. Norton said in a statement. "The Capitol Police clearly showed they were prepared."

Coming on the heels of terrorist attacks in Brussels and in Lahore, Pakistan, the incident occurred when many members of Congress were on recess but thousands of tourists had come to the nation's capital to view its cherry blossoms and visit sites such as the Capitol. Chief Verderosa said thousands of people visit the Capitol every day and about 2 million are screened through the Visitor Center every year.

The police chief said the incident started about 2:39 p.m. Monday when a man entered the north screening facility of the Capitol Visitor Center, drew a weapon and pointed it at officers. An officer shot the man, who underwent surgery at Washington Hospital Center in Northwest. His condition was not known, the chief said.

No officers were injured, but a 35- to 45-year-old female bystander received minor injuries and was treated at a hospital, Chief Verderosa said without elaborating about her injury.

He said no charges had been filed but an investigation was continuing. Earlier reports that an officer had been shot were erroneous.

"We do believe this is an act of a single person who has frequented the Capitol grounds before, and there is no reason to believe that this is anything more than a criminal act," the chief said.

Chief Verderosa declined to identify the suspect but said officers and bomb disposal specialists were examining his truck.

Several news organizations identified the man as Larry Dawson of Antioch, Tennessee. Mr. Dawson was arrested in October after disrupting a session of the House by yelling that he was a "prophet of God," and reports said he assaulted an officer on the House balcony. Mr. Dawson was charged with assault, and D.C. Superior Court ordered him to stay away from the Capitol.

The incident prompted a one-hour lockdown at the Capitol, and staffers were directed to shelter in place until the situation was resolved. The Capitol's east plaza filled with police vehicles as the intercom system blared a warning about shots fired. The White House also was locked down briefly.

The Visitor Center remained closed pending completion of the investigation. Chief Verderosa said the center would reopen Tuesday.

Unlike the White House, where access is more strictly controlled, the Capitol is open to the general public for regular tours.

Calls for more security at the Capitol arose after two Capitol Police officers were killed by a single gunman in 1998. Russell Eugene Weston, who was suffering from mental illness, gunned down Officers John Gibson and Jacob Chestnut in the building. Those calls grew louder after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York City and the Pentagon.

Opened in 2008, the Visitor Center is a complex of meeting rooms, exhibits and a cafeteria. It was built in part to screen visitors to prevent danger from reaching the interior of the main building. All visitors are required to go through metal detectors and have their bags screened.

"Today we are reminded of the courage and daily sacrifice of the United States Capitol Police," House Speaker Paul D. Ryan said in a statement. "The Capitol is our greatest symbol of democracy, and these officers serve to protect not just those who work there but also the millions of visitors from all around the world who travel each year to see it."

The Capitol complex has always been a target, but security has come a long way since 1954, when four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the visitor's gallery in the

House of Representatives chamber, said Anthony Roman, a counterterrorism security analyst.

"It's unlikely today that what happened in the '50s could happen again," Mr. Roman said.

Now, the Capitol has constant video and human surveillance, a series of concentric security zones for visitors and more heavily armed police officers, he said.

The incident Monday happened in the Visitor Center's outermost security zone, where people are screened with X-ray machines, Mr. Roman said. Visitors must pass through several other zones and security checkpoints as they move toward the building and the chambers for members of Congress.

Cameras are placed at each zone, and Capitol personnel must accompany all visitors, Mr. Roman said. Even if someone was able to get a weapon through the first ring of security, he said, it would be difficult to avoid detection beyond that point.

The Capitol complex is under even heavier security with thousands of tourists in town for the Cherry Blossom Festival.

"Anytime you expect larger numbers of tourists, the potential for an active threat goes up simply because you have many, many more people to watch," Mr. Roman said.

- Stephen Dinan contributed to this article, which is based in part on wire service reports.

Capitol Police Officer Shot, Hill Locked Down

By Jake Sherman

[Politico](#), March 28, 2016

The U.S. Capitol complex has been locked down after reports of gun shots at the Capitol Visitors Center. Officials said that one Capitol police officer has been shot, although not seriously, and the shooter was in custody, according to the Associated Press.

Shortly after a notice of a lockdown of the Capitol was sent, officials announced over the Hill public address system that there had been a shooting. In an email alert, the Senate sergeant-at-arms said that gunshots had been reported and the complex was ordered to shelter in place.

"One suspect is in custody, no further suspects appear to be at large, however the U.S. Capitol Police are continuing to investigate," the Capitol Police said in a separate alert.

Two ambulances were seen driving toward the Capitol after the incident. Other traffic on Constitution Ave. near the Capitol was blocked.

Sources said that Hill employees were locked in offices, and police officers were running through the complex with guns drawn.

The White House was also briefly locked down after news of the shooting broke, according to multiple reports.

Suspect In Custody After Shooting Scare At Capitol; No Officers Hurt

By Rebecca Savransky
[The Hill](#), March 28, 2016

U.S. Capitol Police on Monday shot a man who appeared to draw a weapon and point it at officers at a security checkpoint, according to police chief Matthew Verderosa.

The suspect was taken into custody and has been transported to a local hospital for treatment. A weapon was recovered at the scene.

Verderosa said no officers were hurt, though a female bystander suffered minor injuries. Police believe the man acted alone and that there is no reason to suspect terrorism. The suspect is someone known to Capitol police, Verderosa said.

The police chief did not provide the suspect's name.

CNN and local media outlets in Tennessee have identified the suspect as Larry Russell Dawson, who was previously arrested last year for interrupting the House. A court last year ordered Dawson to stay away from the Capitol, according to The Associated Press.

CNN: Capitol Hill suspect IDed as Larry Russell Dawson, 66. In Oct. incident he disrupted House chamber claiming to be 'Prophet of God.'— Jake Tapper (@jaketapper) March 28, 2016

Here's the Capitol suspect shouting "I'm a prophet of God" during a House session last year. <https://t.co/vi3CHlz3Z5> pic.twitter.com/Yz81ugkz44— Andrew Kirell (@AndrewKirell) March 28, 2016

The shooting incident spurred a chaotic lockdown of the Capitol complex, with staffers given a stay-in-place order while tourists in the area were ordered to flee.

The shelter-in-place order has now been lifted, though the Capitol Visitors Center, where the incident took place, remains closed.

Washington Metropolitan Police declared on Twitter that the incident was "isolated" and did not present an "active threat to the public."

The sounds of shots being fired set off a panic at the Capitol.

Police could be heard telling tourists to run away. Other staffers said they left the complex and ran outside when they couldn't get back into their offices due to the shelter-in-place warning.

One family visiting Washington was outside the Supreme Court and told The Hill they heard someone shooting at the Capitol.

"We heard screams," said a woman who declined to give her name.

One other woman claimed on Twitter that she was going through security in the Capitol Visitors Center when shots went off, creating a "scramble" for safety.

Mariam Baker was in the Senate chamber with her two children, ages 9 and 11, when the incident occurred. They

were held on the balcony for roughly an hour, she said, following the order to "shelter in place." Capitol police counted heads, escorted folks on bathroom breaks and provided updates with "what they could, what they knew."

"They were very helpful, they were very kind," said Baker, who was visiting from Illinois through Sen. Dick Durbin's (D-Ill.) office.

Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) in a statement praised Capitol police for their "courage and daily sacrifice."

"This evening our thoughts and prayers are with all those who faced danger today. While the investigation of the incident continues, I want to express my deep gratitude, on behalf of the whole House, to the men and women in uniform who keep us safe," Ryan said.

The White House also went into lockdown during the incident. Entrances to the White House were shut down and the north and south fence lines were cleared as a "precautionary measure," according to Secret Service spokesman Robert Hoback.

The lockdown, which was later lifted, occurred as thousands of children and guests were welcomed on to the White House's South Lawn for the annual Easter Egg Roll.

Congress is in recess this week, but thousands of staffers are working in the Capitol. It is also a busy season for tourism, with the city's famous cherry blossom trees in full bloom.

—Updated at 5:43 p.m. The Hill staff contributed.

Lockdown Lifted After Shooting At U.S. Capitol

[Huffington Post](#), March 28, 2016

A lockdown of Capitol Hill was lifted Monday afternoon after reports of shots fired at the U.S. Capitol closed the multi-building complex just before 3 p.m.

The Capitol Police announced the Capitol was again open for official business, though the Capitol Visitor Center remained closed as of 4 p.m.

A House alert email to Capitol Hill staffers after 3:30 p.m. informed them the House, Senate and Library of Congress buildings had been returned to normal operation, but noted, "The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center will remain closed until further notice."

In a press conference late Monday afternoon, Chief of Capitol Police Matthew Verderosa described what happened.

"At 2:39 p.m., an adult male entered the north screening area of the Capitol Visitor Center," he said. "The individual drew what appeared to be a weapon and pointed it at officers. Officers shot the suspect and the suspect was then taken to a hospital."

Verderosa said the suspect was still in surgery at the time of the press conference. An uninvolved bystander

suffered minor injuries and was also transported to the hospital.

The police chief said many details were still being confirmed, including "how many police officers fired their weapons."

There is no reason, he said, "to believe this is anything besides a criminal act." He also said the suspect was known to police, but declined to elaborate on the suspect's identity or how he had come in contact with police.

Charges have not been filed against the suspect, Verderosa said, adding, "It appears that the screening process worked the way it's supposed to."

An Instagram video posted by user Sammy Sanchez appeared to show people being ushered out of the Capitol Visitor Center after the incident:

Tourists visiting the Capitol at the time were shaken by the incident.

Laurie and Frank Kosker of New Jersey brought their daughters, Emily and Sarah, to the Capitol for a tour Monday. They were heading downstairs from the rotunda when officials told them to head back up and sit down, since they might be there for a while.

They told their kids it was just a drill – until they all heard loud muffled sounds and felt strong vibrations. That's when they started to get scared and made a plan for what they'd do if anything happened. (There was a wall behind them that they were planning to jump behind and hide.)

To top it off, it was Sarah's 11th birthday.

"We're making memories in Washington," Laurie Kosker joked.

Tourists in the Capitol who didn't hear the shots quickly learned something was wrong when security officials told them to shelter in place. In the crypt, people moved to the sides of the room so officers could move through the center.

Travis Jackson and his family, visiting from New Mexico, were dining in the restaurant near the Capitol Visitor Center when they heard screaming and had to hide under their table.

Mariam Baker, who was visiting Washington, D.C., for the first time in years from Illinois, was in the upper balcony of the Senate chamber with her two children when the Capitol went into lockdown. They were told an incident had taken place and were kept in the chamber until the all-clear was given.

"They were very calm, they were very helpful," Baker said of Capitol Police. She said she didn't hear any shots.

A woman named Rachel from Indiana said she and her family were just beginning their tour of the Capitol when their guide suddenly diverted the group of about 12 to Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly's (D) office, where they were on lockdown for almost an hour and a half. It was the family's first visit to Washington. "You don't usually get that on the tour," said Rachel, who declined to give her last name.

Twin siblings Carol and Carl Archambeault, from Burbank, California, were in the Capitol Visitor Center looking at the self-guided exhibitions as they waited for their 2:40 p.m. tour to start when they heard people yelling, "Go, go, go!"

Carol didn't hear the gunshots and said she initially thought the noise was a father yelling at his kid. She quickly realized something more serious was happening when she saw people running toward one corner of the building, with Capitol Police rushing past them.

"It escalated very quickly," said Carl, who was visiting the Capitol for the first time.

The Archambeaults were then led downstairs into a storage facility, which they were told was three levels below the visitor center. They were held on lockdown there for a little over a half-hour. Carol said that despite the presence of heavily armed police, their escorts managed to stay calm and keep the young children in the group from realizing they were fleeing a gunman.

The siblings said they plan to return to the Capitol Tuesday to take a tour.

D.C. Metropolitan Police tweeted that it was an "isolated incident":

The lockdown Monday afternoon followed a planned security drill earlier in the day, adding to the confusion of some staff and visitors.

According to The Associated Press, the White House was also put on lockdown Monday afternoon, but it was lifted by 3:20 p.m. It's unclear whether that was related to the Capitol incident.

Laura Barron-Lopez,

Jennifer Bendery, Matt Fuller, Jessica Schulberg and Amanda Terkel contributed reporting.

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Gunman Shot And Captured At Capitol Complex: Police

By Richard Cowan And Susan Cornwell

[Reuters](#), March 28, 2016

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

Suspect In Custody After Gunfire At U.S. Capitol

Official believes incident was a isolated criminal act by a single individual

By Siobhan Hughes

[Wall Street Journal](#), March 28, 2016

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

U.S. Capitol On Lockdown After Police Shoot Gunman

[New York Times](#), March 29, 2016

WASHINGTON — A gunman on Capitol Hill was shot by the police on Monday and taken to a local hospital, according to federal law enforcement officials. The authorities did not believe that the incident was part of a larger plot, the officials said.

The details of what occurred were not immediately clear, and it was not known whether anyone else was injured during the incident. The Capitol and the White House were placed on lockdown.

About an hour after law enforcement officers first swarmed to the scene, employees and visitors who had been sheltering in place were escorted out of the Capitol, and its grounds and several adjacent streets remained closed. The Metropolitan Police Department said officers had been sent to the scene to work with the Capitol Police.

Congress is in recess this week, meaning that there are very few lawmakers or staffers on Capitol Hill.

But with the cherry blossoms in bloom here and many children on spring break, tourists have flocked to the city to view the monuments, visit museums and tour federal buildings like the Capitol.

In 1998, two Capitol Police officers were killed when a man opened fire in the Capitol. After the shooting, Congress initiated plans for a new visitor center that expanded its security perimeter. Continue reading the main story

Suspect In Custody After Shooting Near Capitol

By Kevin Johnson And Bart Jansen

[USA Today](#), March 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — An armed man was wounded Monday by U.S. Capitol Police when he arrived at the Capitol Visitors Center and brandished a weapon at authorities, police said.

U.S. Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa said the man, who is known to authorities, appeared to draw his weapon when he was shot by police. One other person, described as a 35-to-45-year-old female bystander, suffered minor injuries from flying shrapnel or debris.

A federal law enforcement official, who is not authorized to comment publicly, said the man was armed with a handgun.

Verderosa said the matter was “the act of a single person who has frequented the Capitol before.” The suspect

was identified by a federal law enforcement official as Larry Russell Dawson of Antioch, Tenn., who had been charged last year in a Capitol disturbance.

Dawson was charged Oct. 23 with assaulting a police officer and unlawful conduct on Capitol grounds, according to D.C. court records. He was released, but never appeared to court. A bench warrant was issued Nov. 19 for his arrest.

In another matter, Dawson’s reapplication for a license from the Tennessee Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers was rejected in August 2014, according to board records.

The confrontation Monday, which occurred during a congressional recess, transpired in a matter of seconds near the entrance at the Visitor Center, prompting authorities to issue a shelter-in-place order, which was later lifted, as police massed near the scene. Following the reports, the Washington, D.C. police department tweeted that there was “no active threat to the public.”

Unidentified young people embrace after being evacuated on Capitol Hill following a shooting in the Capitol Visitors Center. (Photo: Michael Reynolds, European Pressphoto Agency)

The Capitol Visitor Center remained closed Monday afternoon following the incident, and the Capitol was available only for official business.

Diane Bilo of Cincinnati said her husband heard a single shot in the visitors center and a clip of bullets being fired. Her husband, Robert, was in the center with their two younger sons, Michael and Matt, waiting for her to return from Ohio Sen. Rob Portman’s office with gallery passes.

“It was scary,” Bilo said. “Police said, ‘Run, run as fast as you can.’”

She was communicating with her husband and children, who were still in the center’s theater, by text.

“They are sheltered,” she said, adding that she was relieved to hear from him.

Matthew Melucci of Connecticut said the situation seemed under control relatively quickly, but scary as it unfolded.

“We were coming out of the Capitol when we heard ‘Shots fired, shots fired,’” he said, before being pulled into a security area for a half hour.

“It was scary. I’ve got three children with me and my wife,” he said. “It was a scary moment about what was going to happen next. We felt lucky we were there with several police officers.”

Trotter and Anne Cobb of Birmingham, Ala., were eating lunch in the lower level of the Capitol Visitor Center when Trotter Cobb said he heard a “crack” of a gunshot, resulting in dropped trays and glasses crashing to the floor.

“Capitol Police came out of nowhere,” he said. “They were amazing.”

Tune Chang, 42, and his wife, Angie, and 10-year-old daughter Amanda were headed to the the Capital Visitor Center when they were stopped on the south side of the Capital and directed across the street.

Tune Chang said he didn't consider safety issues when the family decided to travel from Los Angeles to Washington for a one-week vacation.

"We're in a better situation than the rest of the world" as far as security," he said.

Contributing: Christopher Doering and Bill Theobald

Gunman At U.S. Capitol Had Disrupted Congress Before, Officials Say

By Lisa Mascaro And Brian Bennett

[Los Angeles Times](#), March 28, 2016

An armed man who was shot Monday trying to enter the U.S. Capitol building was known to Capitol Police and had previously disrupted a session of Congress, according to local and federal law enforcement officials.

Larry Dawson of Tennessee was stopped by Capitol Police after he set off a metal detector trying to enter the Capitol Visitor Center around 2:40 p.m. EDT, officials said. After a dispute with officers, Dawson drew a weapon and at least one officer opened fire.

He was taken to a hospital for treatment, according to Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa. A weapon was recovered at the scene, he added.

A female bystander, age 35 to 45, also suffered minor injuries in the incident.

Dawson's motives were unclear. Verderosa did not identify Dawson by name during a press briefing outside the Capitol but said the suspect was known to Capitol Police.

"We believe this is an act of a single person, who has frequented the Capitol grounds before," Verderosa said. "There is no reason to believe this is anything more than a criminal act."

Dawson's identity was confirmed by a federal law enforcement official who was not authorized to speak on the investigation.

In October, Dawson reportedly shouted from a House balcony that he was a "prophet of God."

Verderosa said the building's security precautions appeared to have prevented the suspect from entering the building.

"It appears the screening process worked the way it's supposed to," he said. Police also located and seized the suspect's car, he said.

The shooting briefly shut down the Capitol as police told panicked visitors and staff to take immediate shelter and close, lock and stay away from doors.

"Due to police activity, Capitol Police have issued a shelter in place for the Capitol complex. Please stay in your

designated area," the Senate sergeant at arms said in a tweet during the shutdown.

Shortly before 4 p.m. EDT, the Capitol reopened.

Though House and Senate lawmakers are away on recess, the Capitol remains a popular draw for tourists and school groups visiting in spring at the peak of cherry blossom season.

Joe and Leslie Stephenson, who are visiting from the San Diego area with their two small children, were at the National Air and Space Museum when they suddenly saw people fleeing the Capitol complex.

"They were out of breath and really shaken up," said Leslie Stephenson, a nurse.

"These kinds of things happen," said Joe Stephenson, adding that the family still hopes to tour the Capitol during their trip. "I don't want to live in fear."

The visitor center is a vast underground complex beneath the Capitol where visitors line up for tours. The multilevel space includes a cafeteria, gift shops and official meeting rooms for lawmakers. Many press conferences are held there.

Those visiting the Capitol must go through metal-detector screening as they enter the visitor center, but lines often form outside the complex.

The visitor center was built in part as a response to the 1998 shooting deaths of two U.S. Capitol police officers who were killed by a man with mental problems. Previously, tourists entered at the same doors used by lawmakers and staff.

As a precaution, the Secret Service temporarily closed the north and south fence lines of the White House, a spokesman said. The White House itself was not on lockdown.

The closures were quickly lifted, and pedestrians were again free to walk along the north and south perimeters of the White House grounds.