Message

From: Lee, MJ [MJ.Lee@turner.com]
Sent: 2/13/2018 7:44:50 PM
To: Dravis, Samantha [dravis.samantha@epa.gov]
Subject: Urgent request for comment from CNN

Importance: High

Hi Samantha,

I know that you have not engaged media inquiries over the last week, but I wanted to make sure this was put in front of you and you were given a chance to comment and react.

Ex. 6

Best,
MJ

--
MJ Lee
CNN National Politics Reporter
Cell: 917-838-1761
mj.lee@cnn.com
@mj_lee

Message

From: Ford, Hayley [ford.hayley@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/15/2017 8:55:07 PM
To: Hupp, Millan [hupp.millan@epa.gov]; McMurray, Forrest [mcmurray.forrest@epa.gov]; Dravis, Samantha [dravis.samantha@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Fed Soc Reception/Dinner 11/16

All – See below for his Fed Soc table tomorrow evening. Let me know if you see any conflicts. I could do some quick googling but figure you may know most.

Hayley Ford
Deputy White House Liaison and Personal Aide to the Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
ford.hayley@epa.gov
Phone: 202-564-2022
Cell: 202-306-1296

From: Juli Nix [mailto:juli.nix@fed-soc.org]
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 3:41 PM
To: Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Fed Soc Reception/Dinner 11/16

Pruitt:
#22
Boyden Gray
Lauren Alexander
Gerard Alexander
Samantha Dravis
Cason Carter
Rob Porter
Anne Gentry
Kevin Gentry
Marlyn Pruitt
Scott Pruitt

Thanks!

Juli A. Nix
Director, Conferences
The Federalist Society
1776 I Street, N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-810-8652--Direct Office
202-810-8653--Direct Fax

202-822-8138--Main Office
202-296-8061--Main Fax
www.fed-soc.org

On Wed, Nov 15, 2017 at 2:33 PM, Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov> wrote:

> Hi Juli,

Just checking in to see if you had the seating chart yet for tomorrow evening's dinner and could tell me who he is sitting with.

Thank you!!

Hayley Ford

Deputy White House Liaison and Personal Aide to the Administrator

Environmental Protection Agency

ford.hayley@epa.gov

Phone: 202-564-2022

Cell: 202-306-1296

From: Juli Nix [mailto:juli.nix@fed-soc.org]
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2017 11:51 AM
To: Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov>

Subject: Re: Fed Soc Reception/Dinner 11/16

Sure, we will not have that until early next week.

Thanks,

Juli

Juli A. Nix
Director, Conferences
The Federalist Society

1776 I Street, N.W.

Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006

202-810-8652--Direct Office

202-810-8653--Direct Fax

202-822-8138--Main Office
202-296-8061--Main Fax
www.fed-soc.org

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 11:49 AM, Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov> wrote:

Hi Juli,

Thank you for sending this info and it looks like we're all set! I'm not sure you would have this yet, but when you do, could you please send who will be sitting at his table you mentioned below? Just want to make sure our staff has the list and can prepare him as necessary.

Thank you!

Hayley Ford

Deputy White House Liaison and Personal Aide to the Administrator

Environmental Protection Agency

ford.hayley@epa.gov

Phone: 202-564-2022

Cell: 202-306-1296

From: Juli Nix [mailto:juli.nix@fed-soc.org]
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2017 10:43 AM
To: Keith, Jennie <Keith.Jennie@epa.gov>
Cc: Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov>

Subject: Re: Fed Soc Reception/Dinner 11/16

Jennie,

1) The ticketed fee for a government employee. I'm assuming that you offer that rate since I see it elsewhere on your registration page. If that fee wasn't offered, then please provide the entire pricing scheme for each event (the dinner and preceding reception, if you did separate those as each a ticketed event)

For single tickets for the dinner we offer member/non-member pricing. $200 member, $250 non-member.

2) Would you confirm whether this event is a fundraiser. If this is a fundraiser, would you confirm that the Administrator is your guest only as an attendee; e.g., you don't have any expectations that he'll be performing any fundraising activities such as sitting at a head table, standing in a reception line, making any informal remarks, etc.

The event is not a fundraiser. He will be sitting at a VIP table, but will not be performing any fundraising duties.

3) Would you confirm that the Administrator is your guest only and you will seat him according to your preferences and criteria for seating your own guests (e.g., a table sponsor has not requested you invite him and seat him at its table). If a table sponsor has invited him, please let me know which entity it is and its level of sponsorship.

Administrator Pruitt is a guest of the Federalist Society and will be sitting at a VIP table, and has not been requested to sit at a firm table.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

All the best,

Juli

Juli A. Nix
Director, Conferences
The Federalist Society

1776 I Street, N.W.

Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006

202-810-8652--Direct Office

202-810-8653--Direct Fax

202-822-8138--Main Office
202-296-8061--Main Fax
www.fed-soc.org

On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 10:36 AM, Keith, Jennie <Keith.Jennie@epa.gov> wrote:

Hi Juli,

I was trying to obtain information about the anniversary dinner from your website, but since it's all sold out, the information relevant to me is no longer there! Congratulations on what appears to be a very successful event!

For the Administrator, I need to know the following information:

1) The ticketed fee for a government employee. I'm assuming that you offer that rate since I see it elsewhere on your registration page. If that fee wasn't offered, then please provide the entire pricing scheme for each event (the dinner and preceding reception, if you did separate those as each a ticketed event)

2) Would you confirm whether this event is a fundraiser. If this is a fundraiser, would you confirm that the Administrator is your guest only as an attendee; e.g., you don't have any expectations that he'll be performing any fundraising activities such as sitting at a head table, standing in a reception line, making any informal remarks, etc.

3) Would you confirm that the Administrator is your guest only and you will seat him according to your preferences and criteria for seating your own guests (e.g., a table sponsor has not requested you invite him and seat him at its table). If a table sponsor has invited him, please let me know which entity it is and its level of sponsorship.

I think that's it! Thank you for answering my nosy questions!

Jennie for EPA Ethics

Jennie Keith | Ethics Officer | Office of General Counsel | US EPA | Mail Code 2311A | Room 4313 North, William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building | Washington, DC 20460 (for ground deliveries, use 20004 for the zip code) | phone 202-564-3412 | fax 202-564-1772

From: Juli Nix [mailto:juli.nix@fed-soc.org]
Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 9:50 AM
To: Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov>
Cc: Keith, Jennie <Keith.Jennie@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Fed Soc Reception/Dinner 11/16

That's would be me!

Juli

Juli A. Nix
Director, Conferences
The Federalist Society

1776 I Street, N.W.

Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006

202-810-8652--Direct Office

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On Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 9:35 AM, Ford, Hayley <ford.hayley@epa.gov> wrote:

Hi Juli,

I hope you're doing well! I've copied Jennie Keith on this message, an Ethics Officer in EPA's Office of General Counsel. She just needs to gather a little more information regarding next Thursday's reception/dinner in order to write up approval for Administrator Pruitt to attend (even if it is in his personal capacity as The Honorable Scott Pruitt). Would you be able to answer her questions or point her to someone who can do so?

Thank you!

Hayley Ford

Deputy White House Liaison and Personal Aide to the Administrator

Environmental Protection Agency

ford.hayley@epa.gov

Phone: 202-564-2022

Cell: 202-306-1296

Message

From: Bowman, Liz [Bowman.Liz@epa.gov]
Sent: 2/13/2018 5:55:44 PM
To: Dravis, Samantha [dravis.samantha@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Playbook Power Briefing, presented by Morgan Stanley: WRAY gives timeline on PORTER that contradicts W.H. -- COATS and POMPEO: RUSSIA will try to interfere in future elections -- MCCONNELL says Senate has ONE WEEK on DACA

From: Anna Palmer Jake Sherman Daniel Lippman [mailto:politicoplaybook@politico.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 12:49 PM
To: Bowman, Liz <Bowman.Liz@epa.gov>
Subject: Playbook Power Briefing, presented by Morgan Stanley: WRAY gives timeline on PORTER that contradicts W.H. -- COATS and POMPEO: RUSSIA will try to interfere in future elections -- MCCONNELL says Senate has ONE WEEK on DACA

View online version | Add politicoplaybook@politico.com to your address book.

Today's Playbook Power Briefing presented by Morgan Stanley

By JAKE SHERMAN (sherman@politico.com; @JakeSherman), ANNA PALMER (anna@politico.com; @apalmerdc), DANIEL LIPPMAN (daniel@politico.com; @dlippman), ZACH MONTELLARO (zmontellaro@politico.com; @ZachMontellaro)

Good Tuesday afternoon. YA CAN'T MAKE IT UP ... SPOTTED: EPA Administrator **SCOTT PRUITT** flying first class on the American Airlines DCA to Boston shuttle early this morning.

-- Sunday's story from WaPo's Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis on Pruitt's extensive first class travel http://wapo.st/2BXRCgo

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION: RUSSIA WON'T STOP, via Josh Gerstein and Kyle Cheney: "The Trump administration's top intelligence officials said during a Capitol Hill hearing Tuesday that Russia is intent on disrupting elections in the United States and elsewhere. President Donald Trump is facing sharp criticism for failing to act decisively to head off potential attempts by Russia to interfere in the upcoming U.S. midterm elections.

"At a minimum, we expect Russia to continue using propaganda, social media, false-flag personas, sympathetic spokespeople, and other means of influence to try to exacerbate

social and political fissures in the United States," Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said in his opening statement at the hearing. ... 'We have seen Russian activity and intentions to have an impact on the next election cycle,' Pompeo said. Coats backed up the statement." ***More highlights*** http://politi.co/2BVo4zz

NOT THE TIMELINE THE WHITE HOUSE GAVE -- @GeoffRBennett: "FBI Director Chris Wray says the FBI submitted a partial report on the Rob Porter investigation in March and a completed background investigation in late July. 'Soon thereafter we received a request for a follow-up. We did that.' Provided it in November & closed file in January". ***Bloomberg's report that the FBI s report in July included the domestic violence allegations*** https://bloom.bg/2BseLpJ

JOHN KELLY, via Mike Bender of the WSJ: Asked on Monday if the White House should have handled Mr. Porter's situation any differently, Chief of Staff John Kelly said, 'No.' 'It was all done right,' Mr. Kelly said in a brief interview." http://on.wsj.com/2F4gzVT

SIREN -- "McConnell: One week only to solve DACA," by Burgess Everett: "Mitch McConnell is not going to let the immigration debate get out of hand. The Senate majority leader on Tuesday announced that the Senate's work on a solution to the expiring Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program will be limited to this week. McConnell said Democrats should have been ready for this week's crucial test of whether the Senate can produce 60 votes for an immigration bill.

"'Senators have had plenty of time to prepare. There's no reason why we should not reach a bipartisan solution this week. But to do this, we need to get the debate started, look past making political points and focus on actually making law,' McConnell said." http://politi.co/2srJCjh

-- UPDATE, from Burgess, on Twitter: "McConnell tries to call up Toomey amendment on sanctuary cities. Schumer rejects because it doesn't address DACA ... This isn't a great sign of success this week, by the way"

JERUSALEM POST: "POLICE TO SUBMIT RECOMMENDATIONS ON CHARGING NETANYAHU FOR CORRUPTION TONIGHT": "After a 14-month-long investigation, the police are expected to announce if they found enough evidence to recommend the state's prosecution to indict Netanyahu in Case 1000 or in Case 2000.

"In Case 1000, the 'gifts affair,' it is alleged that Netanyahu improperly accepted expensive gifts from different businessmen. In Case 2000, the 'Yediot Aharonot affair,' Netanyahu allegedly negotiated with publisher Arnon 'Noni' Mozes for favorable coverage of

himself in Yediot Aharonot in exchange for support of a bill to weaken Israel Hayom, the largest circulation Hebrew-language paper and Yediot's biggest competitor." http://bit.ly/2ChzSYA

WAR REPORT -- "U.S. Strikes Killed Scores of Russia Fighters in Syria, Sources Say," by Bloomberg's Stepan Kravchenko, Henry Meyer and Margaret Talev: "U.S. forces killed scores of Russian mercenaries in Syria last week in what may be the deadliest clash between citizens of the former foes since the Cold War, according to one U.S. official and three Russians familiar with the matter. More than 200 contract soldiers, mostly Russians fighting on behalf of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, died in a failed attack on a base held by U.S. and mainly Kurdish forces in the oil-rich Deir Ezzor region, two of the Russians said. The U.S. official put the death toll at about 100, with 200 to 300 injured.

"The Russian assault may have been a rogue operation, underscoring the complexity of a conflict that started as a domestic crackdown only to morph into a proxy war involving Islamic extremists, stateless Kurds and regional powers Iran, Turkey and now Israel. Russia's military said it had nothing to do with the attack and the U.S. accepted the claim. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called the whole thing 'perplexing,' but provided no further details." https://bloom.bg/2swrlSa

****** **A message from Morgan Stanley:** Across the globe, disparities in income, wellbeing and living standards are growing. Opportunities to invest in technologies that provide access to critical tools that can create opportunities to close those economic gaps-such as education-exist in a wide range of geographies. Read more. ******

TAKE THREE? -- "Alan Grayson says he's running for Congress, but won't say where," by Florida Playbookers Matt Dixon and Marc Caputo: "Firebrand Democrat Alan Grayson says he wants to return to Congress in 2018, but is not yet saying which seat he's running for. 'Yes, this cycle is what I'm looking at,' Grayson told POLITICO Florida in a telephone interview Monday. 'But Florida law says I can run anywhere.' ...

"The Orlando Democrat has never stopped accepting online contributions since leaving Congress in 2016 to run for the U.S. Senate. He has $556,000 cash-on-hand, and has continued receiving small-dollar contributions since his loss in the Democratic primary to Patrick Murphy. Republican Sen. Marco Rubio defeated Murphy in the general election. ...

"Central Florida Democrats for more than a month have been buzzing with talk that Grayson might run against his Democratic successor, U.S. Rep. Darren Michael Soto, who

beat Grayson's wife and his former aide in the 2016 Democratic primary when the former congressman decided to run for U.S. Senate." http://politi.co/2BYFknm

MORE BOOKS! -- "Trump's Lawyer Michael Cohen Is Shopping a Book About the First Family, Stormy Daniels, and Russia," by The Daily Beast's Maxwell Tani: "According to a proposal shopped to multiple publishers and obtained by The Daily Beast, Michael Cohen's book will likely be titled 'Trump Revolution: From The Tower to The White House, Understanding Donald J. Trump,' and will focus on the attorney's role in the president's campaign and businesses.

"'No issue was too big, too sticky or too oddball for me to tackle,' Cohen teases in the proposal. 'I saw it all, handled it all. And still do.' Positioned partially as a rebuttal to Michael Wolff's massively popular White House exposé 'Fire and Fury,' Cohen's proposal posits that few people outside Trump's family understand the president besides him; and he casts himself as the 'family fix-it guy' and the original Trump 'special counsel.'" http://thebea.st/2svaZcp

THE NEW WASHINGTON ELITE -- CARRIE BATTAN in Elle: **"Louise Linton Is Super-Duper Sorry":** "That Instagram comment has been playing on repeat in Linton's mind for the last six months. 'I think after being kicked and slapped on social media a billion times, I had this one time. This lady said I was a deplorable human being, and that hurt,' Linton says, her voice trembling in sincere horror and self-pity. Her hands are shaking. 'So I had this knee-jerk reaction and I was like...blarghhhh. I was feeling like a regular person. And regular people, when someone says something mean to you on social media, regular people are allowed to respond.' ...

"Linton's sometimes treacherous lack of filter is only matched by [her husband, Treasury Secretary Steven] Mnuchin's extreme caution -- he keeps one of the lowest profiles of any top-ranking Trump official, and generally finds himself in the spotlight only because of his wife. If he is impacted by the vitriol aimed at his family and his colleagues -- he and Linton received a package of horse feces two days before Christmas, sent by 'The American People' -- he doesn't show it. Nor does he seem to express any concern that his wife's snafus will damage his own reputation. When asked about his wife's turn in the spotlight over email, just a few days after the horse poop incident, he wrote: 'I think social media has made her misunderstood and she is not at all the person that has been portrayed. She has a huge heart, is sensitive, deeply compassionate, and kind. She has humility and gentleness. She's also funny and makes people laugh.... She loves gadgets and has a bird feeder in the backyard. She reads John Stuart Mill and writes notes in the margins of her books. She's an incredibly warm and loving person.'" http://bit.ly/2BrVggW

PAGING ZUCKERBERG -- "I Approved This Facebook Message -- But You Don't Know That," by ProPublica's Jennifer Valentino-DeVries: "Hundreds of federal political ads -- including those from major players such as the [DNC] and the Donald Trump 2020 campaign -- are running on Facebook without adequate disclaimer language, likely violating Federal Election Commission rules, a review by ProPublica has found.

"An FEC opinion in December clarified that the requirement for political ads to say who paid for and approved them, which has long applied to print and broadcast outlets, extends to ads on Facebook. So we checked more than 300 ads that had run on the world's largest social network since the opinion, and that election-law experts told us met the criteria for a disclaimer. Fewer than 40 had disclosures that appeared to satisfy FEC rules." http://bit.ly/2swvUvG

WARNING SIGN FOR DEMS? -- "Internal Dem polling shows Trump's standing on the rise," by McClatchy's Alex Roarty: "A leading Democratic group -- Priorities USA -- is warning party leaders they could squander a strong political climate in 2018 if they don't start to emphasize pocketbook issues over loose and unfocused critiques of Donald Trump. According to internal polling by the super PAC, President Trump's approval rating climbed to 44 percent in the first week of February, compared to 53 percent who disapprove. That mirrors Trump's improving position in public polls." http://bit.ly/2BYA6Z3

MEDIAWATCH -- John Hudson is joining WaPo as a State Department reporter. He is currently the foreign affairs correspondent at BuzzFeed. ... **Chico Harlan** is heading to Rome to be the Washington Post's bureau chief ... **Rachel Stassen-Berger** has been named the politics editor for the Des Moines Register. She was most recently the capitol bureau chief for the St. Paul Pioneer Press in Minnesota. ...

... **Cristina Marcos** is joining MSNBC's "Meet the Press Daily" as a producer later this month. She is currently a reporter at The Hill. ... **Caroline Chen,** who recently left Bloomberg, has been hired as a reporter at ProPublica covering health care.

-- "Two journalists exposed a massacre in Burma. Now they'll be awarded for their work -- from prison," by WaPo's Jason Rezaian: "For more than two months, the Burmese government has held two Reuters reporters in prison for their investigation into a massacre by the country's military. Now, just days after their explosive and detailed account of the operation was finally published, the two men will win a renowned journalism award for their work. PEN America, a nonprofit organization that supports freedom of expression, will announce Tuesday that it is honoring Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo with its PEN/Barbey

Freedom to Write Award." http://wapo.st/2BsLHyv ... *The Reuters' investigation* http://reut.rs/2sfYjWM

ONE FUN THING -- LAURA BUSH talks to her daughter **JENNA BUSH HAGER** and **KATHIE LEE GIFFORD** on TODAY about her first date with former President George W. Bush http://on.today.com/2BVhucd

TRANSITIONS -- Seth Schermer has been named the VP of development for the LGBTQ Victory Fund. He was most recently the VP of philanthropy for the U.S. Soccer Foundation. ... **Amanda Munger** has recently joined Rep. Rick Larsen's (D-Wash.) office as communications director. She was deputy press secretary for Interior during the Obama administration. ... Crossroads Strategies has hired **Jason Gleason** as an EVP; he is the former chief of staff for Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.). The firm also hired **Sally Adams,** previously with Sixkiller Consulting, as a VP. **Shay Hancock** has been named COO while Katie Dapper has been promoted to SVP.

****** **A message from Morgan Stanley:** Education Technology is taking off in China and India, where there are large disparities in basic and advanced education levels between rich and poor, rural and urban. Both countries are attracting large amounts of investment related to digital learning and performance measurement. In India, where the number of internet users is increasing quickly and is expected to reach 550 million - or 40% penetration - by 2020, digital education's potential is enormous. Technopak, a consultancy, estimates that the Indian digital learning market will almost triple between 2016 and 2020. In advanced countries, a multi-year tertiary degree does not provide life-long skills that keep up with the pace of technological change. Retraining has become necessary to keep employees up to speed, and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) like Coursera and Udacity are helping close the gap. Read more from Morgan Stanley. ******

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Please click here and follow the steps to unsubscribe.

Message

From: Lee, MJ [MJ.Lee@turner.com]
Sent: 2/9/2018 7:46:44 PM
To: Dravis, Samantha [dravis.samantha@epa.gov]
Subject: Hey Samantha Re: Reaching out from CNN --

Dear Samantha –

Ex. 6

Thanks for reading this and take care,
MJ

From: MJ Lee <MJ.Lee@turner.com>
Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2018 at 1:50 PM
To: "dravis.samantha@epa.gov" <dravis.samantha@epa.gov>
Subject: Reaching out from CNN --

Hey Samantha,

Ex. 6

Best,
MJ

--
MJ Lee

CNN National Politics Reporter
Cell: 917-838-1761
mj.lee@cnn.com
@mj_lee

Message

From: Nielsen, Kirstjen M. EOP/WHO [redacted] Ex. 6
Sent: 10/5/2017 10:29:26 PM
To: Dravis, Samantha [dravis.samantha@epa.gov]; Porter, Robert R. EOP/WHO [redacted] Ex. 6
Subject: RE: Administrator Pruitt - Follow Up

Hi Samantha
Apologies that I missed this earlier. Copying Rob Porter whom I believe has been working this today with you all

-----Original Message-----
From: Dravis, Samantha [mailto:dravis.samantha@epa.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 5, 2017 1:33 PM
To: Nielsen, Kirstjen M. EOP/WHO <[redacted] Ex. 6
Subject: RE: Administrator Pruitt - Follow Up

Kirstjen,

Apologies for the bother - do you have 5 minutes or so to speak today? I can also call one of your deputies and fill them in on the issue if that makes more sense.

Thanks again,
Samantha

-----Original Message-----
From: Nielsen, Kirstjen M. EOP/WHO [mailto:[redacted] Ex. 6
Sent: Wednesday, October 04, 2017 9:17 AM
To: Dravis, Samantha <dravis.samantha@epa.gov>
Cc: Michael, Molly A. EOP/WHO <[redacted] Ex. 6
Subject: Re: Administrator Pruitt - Follow Up

Hi Samantha
I'm in meetings this am- happy to support whatever you need. Just let us know. Thx!
Best
Kirstjen

Sent from my iPhone

> On Oct 4, 2017, at 9:15 AM, Dravis, Samantha <dravis.samantha@epa.gov> wrote:
>
> My mobile is [redacted] Ex. 6
>
> Boarding a flight at 10am, but available now until then, or after noon.
>
> Sent from my iPad
>
>> On Oct 4, 2017, at 9:05 AM, Nielsen, Kirstjen M. EOP/WHO <[redacted] Ex. 6> wrote:
>>
>> Hi
>> What's the best number?
>>
>>
>> Sent from my iPhone
>>
>>> On Oct 4, 2017, at 8:56 AM, Dravis, Samantha <dravis.samantha@epa.gov> wrote:
>>>
>>> Good Morning Kirstjen,
>>>
>>> Administrator Pruitt asked me to reach out to you and follow up on some items that you two discussed on yesterday's visit to Puerto Rico. I am not sure if the action item was for him to get time to have a more fulsome discussion with you and General Kelly, but please let me know how to proceed.
>>>
>>> If it makes sense, I can call and share with you again the items he wishes to discuss and the timing of them. Thank you in advance.
>>>
>>> Regards,
>>> Samantha Dravis
>>>
>>>

Message

From: Dravis, Samantha [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=ECE53F0610054E669D9DFFE0B3A842DF-DRAVIS, SAM]
Sent: 2/7/2018 10:22:11 PM
To: rporter Ex. 6
Subject: Fwd: q for you

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Dawsey, Joshua" <josh.dawsey@washpost.com>
Date: February 7, 2018 at 4:41:00 PM EST
To: "Dravis.Samantha@epa.gov" <Dravis.Samantha@epa.gov>
Subject: q for you

Hi Samantha, we're working on a story about Rob Porter for tomorrow's edition of the Post that will mention you.
Here are two things I'd like to fact check with you, if you have a second. My desk is 202-334-7153 if you'd prefer to chat.

Ex. 6

Josh Dawsey
White House Reporter
202-334-7153 – desk
843-267-6747 – cell
Josh.Dawsey@WashPost.com
Twitter: @jdawsey1

Message

From: dawn reeves [dawn.reeves@iwpnews.com]
Sent: 4/5/2018 4:02:16 PM
To: Press [Press@epa.gov]
Subject: Re: does EPA have a statement

Sorry I have an addendum to my questions

-- have to ask if EPA can say anything about Dravis' relationship with Rob Porter and rumors that Porter is the source of the drip drip drip about Pruitt. Sources are telling me this . . .

On Thu, Apr 5, 2018 at 10:58 AM, dawn reeves <dawn.reeves@iwpnews.com> wrote:

> also can someone please confirm that Samantha Dravis has resigned.
> thanks
>
> On Thu, Apr 5, 2018 at 10:45 AM, dawn reeves <dawn.reeves@iwpnews.com> wrote:
>
> > on the future of the administrator at the agency, given remarks by Sarah Sanders and reaction to his Fox News interview last night?
> >
> > If yes please send to me by 1 p.m. today.
> >
> > Thanks,
> > Dawn Reeves
> > 703-562-8766

Message

From: White House Press Office [whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov]
Sent: 2/22/2018 10:49:32 PM
To: Wilcox, Jahan [wilcox.jahan@epa.gov]
Subject: Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Kevin Hassett, 2/22/2018

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 22, 2018

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRINCIPAL DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY RAJ SHAH
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS KEVIN HASSETT

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:12 P.M. EST

MR. SHAH: Good afternoon, everyone. Since its founding in the 1940s, the White House Council of Economic Advisers has written and delivered a report to Congress on the annual Economic Report to the President. The 2018 report, which was delivered yesterday, covers the President's economic successes to date and our agenda going forward.

To dig into the details, we have with us today, Kevin Hassett, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Kevin will make a brief statement and answer your questions on the economic report. Then I'll be back to take your questions on the news of the day.

So with that, I'll give it to Kevin.

MR. HASSETT: Thanks a lot, Raj. And, you know, it's kind of a dark, dreary day. And I heard the White House Press Corps was a little bit depressed. And so I said, "Well, let's do some economics and cheer everybody up." (Laughter.)

And digging around the Chairman's office, I noticed that on my bookshelf there was a copy of the first Economic Report of the President from 1947. And Harry Truman, in it, said this: He said, "The economic report is an opportunity for national self-examination and self-criticism. It's a challenge to the President and the Congress to determine the causes of whatever problems we face in our economic life and to find the solutions of those problems."

And that's what we endeavor to do at the Council of Economic Advisors, and what we've endeavored to do in this report that came out yesterday. We briefed the President on it yesterday at 11:30 in the Oval Office, and I encourage you all to read it because it's really a scintillating read.

The economic report has eight chapters. The first chapter is an economic outlook, where we project that our policies will create about a 3 percent growth rate going forward over the next 10 years. Real GDP will be about $2 trillion higher in 2028 because of President Trump's policies.

And then each of the chapters after that go into taxes and growth, deregulation, labor market policies, infrastructure investment, enhancing global trade, and innovative policies for America's health. They all basically go into a big literature that looks at how our policies will affect economic growth.

And we start with a baseline of 2.2 percent growth and show that we can get to 3 percent growth just by adding up what the academic literature says about the economic effects of our policies.

Now, we're supposed to also come up with measures of our nation's problems that help set priorities and quantify how bad our problems are. We have two attempts in the Economic Report to do that. One is, we have a chapter on cybersecurity, where we did a lot of original research to find that cyber theft is costing us about $100 billion a year right now, in the U.S., in 2016.

And the second thing that we did is we looked at the opioid crisis, where we find that that's costing us about $500 billion a year to help us set the priorities.

And with that, that's what the economic report says. I've got just a few minutes for questions. But also, anyone who wants to reach out to us and come over to the CEA office can ask me questions there.

And I'll start with you in the back.

Q Yeah. Thanks, Kevin. Two questions for you. One on the dollar and the other one on the stock market. We've seen a tremendous amount of stock market volatility over the past month or so, and I'm wondering if you think that that volatility has any impact on the real economy, beyond just Wall Street. And then I have another question.

MR. HASSETT: Yeah, stock market volatility is something that's to be expected. It's a regular thing in the stock market. And it tends to go up when the market has gone up a lot, as it has in response to our policies. I don't think that it's anything unusual or something for people to be concerned about.

Question up here.

Q Can I follow up on the dollar, sir?

MR. HASSETT: Oh, the dollar -- Secretary Mnuchin has spoken a lot about the dollar, and the dollar policy has not changed in this administration.

Q But I'm talking about whether the United States still has a strong-dollar policy, because there's been some comments that suggest that maybe the United States wants --

MR. HASSETT: Secretary Mnuchin is in charge of communications about the dollar policy.

Right here.

Q Can you address some of the critics who say that the economic policies of this President may lead to greater inflation?

MR. HASSETT: Yeah, that's right -- that's something that people are concerned about. And, certainly, there's been some inflation data that has caused some pause for markets, some concerns for markets.

Our view is that most of our policies are going to create growth for the economy on the supply side, and that when the supply-side growth comes, then that's actually good for inflation, because if you increase supply, it puts downward pressure on prices.

And so we think that we can get the 3 percent economic growth that we forecast without a big pickup in inflation. In fact, at CEA, when we modeled this, we get forward interest rates that are about what the Fed forward guidance is right now.

Q But you cut the -- I'm sorry, but you cut taxes, and that's the concern, is that that will stoke the fire for inflation.

MR. HASSETT: Yeah, thanks for the question. Well, if you cut the marginal tax rate on investment, then what happens is you get more capital spending, and that increases supply. If you're going to do something like have a big "cash for clunker" program like we did eight years ago, that would increase demand and cause inflation.

Over here in the front. Jon.

Q Just a question on the stock market as an indicator. The President has often pointed to the rising stock market as evidence of the success of his economic policies and the strength of the economy. If the stock market goes down, should we conclude the reverse? Should we conclude that the President's economic policies are failing and that the economy is not healthy?

MR. HASSETT: The stock market is a great forward-looking indicator because the value of the firm is basically the market's assessment of the present value of future earnings after tax or pre-cash flow. And so smoothing through the ups and downs, the stock market is a great indicator. But of course, there are going to be big up days and big down days in the short term. I'm a random walker. There's a big literature on this that your best guess at what the stock market is going to do tomorrow is to flip a coin, and then that will tell you the answer.

But in the long run, economic policy matters. And I think in this regard, the stock market is up probably about 35 percent since the President was elected. I could run the latest numbers.

And that's pretty consistent with what you would expect given all of the positive policy changes that we've made. In particular, cutting the statutory corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. Well, in the present value of the firm's earnings, there's a one minus the tax rate out front. If that goes from 0.65 to 0.79, then that means you should expect equity markets to go up. But equity markets go up and go down. That's the nature of the business.

Q But if we were to see a bear market come about, we should conclude that there are fundamental problems with the economy, fundamental problems with the President's policies?

MR. HASSETT: Sure. If there's a bear market that's sustained, then that would likely happen because there was a lot of bad news about earnings growth and the state of the economy. And so the stock market is a reasonable indicator of the current state of the economy. It's been going up a lot because of optimism about the President's policies.

I'll go to the middle, and then I'll come back to the front row. In the yellow tie. And I'm sorry, I still don't know everybody's names.

Q That's all right. Thanks a lot, Kevin. Have you done any forecasts about what it would mean to the U.S. economy -- a net positive, a net negative -- if the U.S. is to pull out of the North American Free Trade Agreement?

MS. HASSETT: At the CEA, we've done a heck of a lot of analysis to help guide the President's thinking on trade. There are a lot of decisions coming up, and our job is to provide objective analysis of the plusses and minuses of each of the moves that are being considered. That analysis, of course, is confidential, and it's been shared with the President. And I'm sure it could be FOIA'd in the fullness of time, but I can't comment further on that.

Q Well, give me a top line. Obviously, you can't go into your analysis. But would it be a good thing for the U.S. economy if the U.S. just said, we're done with NAFTA?

MR. HASSETT: You know, I would point you to the trade chapter in the Economic Report of the President. We have a really extensive discussion of trade.

And one of the things that surprises me as an economist -- or surprised me as an economist -- as I dug into the details, is how right the President is about trade in the following sense: That our trade deals really are asymmetric; that we charge pretty much no tariff at all on imports into the U.S. But a lot of our trading partners have either high tariffs or high non-tariff barriers. And so even if you look at the U.S. sales of autos into Korea, then there are a lot of non-tariff barriers that make it so that U.S. firms can't sell there.

And so, if economists were to sit down and write a trade deal, then it would be two to three lines. It would say, "Let's have free trade." Right? That's all it would take. Our trade deals are thousands of pages long, and those thousands of pages have often been negotiated by feckless negotiators who disadvantaged American workers. And I think the President is right to prioritize in improving those deals.

Up here in the front.

Q What do you project for the labor force participation rate and those marginally attached in the labor force, in the next 12 to 24 months? Because the President has identified that, you've identified that as a priority, and certainly those who spoke on behalf of the tax cuts and tax reform thought that would be something positive in that realm in the next 12 to 24 months. What do you project?

MR. HASSETT: Sure is. Downward pressure from the retirement of the Baby Boomers has been a key underlining factor driving down long-run growth. But --

Q Meaning, the labor force participation rate is going down because people are retiring?

MR. HASSETT: We have fewer workers. And basically, with fewer workers, you get less output. And so that's been going on for a while, and we have an extensive analysis of this in the Economic Report of the President. And our view is that about half of that is the retirement of the Baby Boomers, and about half of that is bad economic policies that have chased people away from the labor market, including higher marginal tax rates, the high marginal tax rates from the Affordable Care Act, and increase of use of disability, and so on.

And so there are a lot of reasons why our policies, we think, can have a positive effect. But probably the biggest effect in our forecast is just that we think that wages are going up. And with higher wages, then more and more people will be attracted back into the labor force.

Q You are projecting, and you are inviting the American public to look for those numbers to move in a positive direction noticeably, in this coming year.

MR. HASSETT: Relative to the forecasts of the Obama administration, yes. It's still the case that labor force participation is a slight negative in our forecast. You can see that inside the details of the economic report. But it's a much smaller negative than the Obama administration thought, and we think that's because our policies are going to draw people back into the labor force.

I'll go back here.

Q Yes. I just wanted to ask about wealth inequality and the fact that that's been growing for the past few decades. Is that a concern of this administration? Is that something that you want to try and combat?

MR. HASSETT: Yeah, I think that inequality, of course, is a concern for everybody who studies the economy and people in the administration. And inequality skyrocketed very much over the last eight years, in part because of something that we talked a lot about in the fall when we were discussing the tax reform. And that is that corporate profits were growing at about an 11 percent rate per year during the Obama administration, while real wages were dropping 0.4 percent a year.

And so inequality increased a lot because people who owned equities saw their wealth go up, but people who just basically lived on their paychecks saw their wages go down. We think that that happened in part because we were chasing all of the corporate activity overseas and that our wealth was, more or less, creating jobs for Irishmen, not for Americans.

And the corporate tax bill has addressed that, and we would expect that there'd be big wage increases, which you've already seen. There have been announcements of going in on almost 5 million people that have received pay raises this year because of the tax bill, and we think what that's going to do is reduce inequality.

Now, Raj, you're sort of -- do I have time for a couple more questions?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, one more.

MR. HASSETT: Okay, so I'll go right here, row two.

Q Yeah, so on that wage increase, AP was reporting this week on a Morgan Stanley survey of stock analysts who were looking at how companies are spending their tax savings, and said 13 percent was going to workers, 17 percent to capital spending, and 43 percent to dividends and buybacks -- that is, the shareholders. Your model was that a much higher percentage was ultimately going to wind up in the pocketbook.

MR. HASSETT: Sure. And it will. Yeah.

Q So what are the stock analysts missing there?

MR. HASSETT: Well, the thing that you have to remember is that we're starting out with trillions of dollars that were parked overseas, and that trillions of dollars -- those monies are coming home right now, and that's a one-time adjustment. And a lot of firms are taking that money and they're paying bonuses, but they're also doing things like increasing dividends and doing share buybacks, which sometimes happens when firms find money.

And so with that money coming back, then right now we're going to have an adjustment where you'll see probably more dividends than share buybacks than wage increases because that's cumulative past earnings.

But going forward, we're going to see a lot of capital formation and wage growth, and that's where, basically, we said three to five years you'll get the $4,000 number. Right now, about almost 5 million people have had a $1,000 pay raise already. Share buybacks have gone up a lot, but that's basically based on the trillions of dollars that used to be parked overseas but have been brought home and put to work here.

I'll ask a -- last question in the far back.

Q Thanks, Kevin. And a couple for you at that, if you don't mind. You, sort of, laid the foundation in there for increasing the gas tax, talking about how it hasn't been touched in about 25 years while construction prices have risen. How realistic is it that there could be a hike in the gas tax? That's question one.

And then, question two, when you look at the charted GDP growth over 10 years, it's essentially above, at, below 3 percent, but when you look at past tax cuts -- Reagan, JFK, and even what this President has talked about maybe 4, 5 percent -- why only at 3 percent?

MR. HASSETT: Okay, so we'll start with the gas tax. In the economic report, we have a chapter on infrastructure, and we talk about what a 21st century financing mechanism might look like for infrastructure and talk about the challenges for the current organization that are presented by innovation.

And you could imagine, for example, the thought experiment supposed that everybody in this room, everybody in all of society had an electric car -- if we're all driving around in Teslas, then how is the gas tax going to pay to fix the potholes because there's no one using gasoline anymore?

And so, as we approach the 21st century, the President has a very ambitious infrastructure agenda and he's basically instructed everybody to think creatively about how are we going to finance that, and to make sure

that the thing that's legislated becomes law and that all of the possible tools are on the table.

As for why we didn't go to 4 or 5 percent growth, I think that you can go -- and I think our economic report is extremely transparent. You can see that we get a 2.2 percent baseline growth forecast out of one of the best, most reliable time series models in the literature. And then we have a chapter on each of the President's policy objectives, and we talk about what the economic growth you ought to expect out of that is.

That gets us up to 3, 3.2 percent -- 3 percent on average over 10 years. And that's all it's really based on, very hard science. We have more than 50 pages of academic references in the back where those numbers come from. If those numbers had led us to 5 percent, then we would have been at 5 percent.

Let me close, though, by putting that in perspective. The median forecast for Economic Reports of the President going back to this one is that economic growth would be about 3.2 percent. And so we're a little bit below the median.

The economic growth forecast for the Obama administration, the first four years, was that it would be about 3.2 percent. They were right on the median that we inherited all the way back from Harry Truman. But then what happened was, at the end of their administration, because we kept having low-growth years after low-growth years -- they, on average, overestimated growth over those eight years by 1.2 percent -- then they finally came up with a story for why we should expect low growth forever.

We, at the CEA, and in this White House, don't accept that there's a new normal. We think that if you read the Economic Report of the President, you can see that there's a very strong case to be made that we can just go back to normal and stop modifying the word "normal" when we think about the economy.

Q So should we not expect potentially 4 percent growth or higher at some point down the line? Is that aggressive?

MR. HASSETT: The President and I have talked about this. And it's one of those things about -- if you think about what a 3 percent year looks like -- a 3 percent year is never 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3. A 3 percent year is 4, 2, 4, 2. And so I think that the odds over the next few years having some quarters where we have growth is in excess of 3, or probably pretty high given the very ambitious policy agenda that's already partially enacted.

And with that, I guess Raj is telling me I have to go. And thank you so much for your attention. It's an honor to be here again.

Q There's no fear you have at all of a recession anywhere in the foreseeable future?

MR. HASSETT: Oh, I think economists are always attentive to developments and wary of exogenous factors that we can't anticipate. I think the unconditional laws of recession are something that people who study this, like Jim Stock at Harvard, talk about.

But right now, there's so much momentum in this economy that we're heading into a Q1 with three quarters in a row that average about 3 percent. Our models suggest that the first quarter should be a little bit above that because there was an inventory drag in the fourth quarter that should offset in Q1. And so, right now, we're looking at an economy that's about as solid and as good as we've seen since before the financial crisis.

Thank you very much.

MR. SHAH: Thanks, Kevin. Moving on, as you all saw yesterday, the President hosted an extraordinary listening session with students, teachers, and families impacted by school shootings.

It was an emotionally, incredibly constructive conversation. It included many perspectives and very different opinions. And it focused on solutions, which is exactly what the President is looking for. As the President tweeted yesterday, "I'll always remember the time I spent today with courageous students, teachers, and families. So much love in the midst of so much pain. We must not let them down. We must keep our children safe."

Today, that conversation continued with local leaders. The President knows the best ideas usually come from the local level and not from Washington, D.C., and that's certainly the case here.

Next week, the President will welcome governors to the White House, and the top issue will be school safety.

I'd like to quickly follow up on a question I got from April Ryan last week. She asked about the Violence Against Women Office in the Department of Justice. The President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2019 does increase funding for the Office on Violence Against Women by over $3 million. Our goal is to ensure this funding has a maximum impact providing support and assistance to survivors in combatting domestic and dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault.

Finally, two quick things I'd like to point out before taking your questions. First, a new Gallup survey out today shows that the percentage of Americans who are satisfied with the United States standing in the world has increased by 13 percentage points in a single year under this President. That is a 13-year high.

And last, but certainly not least, I'd like to offer congratulations to one of your colleagues who's not here today, Margaret Brennan, who was just announced as the new host of Face the Nation.

So with that, I'll take your questions. I'll start with Major.

Q Thank you, Raj. Would you summarize for us what the President intends to do in terms of legislation he will propose to Congress on guns? He raised a lot of issues yesterday; he raised them again today in the second listening session. Is he going to send a bill to Congress authored by him and this administration, outlining what he wants? Or is he going to leave it to Congress to decide what to propose and what to vote for?

MR. SHAH: Well, the President is proposing ideas. He's listening right now. He's been talking about a series of ideas. He's talked about strengthening background checks, with an emphasis on mental health. He's also talked about raising the age for some gun sales. He's talked about ending bump stocks -- the sale of bump stocks. And there's also state laws that have been on the books and that we're continuing to look at.

So, right now, we're in a listening phase. I wouldn't say that we are or aren't going to propose some things that is as specific as legislative language. But he is going to come forward later on with something a little bit more concrete.

Q But does he think that, for example, on bump stocks, or any of these questions, the best way to approach it is to have Congress write the law and for him to sign it? Because he's been pretty specific and consistent on that point. Regulations are helpful, but laws are better. Does he believe Congress should rewrite laws in conjunction with, and consistent with, the priorities you just outlined?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think to each of those points, there could be a different approach. In some areas, state laws make more sense. In other areas --

Q Such as?

MR. SHAH: Well, I mean -- I think some states have had these red-flag laws, for example, that remove firearms after you go to a judge for potentially dangerous individuals. That's something that's being done right now in a variety of states, right? They have due process rights for these individuals. It seems to be working in certain areas. That's something that we're looking at and other places we're looking at.

Q So he would not look at that federally?

MR. SHAH: Right now, that's not under consideration, but that doesn't mean it can't be. I think what we want to say, though, is that on the issue of bump stocks that you outlined, he's already ordered the Department of Justice to look at --

Q Right. But Congress can do that also.

MR. SHAH: Sure. But I think that right now he's ordered the Department of Justice to take action, and I think that we're going to see exactly the rule that might be proposed by the ATF and the DOJ on bump stocks. But I don't think that some panacea makes the most sense. I think we need to look at, first, what policy we want to come forward with, and then what is the right legislative approach at a federal and state level.

Jonathan.

Q Hey, Raj, the President has talked about arming teachers who are capable of handling firearms. There are 3.5 million teachers, roughly, in the United States. He said it would be about 20 percent. That's 700,000 teachers. How would the President propose arming 700,000 teachers?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think what the President talked about was taking individuals, personnel within schools -- some could be teachers; you could have other individuals who have training, already in how to use firearms or could gain training -- and making sure that those individuals have access to concealed weapons that they can have on school grounds. In those instances, the presence of individuals would deter potential attackers.

Q But, by his numbers, we're talking 700,000 teachers or other school personnel, maybe even more, armed in schools. How is that practical? How is that wise to have to have 700,000 more firearms in schools?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think when you have a horrific situation like you had last week, and some other school shootings that we've seen, these horrible tragedies, what we think and don't think is practical can change.

John.

Q In order for something like that to be effective, you'd have to get buy-in from many, many school boards across this country.

MR. SHAH: Of course.

Q So far, much of the reaction that we've seen to this idea has been negative. Does the President expect that he can get enough buy-in in order to send a signal to potential shooters out there that this is a hardened facility; you walk in the doors, he said, a little while ago, and you're not going to last very long?

MR. SHAH: We certainly think so. Look, there are a lot of individuals, leaders, in Congress. You know, the NRA has been supportive of this idea, a lot of other folks have been supportive of this idea. The notion that trained individuals who work within schools that have firearms and can serve as a deterrent, we think, could keep a lot of schools and a lot of communities safe.

Hallie.

Q Raj, I have two questions for you on both of these policies, to follow up on this conversation. There are some districts, as you know, that don't have enough money to give teachers the school supplies that they need. So how are schools supposed to pay for bonuses for armed teachers, as the President has suggested?

MR. SHAH: I think we're looking at school safety measures. Again, there's a policy piece to this and there's a legislative piece to this. I think those are --

Q And a money piece, right?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, yeah. And there is a budgetary piece to this. I think that if we find the policy solutions that make the most sense that we can get buy-in for, we'll figure out the rest of these other pieces that you outlined.

Q So the second question, though, is on the proposal that he talked about yesterday and today of raising the age limit to purchase, as he said today, any weapon, you have to be 21 to do it. The NRA has come out, as recently as last night, and said they oppose that. The President said today, he doesn't expect to have to go up against the NRA, but this is clearly an instance where the President holds one position, the NRA holds a different position.

MR. SHAH: Right.

Q Is the President prepared to take on the NRA? What has he said to them? What assurances has he received from them since he said he doesn't expect a battle?

MR. SHAH: Well, the President did talk to Chris Cox over the weekend. You know, in dealing with school safety issues, we don't expect to agree with the NRA on every single issue. We do think that they are concerned about school safety. As the President tweeted this morning, we think that they're interested in doing what's right.

It's going to be part of an ongoing conversation. They're stakeholders, along with family members, students, parents, teachers, who the President heard from yesterday; local officials, who we talked to today. So he's going to get opinions from a lot of folks and he's going to come to the right steps that are necessary.

Q Could he change his mind on that?

MR. SHAH: I'm not saying he can change his mind. I think that the point here is that he's going to take input from a lot of folks and come forward with proposals that we think can improve school safety.

Shannon.

Q Raj, so one solution that the students and family members have called for is a ban on semi-automatic rifles. Is that something that's on the table that the President is considering?

MR. SHAH: Well, Sarah said the other day that, no idea, no potential solution is off the table. With that said, when you look at what happened in Florida, you have an individual who dozens of times, police either went to his home or were called. There was a call to the FBI. This was a troubled individual. He had been identified. There were a lot of alarms raised about this individual.

We don't think that most -- the immediate policy response would be to ban an entire class of firearms. What we're looking for is solutions that don't ban a class of firearms for all individuals but ban all weapons for certain individuals who are identified as threats to public to safety.

Q Raj, the President had said before -- he wrote in his book in 2000 that he was for the assault weapons ban. Is there something that's changed his thinking in that time? Or (inaudible)?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, I mean, he campaigned for President and was opposed to the assault weapons ban. And his position hasn't changed on that.

Jackie.

Q Raj, I want to ask you about the rule finalized by the Obama administration that President Trump reversed last February which would have allowed the Social Security Administration to provide information to the gun background check system of people with mental disabilities.

CBS News has asked the White House on 15 separate occasions for a participant list of the bill signing, which you guys normally release, along with a picture. Is there a reason that you guys aren't releasing this photograph -- if the President, as he professed today, is proud to work so closely with the NRA? And if not, why not?

MR. SHAH: Well, I don't know. You hadn't asked me about it. And it you have, I apologize if I haven't gotten back to you. And I don't know if there's a photo, but I will get back to you.

On the rule that you're talking about, the Social Security Administration's regulation under the previous administration that blocked gun purchases was opposed by folks on both sides of the aisle, including the ACLU. We need actual solutions that will secure our schools and prevent future shootings. We don't think that taking away Second Amendment rights from people who essentially have trouble with their checkbooks is the right solution.

Q And then I just want to follow up. You've been saying the President is doing a lot of listening. Did he watch the CNN town hall

last night? And why didn't he attend in person and listen in person himself?

MR. SHAH: I didn't ask him about that.

Julie.

Q Hi, how many White House officials are in danger of losing their security clearances under General Kelly's plan tomorrow?

MR. SHAH: I can't get into the specifics regarding individual security clearances or numbers or, kind of, what you're asking me. But I can say, the memo did outline a series of reforms that, in the wake of the situation involving Rob Porter, that we can do to ensure that the security clearance process is tightened up, interim clearances are tightened up. That's actually -- some of these things the Chief of Staff had taken action on months ago, but there are -- these are steps that are going to apply to all White House officials.

Q You can't give us even numbers, though, when it goes into effect tomorrow?

MR. SHAH: No, I can't get into -- I can't get into.

Q How? Why not?

Q When?

Q Why couldn't we at least evaluate -- the public evaluate how meaningful this change has been?

MR. SHAH: Again, the memo outlines in pretty specific detail how the security clearance process is going to work, moving forward, and how it's implemented on Friday. And beyond that, I can't go further.

Pamela.

Q You keep saying that you're in the phase of listening to people's ideas, but just specifically, how can you assure the American people that these ideas will turn into concrete action?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think the President already has -- you saw him, for nearly an hour yesterday, listen to individuals and take in quite a bit of input from people who are frustrated, who are struggling, who are angry. A lot of people -- it was very raw. It was very emotional. It was very real. I can tell you it's impacting him. I can tell you that he is listening.

And again, the policies that he's beginning to talk about -- background checks for one, mental illness, and specific measures that we can look at to improve the background check process, by looking at mental illness is another -- again, the age -- the age 21 piece of this. So

there are a number of things that he is considering and talking to family members, talking to local officials, talking to many others. It is impacting some of his thinking.

Q Can you ensure that action will be taken?

MR. SHAH: Well, I mean, look, as I said -- as I told, Major, right now we're in a listening phase. There's a policy process. Eventually, there will be legislative process.

Q And is he willing to go against the NRA, ultimately? Because the NRA is standing firm that it does not support age limits for semi-automatic rifles. Is the President willing to stick with his --

MR. SHAH: He's willing to do what's right to ensure safe -- to ensure we have safe schools.

Yeah.

Q So when the President talks about comprehensive background checks, can you tell me exactly what he means by that? Does he mean that he thinks that every sale of firearms should come with a background check? Meaning, closing some of these loopholes, like the gun-show loophole?

MR. SHAH: Well, the things that he has talked about are specially focused on mental illness to ensure that in a number of states -- I mentioned red-flag laws -- there are other potential court orders that can be brought into the process. And also ensuring that everybody who engages in a background check has all the information available that we're putting into the system. So more accurate information, more current information, from more sources.

Q But it wouldn't be for all sales. So you --

MR. SHAH: Again, I wouldn't rule anything out, but right now, that's the most immediate thing under consideration.

Julie.

Q On the age limit or the age threshold for purchase of a weapon, is he thinking about an across-the-board threshold for that or for certain classes of weapons? How specific can you be about --

MR. SHAH: For right now, for semi-automatic weapons.

Q Just for semi-automatic weapons?

MR. SHAH: Correct.

Q And then, can you talk about what motivated him today to come out against active-shooter drills in schools? A lot of districts around

the country have been doing these drills to basically prepare students and teachers to survive if there's an incident like happened last week.

MR. SHAH: Yeah, I actually talked -- I did talk to him about that. I mean, he said the term "active shooter drills" is particularly -- could be frightening for young children. He thinks a drill that has a different name and is not -- the brand of it, frankly, doesn't frighten children, might be a better way to approach it.

Q Do the drills but just don't call them active shooter drills. Is that what you're saying?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, I think safety drills, which help in these types of situations, would be more appropriate. The term "active shooter drill" for a young child could be very frightening.

Lalit.

Q Last August, the President had announced his (inaudible). It's about six months now. How did the President see it has moved along? And has it progressed on the lines that he wanted to? Or what are the bumps on the road?

MR. SHAH: So, the United States is working closely with our partners in Afghanistan. We've made significant progress against ISIS, reducing their presence and eliminating hundreds of fighters. We've eliminated their top leaders, and we're working relentlessly to target their leadership and bases wherever they emerge.

I know that we have restored some clarity in our relationship with Pakistan. For the first time we're holding Pakistan accountable for its actions. We've seen modest progress in terms of Pakistan's actual acknowledgement of these concerns, but the President is not satisfied with progress when it comes to Pakistan.

Jon.

Q Thanks a lot, Raj. Are there any proposals for, initiatives, the President is considering that he could implement by executive order as it relates to the mass shootings that we've seen across our country over the last few years?

MR. SHAH: Well, he did sign a presidential memorandum earlier this week -- specifically on bump stocks -- ordering the Attorney General to expedite the ongoing review that's been happening at the Bureau of Alcohol and Tobacco and Firearms.

Q And that's it?

MR. SHAH: Yeah.

Q Okay. And then as it relates to reaching out to members of Congress, has the President -- since the horrific incident that happened last week -- reached out to either the leaders, Republican or Democrat of the House and the Senate, to move some of these proposals forward in the House or the Senate?

MR. SHAH: Well, he has ongoing conversations with a number of members of Congress on a whole host of issues, and this has been a part of that. He did talk to Senator Cornyn on Friday, specifically about his Fix NICS bill. And this has been a part of a lot ongoing conversations.

Again, there is a policy process that is ongoing. And when Congress gets back into session, I think there's going to be more engagement with both Democrats and Republicans on these issues.

David.

Q During that session, the President seemed to suggest he was thinking about pulling ICE out of California because of the sanctuary city flap. Is that a serious proposal? Is he thinking about doing that?

MR. SHAH: Well, we think California should actually enforce immigration law rather than get in the way of it and ignore federal immigration law. We think that sanctuary cities are a threat to public safety and they encourage more illegal immigration. So I think the President was raising that concern and making a very valid point.

Q Is he seriously thinking about pulling federal law enforcement out of there?

MR. SHAH: Well, I wouldn't get ahead of anything the President might do, but I would say that California's law enforcement decisions, and decisions of the Governor and others up and down at the state level have been very troubling.

Q I have a question about the President's reassurances that he's going to give to Republican lawmakers. The NRA president said today of people that are trying to change gun control, that they hate the NRA, they hate the Second Amendment, they hate individual freedom. If there are Republican lawmakers who then come and back the President if he has a difference with the NRA, what assurances is he going to give them that he's going to support them if the NRA chooses to run a primary challenger against them?

MR. SHAH: Well, the President is going to propose more specifics with regard to school safety. He's going to want support from Democrats and Republicans. And yeah, he's going to provide political cover for those who are willing to take leadership roles.

I don't necessarily think that everything that he's going to be proposing is going to be at odds with the NRA or any group. But he is

going to propose things. He is very serious about this issue, and he does want to have solutions.

Francesca.

Q Thank you, Raj. Following on several of my colleagues' questions about the issue of arming teachers in schools, I understand what you're saying about how this is something that we can get into more of the specifics later.

But the President is saying that, not just 20 percent, up to 40 percent of teachers could have these concealed carry permits in schools. And as Jon was noting at that point, that would be more than 700,000. That would be a million-plus at this point. And President Trump said that they would only be going to highly adept teachers, but he used John Kelly, or someone like John Kelly, as an example today when he talked about it.

And so does the President really believe that there are up to 20 percent or 40 percent of teachers in schools who are as adept as someone like John Kelly at wielding a weapon?

MR. SHAH: We've talked to teachers. We've talked to folks in communities. I think there a lot of people who -- a lot of teachers who, if they aren't currently trained, would be willing to get trained. Again, this is a very complex problem, and we need serious solutions. That is a big step. I understand what you guys are saying. But I also think that if we really want school safety, a very serious idea is having trained individuals in schools with concealed weapons, because that will certainly deter potential attackers.

Q And one question on the background checks. The President used the word "comprehensive background checks." What does he specifically mean? When he says the word "comprehensive," does that mean universal? And would he be willing to support universal background checks? And just to clear that up, what I mean by that is background checks on all firearms sales.

MR. SHAH: Right. And as I said, nothing is being ruled out at this stage, but the focus is on mental illness.

Trey.

Q Thanks, Raj. One on foreign policy for you, and one on domestic policy. First, on Syria, we saw the statement from this administration last night. And today, more civilians are dying east of Damascus. What more can President Trump do to stop the killing?

MR. SHAH: Well, we are monitoring the situation. And I don't want to get ahead of anything that may or may not be announced on that front. But, you know, the Assad regime and Russia's actions on this front are on notice.

Q Does the President believe Bashar al-Assad is committing war crimes?

MR. SHAH: I would say that Bashar al-Assad has already committed war crimes. He's already gassed his own people with sarin. He's already committed unthinkable acts, and he's done so with Russian support. And we don't want that to continue.

Q And on guns, quickly.

MR. SHAH: Yeah.

Q Sorry, Raj. On school shootings, generally speaking, does the President see this as a guns issue or a people issue?

MR. SHAH: I think it's about safety. It's about people. And it is about ensuring that schools, our children, are kept safe. I mean, he talked about that a bit yesterday and a bit also, as well, today.

You know, you have a situation right now where, in a lot of communities, banks, local bank branches, stadiums where people go to watch a sporting event are a lot more secure and a lot safer than schools are. And that doesn't really seem to make a lot of sense.

Anybody who's feeling threatened or can afford it, whether it's a celebrity or politicians, they have armed guards. They have a security details. They have people who are able to protect them with firearms. And that's one of the issues that he's raising.

Blake.

Q Raj, thank you. When you look at past school shootings that most Americans can recite at this point -- Columbine -- the shooters in that case used handguns and a sawed-off shotgun. In Sandy Hook, the shooter used a handgun and a type of AR-15. Stoneman Douglas the other day, an AR-15. When the President is talking about teachers being armed with guns in classrooms, is he talking about being armed with handguns? Is he talking about being armed with AR-15s? Is he talking about being armed, potentially, with shotguns? What exactly is he talking about?

MR. SHAH: Well, I haven't asked him about that. I would say concealed weapons are of a certain variety.

Q And just to pick back up on Hallie and Jon and that 700,000 number. If you give these people bonuses, say, a thousand bucks, and you're talking about $700 million, potentially -- maybe it's north of a billion, maybe it's less than that; in any event, it's a lot of money -- would the federal government pay for something like this? Do you expect the state and local municipalities to pay for this?

MR. SHAH: The policy hasn't been fleshed out. But do we really think that that's too much to pay for school safety?

Charlie.

Q You mentioned that the President spoke with the NRA's Chris Cox over the weekend. Did he specifically discuss this idea of raising the legal age to purchase a rifle to 21? Or was this subject not discussed?

MR. SHAH: I'll have to get back to you on that.

Yeah, John.

Q Real quick sec -- a question, if I could. It's all right. I only had one; everybody else had two. Adam Schiff says that he's like to get his Democratic memo out this week. He's sent it to the FBI for redactions. If it comes back to the White House with the appropriate redactions, will you expedite its release?

MR. SHAH: So I know that the House Intelligence Committee, the minority, has been in touch with the FBI, and they've been going back and forth about that. Yeah, once it meets the FBI's standards for ensuring it's law enforcement sensitive, and sources and methods are protected, we would support its release.

Jon.

Q Yeah, just another subject. Last week, the President's personal lawyer acknowledged giving a $130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels. Is the President aware that his lawyer paid that kind of money to a porn star to buy her silence? Does he approve of that?

MR. SHAH: I haven't asked him about it, but that matter has been asked and answered in the past.

Q No, not since he acknowledged this. He acknowledged this last week. This is the first time we've had a chance to ask about it. So can you go back -- can we find out if the President approves of the fact that his personal --

MR. SHAH: I haven't asked him about that.

Q Will you ask him about that?

MR. SHAH: I haven't asked him about it.

Q But will you ask him about it, Raj?

MR. SHAH: I'll get back to you.

Ken.

Q Thank you, Raj. Police in Israel said last week that they have sufficient evidence to charge Prime Minister Netanyahu with bribery and other charges. Does the President believe that the Prime Minister is innocent? And does he have any concern that this legal issue could affect the peace process?

MR. SHAH: That's an internal Israeli matter, and I'm not going to comment on it. Thanks a lot, guys.

END 2:53 P.M. EST

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From: White House Press Office [whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov]
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Subject: Photos of President Donald J. Trump working in the White House during the Democrat shutdown

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 20, 2018

Photos of President Donald J. Trump working in the White House during the Democrat shutdown

President Donald J. Trump talks on the phone in the Oval Office receiving the latest updates from Capitol Hill on negotiations to end the Democrats government shutdown, Saturday, January 20, 2018, at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

President Donald J. Trump walks along the West Wing Colonnade returning to work in the Oval Office, to continue efforts to end the Democrats government shutdown, Saturday morning, January 20, 2018, at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

President Donald J. Trump meets with White House senior staff members Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Marc Short, Hope Hicks, Jessica Ditto, Hogan Gidley, Dan Scavino, Raj Shah, Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, Rob Porter, Mick Mulvaney and Lindsay Walters, in the West Wing communication offices, on the one year anniversary of President Trump's inauguration, Saturday, January 20, 2018, at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

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Message

From: White House Press Office [whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov]
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Subject: Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, 2/7/2018, #56

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 7, 2018

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
AND SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES MATTIS

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:32 P.M. EST

MS. SANDERS: Good afternoon.

We are pleased that Congress has been able to meet our defense spending requirement and come together on a two-year spending bill. This deal achieves our top priority: a much-needed increase in funding for our national defense. This deal also increases budget caps, ends the sequester, and provides certainty for the next two years.

Defense spending will match the request made by the Pentagon, and will reflect what the President signed into law with the National Defense Authorization Act. The bottom line is that, thanks to President Trump, we can now have the strongest military we have ever had.

Additionally, this deal increases the debt ceiling to March of 2019, which moves us away from crisis-to-crisis budgeting. It also ensures funding for our other critical priorities, including rebuilding America's crumbling infrastructure, tackling the opioids epidemic, and taking care of our great veterans.

To discuss this agreement in more depth from a military perspective, we have Secretary Mattis here with us today. Secretary Mattis will come up to make a brief statement and take a few questions on the importance of funding our armed forces, and then I will be back up after him to answer questions on news of the day. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY MATTIS: Thank you. Well, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for taking time out of your schedules to be here today.

I've spent the last day and a half on Capitol Hill briefing the members of Congress on our 2018 National Defense Strategy. I'm heartened that Congress recognizes the sobering effect of budgetary uncertainty on America's military and on the men and women who provide for our nation's defense.

Two days from now, I will visit our nation's 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade at Fort Benning as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan.

To advance to the security of our nation, these troops are putting themselves in harm's way. In effect, signing a blank check payable to the American people with their lives. Our military has been operating under debilitating continuing resolutions for more than 1,000 days during the last decade.

During last week's State of the Union Address, President Trump said, "Weakness is the surest path to conflict." In a world awash in change, with increasing threats, there is no room for complacency.

Failure to implement or fund the 2018 National Defense Strategy will leave us with force that could dominate the last war, yet be irrelevant to tomorrow's security. We need Congress to lift the defense spending caps and support a 2-year budget agreement for our military. America can afford survival.

For too long, we have asked our military to carry on stoically with a success-at-any-cost attitude. The fact that our volunteer military has performed so well is a credit to their dedication and professionalism.

We expect the men and women of our military to be faithful in their service, even when going in harm's way. We have a duty to remain faithful to them.

Absent a budget this year, America's military will not be able to provide pay for our troops by the end of the year. We will not be able to recruit the 15,000 Army soldiers, and 4,000 Air Force airmen required to fill critical manning shortfalls; we would not be able to maintain our ships at sea with the proper balance between operations and time for training and maintenance; we would have to ground aircraft due to a lack of maintenance and spare parts, degrading our pilot's proficiency; we would deplete the ammunition training and manpower required to deter war; and we would delay contract for vital acquisition programs necessary to modernize our force.

I cannot overstate the negative impact to our troops and families' moral from all this budget uncertainty.

Today's Congressional action will ensure our military can defend our way life, preserve the promise of prosperity, and pass on the freedoms you and I enjoy to the next generation.

Thank you. I can take a couple questions here.

Q General, how damaging would a shutdown be -- would a government shutdown be, given that if you have this deal -- if there was a decision to shut the government down because, for example, the wall wasn't funded in this deal -- how bad would that be to the military?

SECRETARY MATTIS: Shutting down the government would be very damaging to the military for all the reasons I just cited about a continuing resolution. But then aggravated by the shutdown itself, where we actually send home all non-uniformed personnel except those in a few critical areas.

It just paralyzes everything that we do if we go into that, other than the ongoing active operations at sea and there the troops will continue to fight, the ships will stay at sea. But the bottom line is, training is delayed, the impact just ripples through the force.

And it doesn't just happen today, it ripples on, as people who are not flying are no longer gaining the level of skill that you and I would associate with them, even a year from now when they're promoted.

Q Mr. Secretary, you mentioned you've been spending the last day and a half on Capitol Hill. This is a Senate arrangement. Do you have any sense, sir, if the House leadership on the Republican side is equally receptive and as enthusiastic as you are?

And, also, service secretaries, particularly the Navy service secretary has said the funding problems are not, maybe, a direct cause, but contributed to the deaths of seamen in the South China Sea in the two most recent accidents. Can you tell the country, if this money is in fact provided, all of the problems associated with training, maintenance that have been plaguing the military will be eliminated?

SECRETARY MATTIS: I am optimistic that what the House did earlier this week and what the Senate did today can come together this week and give us the budget that then enables us to carry out our responsibilities. By "ours," I mean all the leaders in the Department of Defense who will address the issues you just brought up.

Obviously, a lot of work goes into the execution, then -- the quality of the training. But you can count on us. We'll earn your trust on this. We will spend the money wisely.

Q Mr. Secretary, if I could ask you about the recently released Nuclear Posture Review.

SECRETARY MATTIS: Yes.

Q It calls for smaller-yield nuclear weapons to be added to our arsenal. You're on record as saying there's no such thing as a tactical nuke. Anytime a nuclear weapon is used, it's a strategic game changer. So how does this new Posture Review add to global stability? Because there are many people who believe that if you've got a smaller-yield nuclear weapon, you might be more inclined to use it.

SECRETARY MATTIS: Right. Remember that what we're talking about here is the nuclear deterrent. And in that nuclear deterrent, we believe that some nations could miscalculate -- one in particular -- and that nation could assume that if they used, in a conventional fight, a small-yield bomb, we would not respond with a very large-yield bomb.

Our response to this is to make a small-yield bomb and say, "Don't miscalculate." It's a deterrent. Remember, deterrence is dynamic, it changes from year to year, from decade to decade. We have to address deterrence in its current construct.

So we do this, the idea is to raise the threshold. Don't even think about lowering the threshold to a conventional fight and escalating it to one small-yield nuclear weapon strategically changing the game, and then think our choice is either "surrender or suicide," as Dr. Kissinger put it.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Mr. Secretary, can you talk about where things are in the planning stages for this military parade the President is seeking and what any cost estimates you have at this point are?

SECRETARY MATTIS: I think we're all aware, in this country, of the President's affection and respect for the military. We've been putting together some options. We'll send them up to the White House for a decision.

Q Mr. Secretary, I have a question about North Korea, but also a follow-up on Catherine's question there. You just laid out the argument for fully funding the military, why you think every dollar counts. So why divert time, energy, financial resources to the planning of a parade, as the President has asked?

SECRETARY MATTIS: Again, I think that what my responsibility is -- to make certain I lay out the strategy and make the argument for the oversight of Congress to make a determination of fully funding us.

As far as the parade goes, again, the President's respect, his fondness for the military, I think, is reflected in him asking for these options.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Let me ask whether you think that war is actually nearer or closer with North Korea than it was at the time the administration took office. And do you support any kind of meeting or communication between Vice President Pence and North Korean officials at the Olympics?

SECRETARY MATTIS: Well, on the second, Vice President Pence is quite capable of making the call on that there, while he's in Korea.

As far as the situation with Korea, it is firmly in the diplomatic lane. We have seen much stronger diplomatic action, for example, the last three United Nations Security Council resolutions -- unanimous. And how often do you see France and Russia; PRC, China; and the United States, Great Britain all voting -- and other countries -- all voting unanimously? I think that makes it very clear this is firmly in the diplomatic lane.

And we, of course, back up Secretary of State Tillerson's foreign policy efforts, as guided by the President, with viable military options.

But thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Due to the timing and tight timeline, we will jump right into questions for today with no further statements.

Steve.

Q Nancy Pelosi is wanting to add immigration to this emerging budget deal on the Hill. Is that something the President would like to see?

MS. SANDERS: I think we've made clear that the budget deal should be a budget deal, and that members of Congress, like Nancy Pelosi, should not hold our military hostage over a separate issue. We've laid out what we would like to see in immigration legislation, and I think it's something that Nancy Pelosi should support.

And hopefully, she will come on board, we can get this budget deal done, and then we can focus on getting an immigration deal done.

Q To follow up, is the President committed to this March 5th deadline for DACA, or is he going to extend the deadline?

MS. SANDERS: Look, we are hopeful that we will make a deal with Congress, and we'll see what happens after that. But our goal is to try to get something done. We don't want to keep kicking the can down the road. And we'd like to see a solution, which is why we've laid out a plan that we think addresses everybody's concerns and meets those needs.

Jordan.

Q Thanks, Sarah. To put another point on it, will the President sign the budget agreement that was laid out by the Senate this morning?

MS. SANDERS: Look, we applaud the steps forward that they've made, but we're going to need to see what is in the final bill. But we're certainly happy with the direction that it's moving, particularly that we're moving away from the crisis budgeting that we've been on in the past.

Major.

Q Would you like the House to pass the Senate deal?

MS. SANDERS: We would like to move forward on this front. But again, we want to see the final components. But yes, we're supportive, primarily because it meets several of the things that we laid out, including ending the crisis budgeting, and also helps meet the needs of the military and defense spending as were laid out by General Mattis.

Q Another question. Could you clarify the status of the security clearance of Rob Porter, and if the President has confidence in him as his Staff Secretary?

MS. SANDERS: I can give you two statements. As has always been our policy when it comes to security clearances, we don't comment on them. I'm not going to change that today.

I can tell you that Rob has been effective in his role as Staff Secretary, and the President and Chief of Staff have had full confidence and trust in his abilities and his performance.

In more of an update on that front, Rob has put out a statement, which I can read to you now, and I think it will address some of those other questions.

"These outrageous allegations are simply false. I took the photos given to the media nearly 15 years ago. And the reality behind them is nowhere close to what is being described. I've been transparent and truthful about these vile claims, but I will not further engage publicly with a coordinated smear campaign. My commitment to public service speaks for itself. I've always put duty to country first, and treated others with respect. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served in the Trump administration, and will seek to ensure a smooth transition when I leave the White House."

Q Sarah, is he going to be leaving the White House anytime soon? There was some conversation a couple of months ago that he was at least contemplating that.

MS. SANDERS: He is going to be leaving the White House. It won't be immediate, but he is resigning from the White House, but is going to stay on to ensure that there's a smooth transition moving forward.

Hallie.

Q Thanks. Less than 18 hours ago, the White House released several statements praising Rob Porter and his service. Obviously, he's somebody who's very close with the President. So why would the President accept his resignation if the President thinks he did nothing wrong?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I think that was a personal decision that Rob made, and one that he was not pressured to do, but one that he made on his own.

Catherine.

Q Can we clear up the matter of the security clearance? Did he have one or not? If he didn't --

MS. SANDERS: As I just said, I'm not sure why this is complicated. We've addressed it quite a few times. In many circumstances, as has always been the policy at the White House, we don't discuss security clearances one way or the other.

John.

Q Sarah, can I ask you about the Democratic memo? We understand -- and Chief of Staff Kelly illuminated this yesterday -- that this memo is different in terms of its content than the Republican memo was. General Kelly said it's not as clean as the GOP memo was. Republicans who have read the memo are saying that it contains a substantial number of references to sources and methods.

My question to you is, do you believe that the White House is -- I don't want to say being sandbagged, but being put in a difficult position by the Democratic minority, forcing you to make redactions or hold back this memo so it could draw contrast with your treatment of the GOP memo?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not going to make speculations at this point. We're still going through the process that we went through with the Republican memo. We're going to continue to do that. And once that's completed, we'll have something further to add. But as of this point, we don't.

Jon.

Q Sarah, can you clarify -- the President yesterday said that he would like to shut the government down if he doesn't get funding for the wall, border security. Is what he said yesterday now no longer operative? He's going to support a two-year spending bill without funding for the wall?

MS. SANDERS: Look, as I said yesterday, the focus for us has always been to get a two-year budget deal. We've also laid out the priorities that we want to see in any immigration legislation, and we expect to see that. We do want -- we've made no secret the President wants funding for

the wall and he wants border security. And we expect to see that reflected in the budget.

Q But he said he wanted to shut the government down if he didn't get it. Now that's no longer operative? Is that no longer the position?

MS. SANDERS: No, the position hasn't changed, and I addressed this yesterday. The President is making the point -- the only people that have shut the government down are the Democrats. We haven't shut the government down. We've laid out exactly what we want to happen, and we're working towards achieving those goals.

Q But he was the one who said he wanted to shut the government down. I'm not understanding. He said, "I want a government shutdown."

MS. SANDERS: The point he's making, when you put it in the context, is that, if we are going to have that fight, it's a fight that the Democrats started last time and they lost, and we think that we would win again.

We want a two-year budget deal. We want an immigration plan that fixes the problem and doesn't further kick the can down the road. Those are the two focuses, and we're hopeful we'll get those done.

Pamela.

Q How can the President still have confidence in his Deputy Attorney General when he said he feels vindicated in the Russia probe by the Nunes memo that mentions Rosenstein, and the fact that Rosenstein oversees the Russia probe?

MS. SANDERS: Look, as I said yesterday, the President feels vindicated because he feels like the Russia investigation has been a politically motivated witch hunt for the last year, and the memo clearly vindicates the President's position that there was political bias.

Q Has he actually read the Democrats' memo? You said he has seen it, but has he actually read --

MS. SANDERS: He has. And I told you, also, that he had met with the Deputy Attorney General to discuss the differences yesterday.

Q And just really quickly, General Mattis was saying that the President has great affection for the military, but he has yet to visit Iraq and Afghanistan. Wouldn't that be the ultimate way to honor the troops, by going there rather than a parade?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I think there are a lot of different ways. Nothing has been decided or locked in stone. This is in the early discussion phases, and it's something the President is looking at -- not just a way that he can, but that the entire country can come together and show support and honor our military.

Cecilia.

Q Thanks. Does the President have any concerns about these domestic violence allegations raised against Rob Porter?

MS. SANDERS: I haven't spoken to him about specific concerns.

Q You haven't talked to the President about this --

MS. SANDERS: About whether or not he has specific concerns, I haven't asked him that question, Cecilia.

Q Has he seen the photos of Rob Porter's ex-wife with a black eye?

MS. SANDERS: I don't know.

Jon.

Q Thanks a lot, Sarah. The President weighed in today on Twitter, on the stock market -- the first time this week he's done so. And he's done so quite a bit over the course of his first year in office. Can we expect the President to continue to weigh in on the daily fluctuations on the stock market going forward? Or will he, sort of, let the market take its course?

MS. SANDERS: I don't think I'm going to speculate on what we may weigh in on every single day moving forward through the administration. But the economy has obviously been a big focus for the administration, and it's something we're going to continue to talk about. We have a very strong economy. We feel very confident in the direction that we're moving, and certainly the focus on the long-term economic fundamentals that this administration has been advocating for.

Q On an immigration deal, would the President be open to the idea of just two pillars of what he's put forward being part of an immigration deal? That being funding for that border wall with Mexico and increased border security, and then, of course, a legislative fix for those DACA recipients.

MS. SANDERS: We've laid out the four pillars that we want to see in immigration legislation.

Shannon.

Q The President today called these text messages from the FBI, "bombshells." Does he believe there was a conspiracy in the FBI to try and undermine his candidacy, to try and help Hillary Clinton? Can you explain a little bit more his thinking about what he's seen in these text messages?

MS. SANDERS: I think it just further shows that there is reason for all of us to have great cause for concern in this process, and we hope that it's more thoroughly and fully looked at as we move forward.

Q And just quickly on the FBI. Are there some more specific changes, personnel changes, you would like to see at the FBI?

MS. SANDERS: Not that I'm aware of at this time.

Stephen.

Q Sarah, I just want to give you a chance to respond to the concerns about the propriety of this parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. A lot of people in the country think that that's not how the American military should be presented to the world, rolling tanks down America's Main Street. What do you think?

MS. SANDERS: Look, as I said, we haven't made a final decision. The President is simply exploring different ways that he can highlight and show the pride that we have in the military, the people that have served and sacrificed to allow us all of the freedoms that we have. The President is very proud of the United States military and all that they do on behalf of all of us, and we're simply exploring options.

I think it's way too far -- speculation, to start weighing in on whether or not we think certain things are appropriate when nothing has been decided and it's literally in a brainstorming session.

Q Is it true -- the report that the President essentially gave a directive to the Defense Department? "This is something that must happen."

MS. SANDERS: No. The President asked them to look at different ways and explore and see what those options look like, as the Secretary said.

I'll take one last question.

Q Sarah, to follow up on these text messages, does the President believe that former President Obama was involved in the investigation -- the Russia investigation -- against him, which is what alleged between those texts between Peter Strzok and Lisa Page?

MS. SANDERS: I'm not aware of that specific concern, but I think that there is a lot within those text messages that gives us great cause for concern. And we, again, hope that they look at them thoroughly and investigate this process more fully.

Thanks so much, guys.

END 1:53 P.M. EST

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 8, 2018

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRINCIPAL DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY RAJ SHAH

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:40 P.M. EST

MR. SHAH: Good afternoon, everyone. I want to start with a statement, and then we'll take your questions.

Our normal policy, consistent with the policies of past administrations, is to not comment on background checks and security clearances. Given the unusual nature of these circumstances and a number of false reports floating around, we wanted to try to explain as best that we can, within our security limitations, how the background investigation process works, and then talk a little bit about Rob Porter and how his situation fits within that process.

The background investigation process is the process for evaluating allegations about a White house staffer's conduct prior to joining the White House. It's run by the federal law enforcement and intelligence communities. It's used throughout the U.S. government. It's thorough, it's complex, and it takes time. It takes time because we want to get it right. It's also costly, but it's absolutely worth it.

Over the course of any investigation, some information may arise that seems troubling or complicated, and requires additional investigating. It's important to allow that process to continue in order for a fulsome understanding of the information.

The whole U.S. government takes this process seriously. It's not politicized or interfered with, but we do not push -- we do push for -- we do push to obtain accurate, fulsome information as quickly as possible.

Now let me talk about Rob Porter. The allegations made against Rob Porter, as we understand them, involve incidents long before he joined the White House. Therefore, they are best evaluated through the background check process.

It's important to remember that Rob Porter has repeatedly denied these allegations, and done so publicly. That doesn't change how serious and disturbing these allegations are. They're upsetting. And the background check investigates both the allegations and the denials. The investigation does not stop when allegations comes to light. It continues to determine the truth.

We should not short-circuit an investigation just because allegations are made, unless they could compromise national security or interfere with operations at the White House. The truth must be determined.

And that was what was going on with Rob Porter. His background investigation was ongoing. He was operating on an interim security clearance. His clearance was never denied, and he resigned.

To summarize, the allegations against Rob Porter are serious and deeply troubling. He did deny them. The incidents took place long before he joined the White House. Therefore, they were investigated as part of the background check, as this process is meant for such allegations. It was not completed, and Rob Porter has since resigned.

During his time at the White House, Rob received no waivers and no special treatment. And this is the tried and true process. It was followed meticulously.

We hope this helps explain how seriously these matters are taken and how the process works to investigate such allegations.

With that, I'll take your questions. John.

Q Can you tell us, Raj, when the White House first became aware of these allegations?

MR. SHAH: Well, I know there's been some reports about the Chief of Staff. He became fully aware about these allegations yesterday.

I'm not going to get into the specifics regarding who may have known what pieces of information because they were all part of an ongoing background check investigation.

Q You said fully aware. Was he partially aware?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think we all became aware of the news reports that emerged on Wednesday morning and some of the graphic images.

Q But did he know any of this back in November?

MR. SHAH: Again, I'm not going to get into the specifics.

Peter.

Q Let me ask you if I can: The statement changed from John Kelly yesterday morning to the statement yesterday evening. He said, "based on new allegations." But what changed yesterday, absent a photograph, in terms of new allegations?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think what I just referenced. The reports had additional allegations; they had more information.

Q So you're saying the initial reports where two former wives accused him of violence, both physical and verbal abuse, was not sufficient for him to say that I think he's a man of honor?

MR. SHAH: There were a number of statements from the Press Secretary, from the Chief of Staff, and from others that reflected the Rob Porter that we've come to know working here for over a year, and the Chief of Staff for about the last six months. But the reports are troubling, and I think the statement from Wednesday night reflects the Rob Porter that we had seen in these news reports and some of these credible allegations.

Q So to be clear, what was so shocking that had changed? He said it was "shocking." What was he referring to?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, and it's the full nature of the allegation, particularly the images.

Q You said then -- just to answer -- just to answer one more thing. You talked about the fact there weren't any concerns, you said, that could compromise national security or interfere with operations here at the White House. But we've spoken to one of Porter's ex-wives who told us that she warned the FBI that he could be susceptible to blackmail because of the allegations against him. Is that --

MR. SHAH: Look, again, I'm not going to get into the specifics of the investigation itself. I think that's a question for the FBI and others. But this is not our process. This is the process the U.S. government uses across agencies and has existed over numerous administrations.

Q How would the President --

MR. SHAH: Hang on a second.

Cecilia.

Q Thanks, Raj. I just want to clarify what you're saying here.

MR. SHAH: Sure.

Q Are you saying that the Chief of Staff of this White House had no idea that Rob Porter's two ex-wives had domestic violence allegations against him, when they made those claims to the FBI; that John Kelly did not know that? How is that possible that the Chief of Staff did not know that?

MR. SHAH: Well, again, this is part of an ongoing investigation. We trust the background check process. And the Chief of Staff does not get detailed updates about what may or may not have been alleged.

This is a process; it involves a thorough investigation. And as I went through the process, it involves looking at not just accusations but denials.

Q Okay, but the White House had said yesterday that Porter's decisions to leave was a personal one, that he wasn't pressured to do so. So would Rob Porter still be on the job today had he not decided to resign?

MR. SHAH: Well, Rob Porter was terminated yesterday and his last day --

Q He resigned?

MR. SHAH: His last day was yesterday. I know he came in earlier to clear out his stuff.

Q But would he still be on the job? I mean, Sarah Sanders made it very clear he wasn't pressured to do so.

MR. SHAH: He offered his resignation and it was accepted.

Jim.

Q Yes. So in terms of the Chief of Staff's handling of all this, no regrets?

MR. SHAH: I think the second statement that he sent out reflected his thoughts, which is that these allegations are deeply troubling, they are shocking. And I think the first statement reflected the Rob Porter that we have known.

Q But let me ask you, if I could follow up that -- because as you were coming out here yesterday -- or Sarah Sanders was coming out here yesterday, you were releasing a statement from Rob Porter, saying that he took those photographs. That appears to be an acknowledgment that this abuse took place, that he helped document it.

How can the White House Chief of Staff, how can the Press Secretary, how can this White House still be standing behind him when Mr. Porter appeared to be acknowledging that he had this past?

MR. SHAH: I think it's fair to say that we all could have done better over the last few hours -- or last few days in dealing with this situation. But this was the Rob Porter that I and many others have dealt with, that Sarah dealt with, that other officials, including the Chief of Staff, have dealt with. And the emerging reports were not reflective of the individual who we had come to know.

Q And if I could just ask you one other follow-up.

MR. SHAH: Jeff. We got a few.

Q Okay.

Q Raj, did the President know that Rob was using a -- was working on a temporary clearance?

MR. SHAH: No. The President saw the news report on Tuesday night and was informed of the resignation on Wednesday. He was saddened by it. You know, saddened for all the individuals involved.

Q Over the last year, is that ever something that he was concerned about? Not the abuse, but was he concerned about --

MR. SHAH: He was not informed about specifics regarding Rob Porter's security clearance.

Danielle.

Q Do you have any information on how many senior White House staffers are currently working under an interim security clearance?

MR. SHAH: I got into the security clearance process as much as I'm allowed to discuss it, and I'm not going to go further.

Yes.

Q What is the White House's reaction to comments made by former White House aide, Omarosa, on "Celebrity Big Brother" where she said, she is "haunted by the President's tweets." She described the situation inside the White House as "bad" and said it is not going to be okay.

MR. SHAH: Not very seriously. Omarosa was fired three times on the "Apprentice" and this was the fourth time we let her go. She had limited contact with the President while here. She has no contact now.

Peter.

Q Raj, we initially were told that Rob Porter was going to stay on awhile and oversee a transition period, and now you're telling us he was terminated yesterday. What changed?

MR. SHAH: I think that we've looked at the things that are necessary to ensure a smooth transition. There will be a new acting Staff Secretary that we can name later on, and operations can continue smoothly.

Lalit.

Q Thank you. Congratulations for your (inaudible). Over the last one week, (inaudible) rallies by skilled Indian Americans who are seeking to lift off the per-country limit on green card. Everyone has been talking about illegal immigrants. These Indian Americans have been talking about legal immigrants. What is the administration part on this?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think the President wants to see legal immigration reform. He wants to see us move from a process that currently exists in law of extended-family chain migration toward merit-based immigration reforms. We want to ensure that people coming into the country are the best and the brightest, regardless of nationality, creed, religion, or anything else in between. We want to look at educational backgrounds, ability to contribute to the workforce in a way that helps American workers. So the President wants to see reforms that improve America's economy.

Noah.

Q Normally, when you hire people, do you wait for the investigation to come back before hiring them? Is the burden of proof not on the people seeking the job to prove that they are qualified and don't have any skeletons in their closet? Or do they just get to come aboard and you wait and see what happens with the investigation?

MR. SHAH: The process tends to be a little bit different with the White House because there's a lot of officials coming in with the new administration, and a lot of individuals coming in have an interim clearance.

Q And then also, what about women who don't have photographs? Do you trust their stories? Because a lot of times -- you haven't been at the podium, but Sarah has said that allegations weren't credible from other people. Do you need a photograph? And how should women feel if they don't have a photograph?

MR. SHAH: I don't think any standard applies. I just think that we do take allegations of misconduct, of domestic violence, other issues like that very seriously. We are very concerned about them.

In this instance, in the case of Rob Porter, we relied on the background check investigative process. That process hadn't been completed, so we were relying on the information that we had.

Anita.

Q Raj, I wanted to follow up on two questions on two different things. I just want to understand -- you used the term "fully aware." I don't understand what that means. What does that mean John Kelly knew or didn't know? What does "fully aware" mean?

MR. SHAH: Well, I do know, for instance, that he had not seen images prior to the statement on Tuesday night.

Q Did he know of the allegations?

MR. SHAH: I'm sorry, say that again.

Q Did he know of some of the allegations?

MR. SHAH: Again, I'm not going to get into the specifics of what may have emerged from the investigation.

Q But you used the word "fully aware," so I'm just trying to understand --

MR. SHAH: I understand. I'm saying, specifically, on images. I don't have every single detail, and I'm not going to get into every single specific. We relied on a process. This is a process used throughout the U.S. government. It's a process used by every agency for an individual seeking a security clearance.

Rob Porter was never denied a security clearance. He was never given any special treatment. The process was still ongoing. We relied upon it.

Q I had a second topic which was, on Capitol Hill, members and their staffs are saying that, because the court case regarding DACA is now -- meaning that the administration is now accepting DACA applications again -- that they feel that there's breathing room and that March 5th is no longer the deadline.

MR. SHAH: March 5th is the deadline.

Q And what's going to happen if they haven't done anything by then? Because it doesn't look like they're going to.

MR. SHAH: When you say "they haven't done anything," what do you mean?

Q If Congress hasn't acted by March 5th, what is going to happen?

MR. SHAH: Well, we fully expect Congress to take action on the President's immigration reform framework.

April.

Q Okay, Raj. Two questions. I want to follow up on Noah. You said the President takes the issue of violence against women seriously.

MR. SHAH: He does.

Q Why did this administration close the Violence Against Women Office when he became President last year? He defunded it and everything. And also, he shut down the Women and Girls Office as well. And I have another question on Rob Porter.

MR. SHAH: I don't know, specifically, why those specific offices may have been closed. But look, I did talk to the President earlier today. He told me he was very saddened by these reports and by the information that he saw, by the images that he saw. We do take violence against women and these types of allegations very seriously.

Q And a follow-up on that.

MR. SHAH: What's your second question? Yeah.

Q The interim security clearance, does that allow Rob Porter to be able to touch -- at the time when he was employed --to be able to touch and see classified materials?

MR. SHAH: It would, yes.

Blake.

Q Thanks, Raj. Let me turn your attention back to the Hill where there's a spending deal going on. Republicans, for years, have said there needs to be fiscal restraint -- years and years and years. Now we know that the deficit for this fiscal year is potentially going to reach a trillion dollars.

You've got the House Freedom Caucus saying, about this deal, that "growing the size of government by 13 percent adds to the swamp instead of draining it," and "this is not what the American people sent us here to do." Essentially, they're saying some within their party are being hypocritical. Is the President concerned about all of this spending? And what exactly is your plan to pay for it?

MR. SHAH: He is concerned about spending in Washington. He's expressed that for years.

Let me just say off the bat, we do support the two-year spending bill that is being discussed and voted on in the House and Senate. You know, it lifts the caps on defense spending, which is something that the Secretary of Defense, the President's generals have told him that they need to ensure that we rebuild our military and protect our national security.

With respect to deficits, no. We're going to be releasing a budget on Monday. The budget does move us toward a path of restoring fiscal responsibility. It reduces our deficit by trillions of dollars. I'm not

going to get more specific; you guys will get more on Monday. But it does incorporate these budget caps, it incorporates the tax bill, incorporates our other priorities. So we do think that that budget will outline the path to our fiscal responsibility.

Q You're still going to be running deficits at that point, and now you've got this $300 billion cap to raise. So is it just economic growth? Is that the only way that you do it?

MR. SHAH: Economic growth is essential to cutting deficits and to restoring fiscal responsibility. Again, the budget will outline a lot more detail.

Q What can you tell us about the involvement of the White House Communications Director in crafting the statements that your office issued yesterday? Among them, you have the defense issued by the Chief of Staff; you have the statement that Sarah read from the podium, in which Rob Porter calls the allegations against him "vile" and "outrageous." What can you tell us about the extent to which the Communications Director was involved in crafting those statements?

MR. SHAH: Well, I'm not going to get into the specifics, but I would say that all the statements were crafted by a number of senior White House officials.

Q Just one more question.

MR. SHAH: Yeah.

Q Because you have repeatedly referred to the denials that Rob Porter issued, how much weight were those denials given within the White House?

MR. SHAH: You know, I think you've got to take allegations seriously. You've got to take denials seriously. And again, the statements reflected our experience with Rob Porter and other officials' experiences with Rob Porter.

But again, looking at more of the reporting and looking at more facts emerging, you saw the Chief of Staff's statement, and the White House did accept his resignation.

Margaret.

Q Thanks. A couple more questions about this issue. It sounded like you're saying the investigation is ongoing. Is that right?

MR. SHAH: Well, I don't think -- now that he's been terminated, I don't think it continues. But I can get back to you on the specifics.

Q So I guess what I was going to ask is, once the investigation is totally completed -- you're satisfied, you know the answers to those

questions -- could you elaborate more specifically on the first time anyone mentioned this to the President? When, you know --

MR. SHAH: I know that any issues regarding his security clearance weren't made available to the President prior to Tuesday.

Q Raj --

Q But the President -- hang on. I'm sorry, hang on a second, please. So, I guess, does the President retain full confidence in his Chief of Staff?

MR. SHAH: Yes.

Q And his White House Counsel?

MR. SHAH: Absolutely.

Q In his Communications Director?

MR. SHAH: Yeah, absolutely.

Q And all of the rest of the top staff?

MR. SHAH: The President has confidence in his Chief of Staff, Counsel, and Communications Director.

Q Can I ask you a finance question real quickly, on the spending plan?

MR. SHAH: Sure.

Q As I understand it -- and notwithstanding whatever the budget is going to say -- the U.S. is going to have to borrow more than a trillion dollars this year, and it could affect markets globally. Does the President feel confident -- do you dispute that? And does the President feel confident that that's still the right thing to do and it can be, kind of, mitigated in the budget plan?

MR. SHAH: Well, I'd refer you to Treasury on the specifics. I know that some of those numbers have more to do with the previous administration's accounting than it has to do with this administration's policies. But I would say that we are committed to fiscal discipline, and the budget next week will show that in greater detail.

Anne.

Q Yeah, back to Mr. Porter.

MR. SHAH: Sure.

Q If I understood your description of the background check process correctly, the fact that the two ex-wives had made statements to the FBI about alleged abuse during that investigation was not a disqualifying factor in his initial hiring. Does the White House regret that? And going forward, do you plan to change the way you consider allegations of domestic abuse?

MR. SHAH: Well, again, understand that the background investigation was not completed. There was no determination made about Rob Porter's security clearance. There was not a thumbs up or thumbs down. There was no denial of his security clearance. He was operating off an interim clearance. That is the clearance that many individuals who have never had a security clearance would get when they first come to the White House.

With respect to allegations made, again, every allegation has to be investigated. Any denial has to be thoroughly and fully investigated. We allow that process to play out.

Francesca.

Q Thank you, Raj. I wanted to clear up a few things that you said today on this. So, first, you said that the President wasn't aware of Mr. Porter's security clearance status. But when was the President aware of the allegations of abuse?

MR. SHAH: On Tuesday night, when there was a report issued.

Q And then secondly, you have said that Rob Porter was "terminated" twice in this briefing. Is the White House now saying that Mr. Porter was fired?

MR. SHAH: I just mean the process by which your employment status ends is termination.

Q And then the last thing on that is, you said that there are things that this White House could have done better with respect to this. Could you please detail that? What could the White House have done better?

MR. SHAH: Well, again, I'm not going to get into a tick-tock and all these detailed specifics. I think a lot of individuals were involved with the White House response to this, myself included. And I think a lot of us could have done better.

Trey.

Q Raj, just clarifying on Francesca's point, and I have two questions for you. So Rob Porter was not fired by the Trump administration?

MR. SHAH: No. He resigned and we accepted his resignation.

Q Okay. And if I could follow up on -- you said the President was saddened. You've spoken with the President about these allegations this morning. Can you give us a better idea about the concerns that the President had? This is a gentleman who was in the Oval Office, very close to the President numerous times throughout the first year of this administration. What did the President specifically have to say about this allegation?

MR. SHAH: He was surprised. He, like many of us, did not see that in Rob Porter, did not see what these allegations have brought forward. And so he was surprised by it, he was disheartened by it, and he was saddened by it.

Q And if I could ask you about the memo from the House Intelligence Committee.

MR. SHAH: Sure.

Q Do you have any sort of update on the timeline? Has the President made a decision? And where does the review process stand?

MR. SHAH: Well, the review process is ongoing. And we have said previously, we're using the same standards and the same process by which the Republican-drafted memo was evaluated that was voted out of the House Intelligence Committee. It's going through both a legal and national security review.

The President -- you know, I think we've previously mentioned -- the President was briefed by the Deputy Attorney General the other day. When we have more information and an announcement, we'll make that available.

John.

Q Thank you, Raj. Two brief questions. First, can you roughly say, are there a lot of other people, at the highest levels in the White House, operating under a temporary security pass?

MR. SHAH: I can't get into that.

Q The other question, very simply: Are there going to be any further resignations by Friday or over the weekend?

MR. SHAH: I have no personnel announcements.

Eamon.

Q Yes, thanks, Raj. As we stand here, the Dow is off about 1,000 points or more. Can you give me the President's reaction to the stock market volatility that we've seen so far this week? And does the administration still view the stock market as a barometer for its own performance?

MR. SHAH: Well, the President, like the rest of the White House, is concerned about long-term economic indicators and factors. And the fundamentals, in terms of the long term, are very strong. Again, unemployment and the labor market are very strong. Unemployment is at 4.1 percent. We saw wages rise on Friday for the first time -- not for the first time, but at a measurable level, for the first time in nearly eight years, or nine years. And corporate earnings are high.

And we believe that these long-term fundamentals demonstrate a healthy economy.

Q Thank you, Raj. There have been reports President Trump is asking for preemptive military options for North Korea amid concerns from some Pentagon officials. Yesterday, here, Secretary Mattis said North Korea is "firmly in the diplomatic lane…with viable military options." That's a quote. Has President Trump asked for preemptive military options? And what is his view of the concerns expressed by Victor Cha and other experts that this would lead to catastrophic casualties in Seoul?

MR. SHAH: Well, first off, I'm not going to get ahead of anything the President may consider. We don't telegraph, and the President doesn't telegraph his potential actions.

But our strategy with respect to North Korea is denuclearization. It's to provide as much economic and political pressure on that regime that would end its nuclear program. And we've had a considerable amount of success over the last year pursuing that strategy. We've had dozens of countries reduce economic or diplomatic ties with North Korea. Trade with North Korea, with countries in the region, has been reduced.

We continue to apply as much pressure -- maximum pressure -- on the regime. And as the Secretary of Defense said, we keep all options on the table, but the path we obviously would prefer is diplomatic.

Q Raj, thanks very much. Yesterday, U.S. personnel in Syria were attacked and there were counterstrikes launched by U.S. forces. I wonder if you could give us an idea of the President's involvement in this and whether you have any indication that there were any Russian personnel involved in the strike against -- the attacks on U.S. personnel.

MR. SHAH: Well, the President was involved and briefed. I don't know an answer on Russian engagement, but I can get back to you on that.

Kelly.

Q When you consider the Porter matter now, do you think that there were personal feelings, relationships in the White House among the senior staff, collegial and friendship relationships that clouded peoples' judgment on how this was handled?

MR. SHAH: I think I'd point you to a number of statements that indicate that the White House was prepared to defend Rob Porter based on initial accusations that we heard about and his denial. And that was based on our experiences with Rob Porter. And so, I mean, to answer your question, I think that the initial response was based upon that.

Q Did anyone recuse themselves from participating?

MR. SHAH: The Communications Director did recuse herself from some matters concerning it.

Q Raj, I want to take you back to the reports of emails -- or texts, I'm sorry, between Lisa Page and Peter Strzok.

MR. SHAH: Sure.

Q From the podium, Sarah has said that those texts are evidence of political bias. Now, everyone has opinions, so is the view of the administration that persons who are not fans of the President should not be allowed to investigate him? And also, can you point to any evidence, other than the text messages, that the investigation was conducted by people who were biased, other than these texts? I mean, was there anything -- any way the investigation has been --

MR. SHAH: Yeah, look, you bring up an issue that the President and others have talked about within the administration about political bias at the FBI and Department of Justice. And this predates this investigation. There are a number of issues regarding how the Hillary Clinton email investigation was handled by the former FBI Director and others in the FBI that have raised questions.

When it comes to the text messages that you referenced, that's not the considered judgment of the President or others, but it is the judgment of the Special Counsel, who had him removed from the case because -- specifically citing political bias.

So there are a number of issues. There's a Department of Justice Inspector General report that we've heard about that is going to look into this issue further.

Yeah, go ahead.

Q Thank you, Raj. Two questions. First, President Trump and Dr. Kissinger's meeting. President Trump tweeted that they would discuss China and also other areas. Can you tell us more about their meeting?

MR. SHAH: I think we'll have more information for you later on.

This is the last question. Saagar.

Q Raj, is Vice President Pence or Ivanka Trump willing to meet with Kim Jong-un's sister while they're at the Olympics?

MR. SHAH: There's no meetings planned whatsoever.

All right. Yeah

Q Is the U.S. investigating reports of chemical weapons use by Bashar al-Assad in Syria?

MR. SHAH: I'll have to get back to you on that.

Thanks a lot everyone.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 13, 2018

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
AND SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELAINE CHAO

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

2:41 P.M. EST

MS. SANDERS: Good afternoon, everyone. Many of you probably saw Protective Life Corporation's announcement this morning. As a direct result of the Trump tax cuts, the Alabama-based company is raising their minimum wage to $15 per hour, and giving a $1,000 bonus to over 2,000 of their workers.

For those of you keeping track, we now have over 350 companies that have announced wage increases, bonuses, new hiring, or increased retirement benefits as a direct result of tax reform, which not a single Democrat supported. These announcements have affected over 4 million American workers.

The President is working to build an economy that works for all Americans. The tax cuts and reforms are a big part of that, and so is infrastructure.

As you all saw yesterday, the President unveiled a Legislative Outline for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America. To cure decades of neglect, we are committed to quickly building a safe, reliable, and modern infrastructure to meet the needs of the American people and to fuel economic growth.

And to help make this possible, we have a very special announcement today. In keeping with his campaign pledge, the President donates his

salary on a quarterly basis to further work being done on important projects.

Most recently, the President donated his third-quarter salary to help the Department of Health and Human Services combat the opioid epidemic. Prior to that, he donated to the Department of Education and the National Park Service.

And today, the President is proud to donate his fourth-quarter salary -- 2017 salary to the Department of Transportation to support their programs to rebuild and modernize our crumbling infrastructure.

Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao is here to accept the check. I'd like to bring her up to say a few words, take a couple of questions on infrastructure and about how these funds will be used. And I trust that you'll stay on topic, and then I'll be back up afterwards to answer your questions on the news of the day.

With that, Secretary Chao. Thank you so much for being here.

SECRETARY CHAO: Thank you. We have to get this check here, and with all of us. (Laughter.)

Thank you. Thank you, Sarah. I'm accompanied here, in case you were wondering, by two officials of the U.S. Department of Transportation. I have with me, Derek Kan, Undersecretary of Policy, and Jim Ray, the Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Infrastructure. They're here because of this gift. And so let me proceed.

As many of you have heard yesterday, 12 federal agencies have been working with the White House on the comprehensive infrastructure proposal that the President announced yesterday. Transportation is one component. The proposal also includes energy, drinking and waste water, broadband, and veterans hospitals, as well.

The goal of the President's proposal is to stimulate at least $1.5 trillion in infrastructure investment, which includes a minimum of $200 billion in direct federal funding. And a key element is to empower decision-making at the state and the local level because state and local officials know best the infrastructure needs of their communities.

Many of you know that the principles are behind this, and so I wanted to reiterate some of the principles. The principles behind this proposal are, one, to use federal dollars as seed money to encourage infrastructure investment by the states, localities, and the private sector. Two, provide for the infrastructure needs of rural communities. Three, streamline project delivery. And four, invest in transformative projects that benefit everyone.

We are already applying these principles to the Department of Transportation's major existing infrastructure grant programs, including, for example, the INFRA grants. And that is why these two gentlemen to my

right are here -- because their offices will be among those at the Department of Transportation that will be taking the applications and also administering these INFRA grants.

This quarter, as mentioned, the President has generously decided to donate his annual salary to the Department's INFRA Grant Programs. INFRA directly reflects the President's proposal by providing dedicated, discretionary funding for projects that address critical issues facing our nation's highways and bridges and ports.

Under the INFRA program, states and localities that secure some funding or financing of their own are given higher priority access to federal funds. In addition, INFRA also reserves at least 25 percent of its funding to be awarded to rural projects.

So infrastructure is the backbone of our economy, and it's key to keeping our country competitive. The President's proposal will create new jobs, strengthen our economy, and improve the quality of life for everyone.

And so with that quick summary, I'll be more than glad to answer any questions.

Yes, John.

Q Madam Secretary, some of the criticisms of the President's plan as outlined yesterday are that it puts too much of a burden on the states financially because the federal portion is about 13 percent of the overall, and might also end up in people paying more taxes, more tolls, that sort of thing. What do you say to that?

SECRETARY CHAO: You know, federal money is not free. Federal money comes from our communities, people, taxpayers, and our communities. They take that money, send it to Washington, and then we decide how to use it, and send it back to the communities with a lot of strings attached on what they need to do.

So what we are trying to do is to recognize the states and localities, communities understand best what their infrastructure needs are, and to allow them to have much greater flexibility to decide their own projects, in conjunction and in partnership with the federal government.

Yes, sir.

Q Thanks, Secretary Chao. One of the other criticisms about the President's plan is that it doesn't include addressing the Highway Trust Fund, which only has so many years ahead of it -- of funding -- just a few years. Could you address why that was not included in the President's broader infrastructure plan? And then, what does the administration plan to do about that very important source of funding for infrastructure projects across the country?

SECRETARY CHAO: Well, the Highway Trust Fund does need to be addressed because, every year, more money goes out of it than receipts are received. And this will be a huge problem in 2021. So we, in conjunction with the Congress, have got to address this issue. So we're not in any disagreement about that. And the issue is how, and we look forward to consulting with Congress on how to do that. Because, again, the cliff begins in 2021.

Q Madam Secretary, so there are no plan -- the White House doesn't have a proposal right now for that?

SECRETARY CHAO: Well, we don't want to do it unilaterally. As mentioned, the President's proposal consisted of principles. And we want to discuss and work in consultation, on a bipartisan basis, with the Hill to address the infrastructure needs of our country.

Q Madam Secretary, thank you. The crumbling infrastructure. Could you talk to us about -- we know what's going on with roads, bridges, highways, what have you. But when it comes to rural America, can you give us specifics about what's crumbling, what needs to be fixed, and what jobs will be given where?

SECRETARY CHAO: Well, I come from the state of Kentucky. I'm a proud Kentuckian, and I come from a rural state. So I am especially concerned about the needs of rural America, and we recognize that the needs of rural America are special. And that is why, in the President's proposal, there is actually a provision which addresses the unique needs of rural America.

So it will be separate from the -- there's a separate title that is addressed to rural America. And similarly, there's a separate title addressed to transformative technology as well. So, for example, Derek Kan, the Undersecretary of Policy, one of his portfolio areas is transformational technology -- autonomous vehicles, automated driving systems. So that is another part of the President's infrastructure proposal that we will be also discussing with the Hill.

MS. SANDERS: Let's take one last question.

SECRETARY CHAO: Yes.

Q Thank you, Secretary Chao. As you know, the federal gas tax has remained at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has advocated an increase in the gas tax of 25 cents per gallon. The truckers -- the American Trucking Associations recommended a 20-cent-per-gallon increase in the gas tax. What's your view on this subject?

SECRETARY CHAO: Well, the President has not declared anything out of bounds, so everything is on the table.

The gas tax, like many of the other pay-fors that are being discussed, is not ideal. There are pros and cons. The gas tax has adverse impact, a very regressive impact, on the most vulnerable within our society; those who depend on jobs, who are hourly workers. So these are tough decisions, which is why, once again, we need to start the dialogue with the Congress, and so that we can address these issues on this very important point.

Q Could you just clarify your answer to John from the first question? Were you saying -- there are strings attached. So you're saying that taxes will increase and that tolls may increase, or they won't?

SECRETARY CHAO: That is a decision that is up to the state and local governments. And also, it's going to depend -- you know, that gentleman mentioned about federal gas taxes. These are tough decisions. We all want better infrastructure. But unfortunately, there's just not enough money in the world to pay for all the infrastructure, which is why the President's infrastructure also emphasizes the private sector.

Private sector pension funds are a tremendous source of capital for funding public infrastructure. There are states which disallow the private sector from investing in public infrastructure. So we hope that those restrictions can be removed.

And then, for those states and localities that want to work with the private sector, it's their decision as to whether they want to use private activity bonds, whether they want to use tolls, whatever. What we are saying in this proposal is that we're looking for creative ways for financing.

And so tolls is one way. We're not advocating for them. We're also not endorsing them. It is really up to the local entities that are involved in trying to raise the financing.

Q Well, but as a quick follow-up, you're from Kentucky, so you well know the Watterson Expressway, when it was widened in Louisville, one of the biggest -- one of the things they liked the best about it, there was no toll. And so in rural areas, it helped people get to where they wanted to go quicker. Here, in the Washington, D.C. area, you have an abundance of tolls, and it cuts into people's paychecks. So while you're espousing that you want to help out rural America, isn't that going to impact -- or won't tolls hurt rural America?

SECRETARY CHAO: That's really -- okay, you're mixing up, I think, several things here. I'm so sorry. There's actually going to be a title, as I mentioned, on rural America. So that is separate from the rest of the titles in this proposal that we're talking about. So there will be a special section for rural America.

And then, as for whether other -- urban areas want to embark upon tolls, or private activity bonds, or asset recycling, that is up to

them. We are giving them the flexibility to do so. So it's actually -- they're getting much greater flexibility now to be able to look at the panoply of creative financing mechanisms, and decide for themselves what they want.

MS. SANDERS: Thank you so much.

SECRETARY CHAO: Thank you so much. I'm sure we'll be talking more. Thank you.

MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Secretary Chao. Due to the fact the President has got an event here momentarily, we'll jump straight into the questions for today.

John.

Q As you know, FBI Director Christopher Wray laid out a different timeline than the White House has been telling us, or one that would seem to be in contradiction to the timeline that the White House has laid out, in terms of what we knew when about Rob Porter. Can you speak to what the Director said? He seemed to indicate that the first that you would have known about this might have been in March, then again in June, then November, then in January when the case was actually closed.

MS. SANDERS: Look, we explained the process extensively last week. The White House Personnel Security Office, staffed by career officials, received information last year in what they considered to be the final background investigation report in November. But they had not made a final recommendation for adjudication to the White House because the process was still ongoing when Rob Porter resigned.

In the view of Personnel Security Office, the FBI's July report required significant additional investigatory fieldwork before Personnel Security Office could begin to evaluate the information for adjudication.

As Director Wray said, information was still coming to the White House Personnel Security Office in February.

Q So just to be clear then -- in the July report, if not back to March, was there information contained in those reports about the allegations about Rob Porter?

MS. SANDERS: I wouldn't have access to that information. I wouldn't know the answer to that, John.

Kristen.

Q I just want to drill down on one important fact, because you and Raj, and you just said this again that the investigation was ongoing. Christopher Wray said it was closed in January. So who's telling the truth here?

MS. SANDERS: Both. As I said, the FBI portion was closed. The White House Personnel Security Office, who is the one that makes a recommendation for adjudication, had not finished their process and therefore not made a recommendation to the White House.

Q And let me just clarify one more point. You said yesterday that you didn't get any paperwork from the FBI. Chris Wray said that he did submit paperwork in all the various months that were (inaudible).

MS. SANDERS: Again, that would come through the White House Personnel Security Office, which had not completed their investigation and not passed that information to the White House.

Q But you acknowledge that you did receive paperwork.

MS. SANDERS: Again, the White House -- I think you need to be very clear about -- there's multiple groups here.

The White House Personnel Security Office, which is staffed by career officials, would have -- may have received information, but they had not completed their process and made a recommendation to the White House for adjudication.

Q And, Sarah, finally, who allowed John Kelly -- or Rob Porter rather, to stay here without a permanent security clearance?

MS. SANDERS: I can't comment on specifics of that other than what we've already said on that matter.

Cecilia.

Q And, Sarah, could you answer questions about --

MS. SANDERS: Sorry, Kristen, I'm going to keep moving because we got a short time fuse here today.

Q Is the White House still maintaining that John Kelly really had no idea about these allegations of domestic abuse until this story broke?

MS. SANDERS: I can only give you the best information that I have, and that's my understanding.

Q And does the President believe the women?

MS. SANDERS: Again, the President takes all of these accusations very seriously. He believes in due process. Above everything else, he supports the victims of any type of violence, and certainly would condemn any violence against anyone.

Q But we still haven't heard him say that himself. The cameras were in front of him today --

MS. SANDERS: Again, the President dictated to me specifically, that comment yesterday which I read out to you guys.

Zeke.

Q Thanks, Sarah. I've got two you. First, can you speak to -- did anyone at the White House Personnel Security Office have any communication with anyone in the West Wing about Rob Porter's clearance, between when the FBI started submitting its interim reports and --

MS. SANDERS: I'm not aware of any communication. I can't say definitively, but I'm not aware of any communication.

Q And then, secondly -- on Capitol Hill today, in an interview with the Associated Press, DNI Coates said that those with interim security clearances should not be granted -- should have limited access to classified information rather than access to the full gamut that a full clearance would provide.

Can you speak to whether that is a current practice right now for the large number -- for the significant number of officials, whether it be the West Wing or the broader White House complex? The President's aides who don't have permanent security clearances, do they have limited access to classified information?

MS. SANDERS: I can't speak to whether people have interim or permanent security clearances at all, and therefore can't comment on the process.

We are following the process that has been used by previous administrations, and we would rely on the law enforcement and intelligence communities to determine if that process needed to be changed.

Q But the DNI suggested that it would be changed.

MS. SANDERS: And they would be the ones that would make that determination and play a role in what those changes would look like.

Josh.

Q Sarah, are you saying that, on four different occasions, the FBI obviously said that it made the White House aware of the allegations, and the White House said -- officials said that, until Tuesday night, they did not realize the extent of the allegations. Should someone at the FBI or the Personnel Security Office be punished for not telling White House officials? How can those two things be?

MS. SANDERS: That's something that would be well beyond my scope to determine, Josh.

Q Is the President upset, though, that they weren't told, if everyone knew, but no one in the senior staff found out. Are you guys upset about that?

MS. SANDERS: I haven't asked him about that, specifically.

Matthew.

Q Thanks, Sarah. Raj, the other day, said, last week, that the situation could have been handled better. Yesterday, you echoed that and said the situation could have been handled better. Today, the Chief of Staff said it was all done right. Can you explain -- does the White House think this Rob Porter situation could have been handled differently? Or do you guys think this was all done right?

MS. SANDERS: Look, as I said yesterday, I think every day we come here, we do the very best that we can, and every day we can do better than the day before. And we're going to continue to strive for that. We're humans, making us imperfect people. And so, every day, I think we can learn from the day before, and we can strive to do better. And that's our goal, certainly within our team, and we're going to continue to try to do everything we can to help serve the American people to the best of our ability.

Q Was it appropriate for Hope Hicks to be involved in drafting some of these statements, given her relationship with Mr. Porter?

MS. SANDERS: She was not part of a lot of the conversations that took place. I don't recall any of you being in the room to be able to say specifically what comments she made or didn't make. She's the White House Communications Director, and is an important and valuable member of the staff, and she has done a great job in that role.

Steve.

Q Was there some discussion here about promoting Rob Porter to another job at the time that this all blew up?

MS. SANDERS: Not that I'm aware of. I just -- I don't know the answer to that.

Jeff.

Q Sarah, you said that the FBI has said it was completed in late July, but you said a follow-up required more fieldwork on that. Was that because of something that Rob Porter said in response to that, that the allegations weren't true? Or what required more fieldwork follow-up?

MS. SANDERS: I wouldn't know the specifics. I can only refer you back to the previous statement.

Q If I could ask again, though. In an op-ed this morning in the Washington Post, the first wife of Rob Porter said specifically of you, "I expected a woman to do better." Based on what you know, do you believe you were personally misled? And do you have any regret for how you have explained this to the American people?

MS. SANDERS: Look, as I said, we do the very best job we can every single day. I would never presume to understand anything going on with that individual, nor would I think that she could presume what's going on with me or the way that I'm responding.

Look, we've condemned domestic violence in every way possible. In fact, the President's budget that he released yesterday fully funds the Violence Against Women Act. We're looking for ways that we can take action to help this prevent this from ever happening to anyone. And to presume that I feel differently is simply a very strong mischaracterization of who I am and who this White House is, and what our actions are focused on, and what we're trying to do here.

Q If I could ask one more --

MS. SANDERS: Sorry, I'm going to keep moving, Joe.

Q -- where does John Kelly stand as we sit here today, in terms of -- if the President has confidence in him, why does he have confidence in him, based on everything we've learned over the last week?

MS. SANDERS: Look, I don't have anything further to add. The President has confidence in his Chief of Staff. We're going to continue trying to do the best we can to help the American people.

Julie.

Q So a clarification and a question. In July, when the FBI was sent back into the field to get more information, are you telling us that no senior staff -- not Don McGahn, not Joe Hagan, not John Kelly -- nobody in the senior staff in the West Wing was involved in that decision to tell them to go back and see if they could get more information on what was --

MS. SANDERS: Again, not that I'm aware of. I can't say with 100 percent certainty, but not that I'm aware of, of any conversations between those individuals.

Q And then, are you looking at, now, ways that you could change the process so that, if a senior official in the White House is facing credible allegations of spousal abuse or some other criminal charge, that senior staff would be notified in a more timely way? I mean, this appears to have -- if your timeline is accurate -- taken more than a year.

MS. SANDERS: Look, again, I think that this is a process that the law enforcement and intelligence community should weigh in on and determine if changes should be made to the way that it's carried out.

Q I'm not talking about their process; I'm talking about the process here -- where an investigation, where serious allegations could surface, and that nobody in the West Wing would be aware of that.

MS. SANDERS: But that would include those agencies and those departments. So you couldn't exclude them from a conversation about what changes should and need to be made to any program.

I think that that would have to be something that involved all of the stakeholders and something, certainly, far beyond my purview to walk you through today.

Q Just following up on what Julie was asking. You're saying that law enforcement should weigh in, but you're the White House, you're in charge, and this is your process. Should you not weigh in and take --

MS. SANDERS: It's actually not our process. A large number of the background component is run by the FBI. Other intelligence agencies weigh in.

Again, what I said is that all of the stakeholders should be part of that discussion and it should be looked at and determined whether or not changes need to be made to the process.

Q Given that it impacts the White House staff, do you not want to request an improved process here?

MS. SANDERS: Again, that would go beyond my scope that I can walk you through here today, but I think it's certainly a conversation that all of those stakeholders should have.

April.

Q Sarah, a couple questions. In light of everything that's going on, is there a review now -- an internal review -- of all of those who have interim security clearances to see if they should stay or should they go?

MS. SANDERS: I can't speak about whether or not different staff have interim or permanent security clearances --

Q I'm not asking about different staff, I'm asking about the process -- all right. Is there a review of those who have interim passes to see if they're going to stay or they're going to go because -- in light of what's happening now?

MS. SANDERS: My understanding is that has been ongoing for a while, and that determination would be made outside of anything I can walk you through at this point.

Q And you spoke of fully funding the Violence Against Women Act. It's up for reauthorization. Tell me the price -- how much the President is trying to put in that. And was that the price prior to all of this that's happened with these two people in the last week?

MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry, I'm not following your question.

Q The budget. You're saying the President is going to fully fund the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act that's up in March. How much -- what is he putting in his budget proposal?

MS. SANDERS: I'd have to look at the specific number, but it was rolled out in the budget that was presented yesterday.

Q You mentioned it, but is the number, the number that it's always been, or was it just done? Can you talk to us about the funding?

MS. SANDERS: I know it what was requested has been put into the President's budget.

Q When was it put in?

MS. SANDERS: It was in the budget that was rolled out yesterday that's been part of the ongoing process.

Q But we just got the budget --

MS. SANDERS: We don't write a budget, like, in 20 minutes, so it's been part of something that's been ongoing.

Q I understand that. I understand that. I understand that. But there's some things in that budget Mr. Mulvaney did not tell us about yesterday.

MS. SANDERS: That means you probably didn't ask those questions. I'm going to keep going.

John, go ahead.

Q He didn't give us an answer. He purposely didn't give us that information.

Q Thanks a lot, Sarah. I wanted to just get some clarification from you regarding the testimony -- the sworn testimony today by the FBI Director. He laid out the timeline. And according to the FBI Director's testimony, the FBI submitted a partial report on the investigation in question of Porter's background check in March, and then a completed background investigation in late July.

And yesterday, when I was asking you about when the White House Counsel learned about Mr. Porter, had he learned before the report in the Daily Mail last week, your reply to me was that, "the process for the

background was ongoing, and the White House had not received any specific papers regarding the completion of that background check."

So those two statements -- the FBI Director's statement, Mr. Wray, and your statement yesterday seemed to be at odds with one another. Do you see anything that you'd like to clarify, in terms of what I asked you today, based upon your answer yesterday?

MS. SANDERS: Yeah, as I said earlier, my understanding is any information would have gone to the personnel security office. That office had not completed their process in order to make a recommendation for adjudication to the White House. That was still ongoing and therefore, recommendation had not been made.

Q But you said the specific papers regarding the completion of the background check had not been received.

MS. SANDERS: That's part of that process that the White House Personnel Security Office plays, run by career officials, and we hadn't received a recommendation from that office.

Q And yet, the FBI Director said today, under oath, that the completed background investigation was actually submitted in late July. So which one is it?

MS. SANDERS: Let me read this to you again:

The White House Personnel Security Office, staffed by career officials, received information last year in what they considered to be the final background investigation report in November. But they had not made a final recommendation for adjudication to the White House because the process was still ongoing when Porter resigned.

In the view of Personnel Security Office, the FBI's July report required significant additional investigatory fieldwork before Personnel Security Office could begin to evaluate the information for adjudication.

We find those statements to be consistent with one another.

Jacqueline.

Q Could Mr. McGahn come out here and answer --

MS. SANDERS: Sorry, John, I'm going to keep moving.

Q -- any questions that we may have regarding what he knew and when he knew it?

Q Sarah, you've said repeatedly that you and the press team do the very best job you can to relay whatever information you know up there. So is there a feeling that Chief of Staff John Kelly has misled you and his colleagues on what he knew and when, and set up the communications staff

for failure to relay credible information to us over the past week in order to cover up the way that he handled the firing of Rob Porter?

MS. SANDERS: No, we're simply stating that we're giving you the best information that we're going to have. Obviously, the press team is not going to be as read-in, maybe, as some other elements at a given moment on a variety of topics. But we relay the best and most accurate information that we have, and we have get those from those individuals.

Q And can you talk about the other staffers who have been dismissed previously for not passing background checks, and why Porter wasn't treated in a similarly timely manner?

MS. SANDERS: My understanding is the same process was followed for all employees, and it's the same process that was used in previous administrations. And I can't comment on anybody else's dismissal.

Toluse.

Q Thank you, Sarah. You've talked multiple times about, sort of, wanting to get us the best information that you have. This scandal has been going on for a week now, and we still don't have answers to the basic questions of, sort of, who knew what, when; whether General John Kelly --

MS. SANDERS: I've done the best I can to walk you through that process, as has Raj. We've done that pretty extensively, and I'd refer you back to all of the statements we've given on that.

Q So I want to ask you whether you've spoken specifically to General John Kelly and to the White House Counsel to ask them these questions. Because you've said, I'm not aware or I'm not sure.

MS. SANDERS: I have, and this is the information that was given to me by those individuals.

Q House Speaker Paul Ryan, this morning, on the Fox Business Network said we've got to get out on entitlements. He talked about a structural deficit problem. He said, we need to "get our other partners in government, White House included, to be willing to do the kind of entitlement reform that we're willing to do in the House." What -- does the President disagree with House Speaker Paul Ryan on that question of the structural deficit and the problem of mandatory spending?

MS. SANDERS: I would have to ask him specifically on that question. I know the President certainly would like to reduce the deficit, and it's one of the reasons that his budget -- this budget reduced the deficit by $3 trillion, which is one of the largest in history. And he's going to continue to look for ways to do that.

Q The Speaker says that it's the structural deficit for mandatory spending, not the discretionary spending, that is the driver. He's been saying this for years. Does the President disagree with him? I know he's

said he doesn't agree with that approach to entitlements. Why does he not agree with that assessment?

MS. SANDERS: I'd have to ask him what the specifics are that he doesn't agree with him on.

Dave. We'll make this the last question.

Q Thanks, Sarah. Majority Leader McConnell said today that the DACA negotiations have to be done by the end of this week. Did he give the White House a heads-up on that decision? And does that reflect any view from the White House that Democrats are not bargaining in good faith? For example, they didn't -- they blocked a vote on sanctuary cities today.

MS. SANDERS: Look, it's up to Congress to set the timeline. The President has laid out the priorities that he has for that legislation, and we're only going to support a legislation that deals with those four priorities that we've laid out. We hope Republicans and Democrats can come together to a consensus to fix that problem and not kick the can down the road.

Thanks, guys.

END 3:13 P.M. EST

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Message

From: Matt Mackowiak [Ex. 6]
Sent: 3/10/2018 5:42:59 AM
To: Matt Mackowiak [Ex. 6]
CC: matt [matt@potomacstrategygroup.com]
Subject: 3/11/18 Sunday Talk Lineup

--**NBC's "Meet the Press"**: Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ) … Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). Panel: Yahoo News' Matt Bai, NBC News' Andrea Mitchell, Wall Street Journal columnist Peggy Noonan and Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson.

--**ABC's "This Week"**: Guests to be announced. Panel: ABC News' Mary Bruce, Democratic strategist Donna Brazile, former Gov. Chris Christie (R-N.J.) and Axios' Jonathan Swan.

--**CBS's "Face the Nation"**: CIA Director Mike Pompeo … Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO). North Korea panel: Former Acting CIA Director Michael Morrell, Brookings Institution senior fellow Jung Pak and The New York Times' David Sanger … political panel: TIME Magazine's Molly Ball, Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, Politico's Susan Glasser and Bloomberg News' Shannon Pettypiece.

--**"Fox News Sunday"**: Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) … CIA Director Mike Pompeo. Panel: The Wall Street Journal's Jason Riley, AP's Catherine Lucey, The Washington Times' Charlie Hurt and Fox News political analyst Juan Williams (substitute anchor: Fox News' John Roberts).

--**Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures"** (10am – 12pm ET): House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) … U.S. Chamber of Commerce president & CEO Tom Donohue. Panel: The Wall Street Journal's Mary Kissel and James Freeman.

--**Fox News' "MediaBuzz"** (11am ET / 10am CT): Ex-wife of former White House staff secretary (Rob Porter) Jennie Willoughby … Fox News' Gillian Turner … The Federalist's Mollie Hemingway … former Clinton campaign director of strategic communications Adrienne Elrod … The Washington Examiner's Emily Jashinsky … Bustle.com director of research Jessica Tarlov.

--**CNN's "Inside Politics"** with John King (SUN 8am ET): Panel: The New York Times' Julie Hirschfield Davis, The Washington Post's Karoun Demirjian, Politico's Eliana Johnson and CNN's Nia-Malika Henderson.

--**CNN's "State of the Union"** (9am ET / 12pm ET): Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) … Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). Panel: CNN political commentators Bakari Sellers and Amanda Carpenter, former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci and Center for American progress president Neera Tanden (substitute anchor: CNN's Jim Acosta).

--**CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS"** (SUN 10am, 1pm ET): Panel: Author and Eurasia Group president Ian Bremmer ("Superpower: Three Choices for America's Role in the World"), Brookings Institution senior fellow Stanley Roth and former CIA senior analyst and CSIS senior fellow Sue Mi Terry … former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Duke University's Gen. Martin Dempsey (U.S. Army, Ret.).

--**CNN's "Reliable Sources"**: (SUN 11am ET): Panel: American Urban Radio Networks' April Ryan, New York Post and Washington Examiner columnist Salena Zito and The Daily Beast editor in chief John Avlon … USA Today editor in chief Nicole Carroll and The Baltimore Sun's David Zurawik … The Wall Street Journal's Michael Rothfeld … The New York Times gender editor Jessica Bennett.

--**Univision's "Al Punto"** (SUN 10am ET / 10am PT): Undocumented immigrant Carmela Apolonio Hernandez … Mexican political analyst and journalist Denise Dresser … Colombian presidential candidate Gustavo Petro … Univision News correspondent Pedro Rojas … teachers Wendy Vazquez and Liliana Ruido and competitive shooter and instructor Gabby Franco … actress Daniela Vega.

--**C-SPAN: "The Communicators"** (SAT 6pm ET): Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), questioned by The Washington Post's Tony Romm … **"Newsmakers"** (SUN 10am ET): Guest to be announced … "**Q&A"** (SUN 8pm & 11pm ET): Author and former U.S. Border Patrol agent Francisco Cantú ("The Line Becomes a River").

--**MSNBC's "Kasie DC"** (SUN 7pm ET): Former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci … figure skater Adam Rippon … former Gov. Ed Rendell (D-PA) … Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) … Rep. Ryan Costello (R-PA) … historian Jon Meacham … former RNC chairman Michael Steele … former Assistant Secretary of Defense and WMD Commission executive director Evelyn Farkas … Cook Political Report's Dave Wasserman … The Washington Post's Ashley Parker ... The Boston Herald's Kimberly Atkins.

--**"The McLaughlin Group"**: Moderator Tom Rogan with syndicated columnist Pat Buchanan, The Daily Beast's Eleanor Clift, syndicated columnist Clarence Page and guest panelist former NSA analyst and New York Observer columnist John Schindler.

--**Washington Times' "Mack on Politics"** weekly politics podcast with Matt Mackowiak (download on iTunes, Google Play, or Stitcher or listen at MackOnPolitics.com: U.S. Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL).

Matt Mackowiak
Cell: (512) 423-6116
Email: matt.mackowiak@gmail.com
Blog: http://www.potomacflacks.com
Twitter: @MattMackowiak
Company website: http://www.potomacstrategygroup.com

Message

From: Ford, Hayley [ford.hayley@epa.gov]
Sent: 1/31/2018 1:24:39 PM
To: Bowman, Liz [Bowman.Liz@epa.gov]; Wilcox, Jahan [wilcox.jahan@epa.gov]
Subject: This morning

In case you receive inquiries, he is arriving to the West Wing soon to meet with Rob Porter. They have been planning to meet for a while on an issue entirely separate from anything that has occurred the past few days. He also might be meeting with the President on this same issue. Then he's going to radio row in EEOB.

Wanted you to have facts in case media sees him and inquires.

Hayley Ford
Deputy White House Liaison and Personal Aide to the Administrator

Message

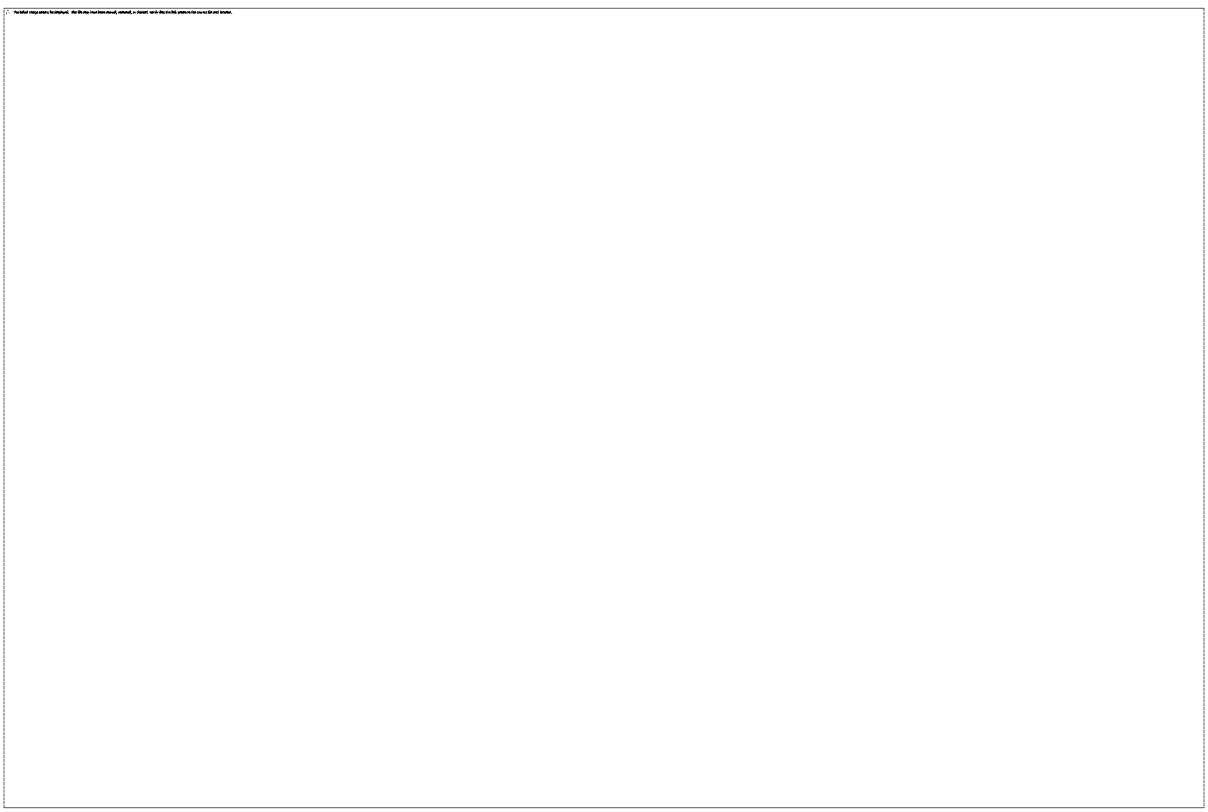
From: White House Press Office [whitehouse-noreply@messages.whitehouse.gov]
Sent: 10/27/2017 11:06:21 PM
To: Wilcox, Jahan [wilcox.jahan@epa.gov]
Subject: Photos of the Week

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2017

Photos of the Week

Saturday, October 21, 2017



The President's Own-U.S. Marine Band perform for visitors viewing the South Lawn, the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden and the Rose Garden, during the White House Fall Garden Tours, Saturday, October 21, 2017, at the White House, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Amy Rossetti)

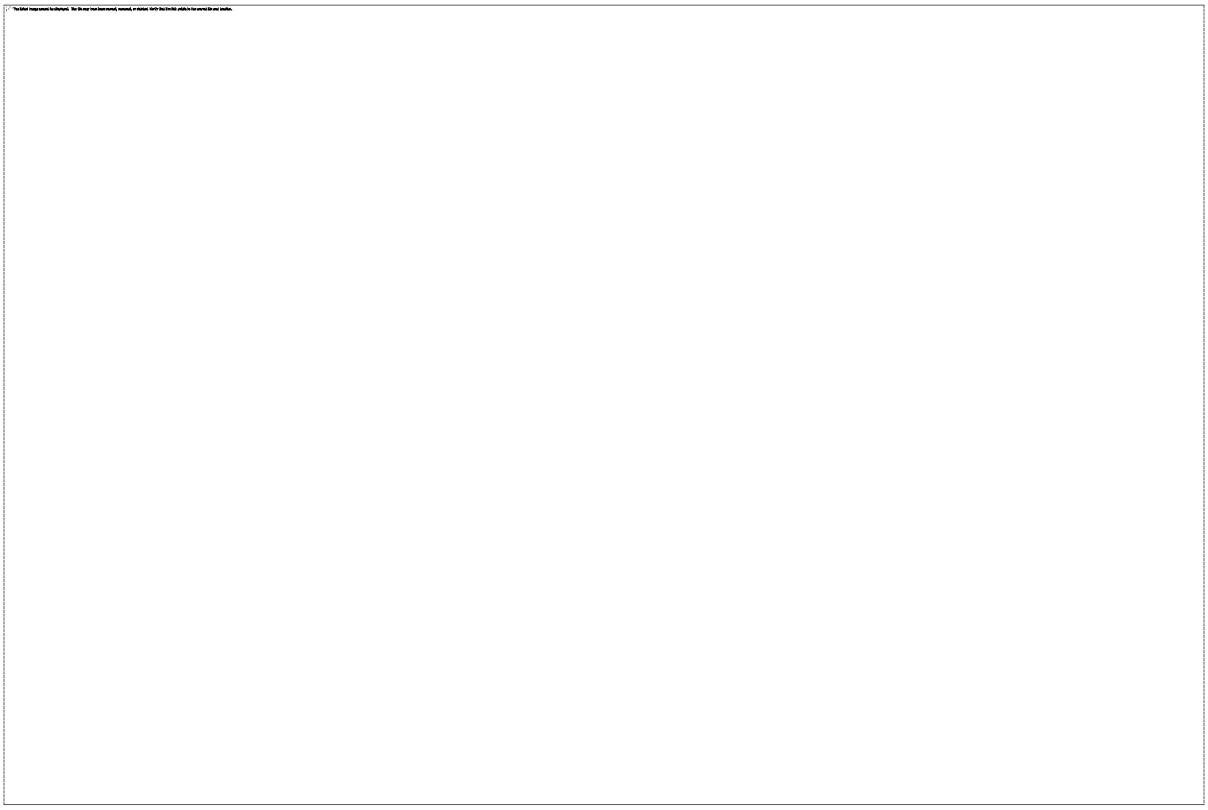
Monday, October 23, 2017

President Donald J. Trump bids farewell to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the West Wing Entrance, at the conclusion of Lee's visit to the White House, Monday, October 23, 2017, in Washington, D.C. (Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

President Donald J. Trump signs the Medal of Honor citation for Retired Army Capt. Gary M. Rose, in the Oval Office at the White House, Monday, October 23, 2017, in Washington, D.C., prior to the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Rose.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

President Donald J. Trump presents the Medal of Honor to Retired Army Capt. Gary M. Rose in the East Room at the White House, Monday, October 23, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

First Lady Melania Trump speaks with a middle school student, during her visit at Orchard Lake Middle School, Monday, October 23, 2017, in West Bloomfield Township, Michigan.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)



Vice President Mike Pence addresses his remarks at the commemoration of the 34th Anniversary of the attack on the U.S. and French Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, Monday October, 23, 2017, at the U.S. Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

President Donald J. Trump applauds the recipients of the Minority Enterprise Development Week Awards, introduced by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, in the Oval Office at the White House, Tuesday, October 24, 2017, In Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

President Donald J. Trump welcomes Callista Gingrich, new U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, and her husband, Newt Gingrich, to the Oval Office at the White House, Tuesday, October 24, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

President Donald J. Trump arrives at the Capitol, Tuesday, October 24, 2017, welcomed by Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, R-KY, and Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, John Barrasso, R-WY, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Marine One, carrying President Donald J. Trump, lifts-off from the South Lawn at White House, Wednesday, October 25, 2017, en route to Dallas, Texas, via Joint Base Andrews, in Maryland.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

President Donald J. Trump, joined by Texas Gov. Gregg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and FEMA officials, attends a briefing on the continuing Hurricane Harvey relief and recovery efforts, during a meeting in the Signature Flight Support facility at Dallas Love Field, Wednesday, October 25, 2017, in Dallas, Texas. Gov. Abbott thanked President Trump for his commitment to Texas.
(Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks)

President Donald J. Trump, is joined by White House Staff Secretary Rob Porter, Wednesday, October 25, 2017 in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, D.C., as he signs a Presidential Memorandum creating a new drone Integration Pilot Program that will accelerate drone integration into the national airspace system.
(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

Pastry Chef Sarah Tanenbaum shows just a few of the 4,000 Halloween theme cookies being prepared, Wednesday, October 25, 2017 at the White House, for the upcoming Halloween at the White House event scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017.
(Official White House Photo by Carlos Fyfe)

Thursday, October 26, 2017

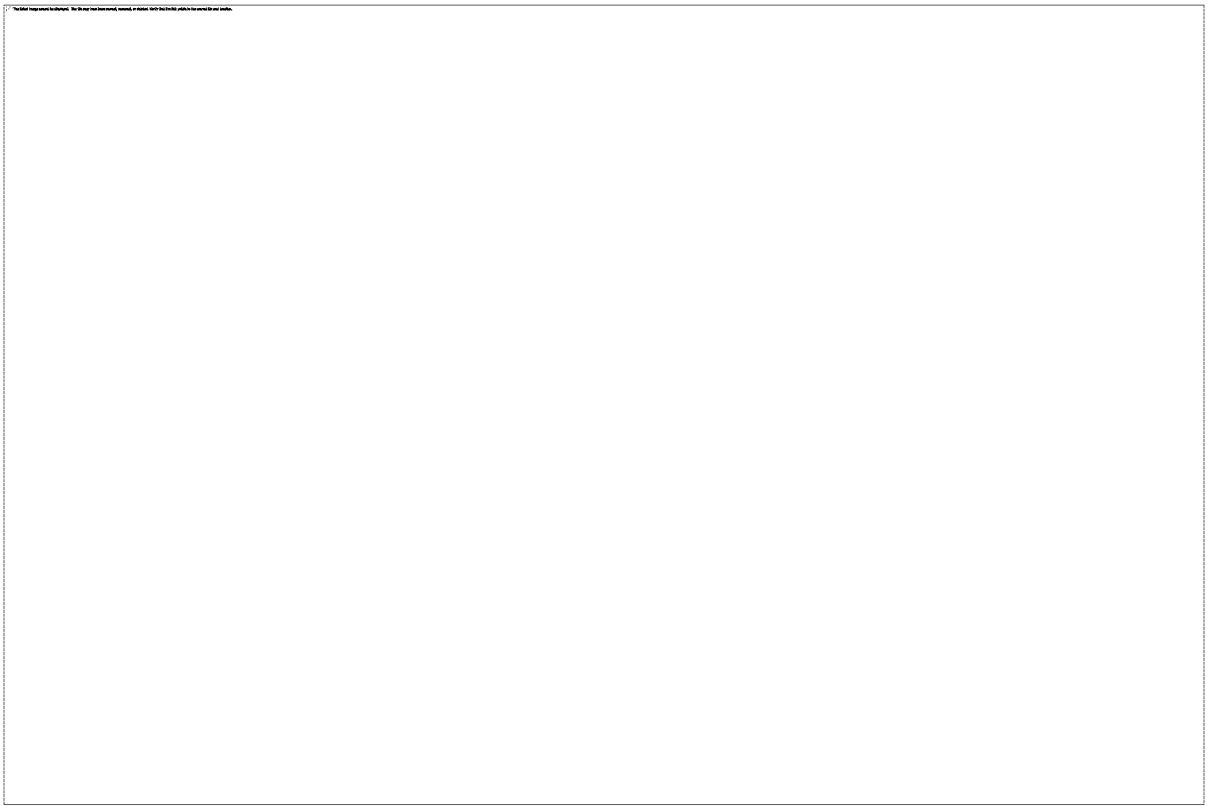
President Donald J. Trump, joined by First Lady Melania Trump and invited families affected by the opioid crisis, prepares to sign a Presidential Memorandum ordering the Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services to declare the opioid crisis a national public health emergency, at a Presidential Memorandum signing in the East Room at the White House, Thursday, October 26, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo Andrea Hanks)

Vice President Mike Pence signs a welcome poster on his arrival to Buckley Air Force Base, Thursday, October 26, 2017, greeted by well-wishers at the base in Aurora, Colorado.
(Official White House Photo by D. Myles Cullen)

Vice President Mike Pence tours a simulation of the Mars Base Camp project, at the Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, Thursday, October 26, 2017, in Littleton, Colorado.
(Official White House Photo by D. Myles Cullen)

Friday, October 27, 2017

President Donald J. Trump welcomes Halloween trick-or-treaters to the Oval Office, Friday, October 27, 2017, at the White House in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)



NASA employees visit The Vice President's Ceremonial Office in The Eisenhower Executive Office Building at the White House on Friday, October 27, 2017, to participate in a space themed trick-or-treating event in Washington, D.C.
(Official White House Photo by Amy Rossetti)

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Message

From: Ferguson, Lincoln [ferguson.lincoln@epa.gov]
Sent: 4/5/2018 4:34:11 PM
To: Jackson, Ryan [jackson.ryan@epa.gov]; Kelly, Albert [kelly.albert@epa.gov]
CC: Leopold, Matt (OGC) [Leopold.Matt@epa.gov]; Wilcox, Jahan [wilcox.jahan@epa.gov]; Bowman, Liz [Bowman.Liz@epa.gov]
Subject: Daily Mail story

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5582299/Female-aide-embattled-Scott-Pruitt-helped-bring-Rob-Porter-resigns.html

Lincoln Ferguson
Senior Advisor to the Administrator
U.S. EPA
(202) 564-1935

Message

From: Marisa Schultz [marisa.schultz@nypost.com]
Sent: 4/10/2018 2:24:33 PM
To: Wilcox, Jahan [wilcox.jahan@epa.gov]
Subject: Samantha Dravis

Hey Jahan,

Wondering if you had an info about Samantha Dravis' calendar/schedule from Nov. 2017-Jan.2018 given the new OIG inquiry. Also wondering if EPA wanted to speak to the implication that Dravis' personal life (finding out Rob Porter was having an affair with Hope Hicks) impacted her ability to do her job?

Thanks,
Marisa

Marisa Schultz
New York Post
Washington Bureau
marisa.schultz@nypost.com
(917) 309-7980 cell