


WEEK 51, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

OUR NATION

ALEX EDLMAN/AP/VIA GETTY IMAGES

A photograph of James Comey, former FBI Director, walking through a doorway. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a red tie. The background shows an interior hallway with other people and a glass door with a blue accessibility sign.

Former FBI Director James Comey leaves the Rayburn House Office Building following a closed meeting of the House Judiciary Committee on Dec. 7, 2018.

FBI Monitored Trump Aide Months Before Opening Russia Investigation

FBI's Comey and McCabe briefed Obama's attorney general, Loretta Lynch, on Trump campaign aide in April 2016 **7**

House Passes \$1.4 Trillion Government Spending Package That Would Avert Shutdown

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—In the final work week of the year, members of the House of Representatives on Dec. 17 passed a bipartisan spending package ahead of the Dec. 20 deadline, enabling a government shutdown to be averted.

The Senate is expected to vote on the package this week and send it to the president for his signature.

Lawmakers finalized the spending bills at an unusual speed, as they have a lot to do this week before heading home for the holidays, including a crucial House vote on impeaching President Donald Trump.

The massive government funding package, more than 2,300 pages long, was released on Dec. 16, a day before the House vote. The package covers approximately \$1.4 trillion in discretionary government spending that includes \$738 billion in military funding and \$632 billion in non-defense spending.

The House passed the 12 appropriations in two separate bills that fund the government through Sept. 30, 2020.

"These bills are the product of bipartisan, bicameral compromise," House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) said at a House Rules Committee hearing Dec. 16. "While there are some things I would have done differently had I written these bills alone, I am very proud of the work we have completed together."

According to a report by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, the total package could result in \$500 billion of additional debt over the next decade.

The package permanently repeals Obamacare's three oft-postponed taxes: the "Cadillac tax" on high-cost health insurance plans, the tax on health insurers, and the medical device tax.

The Congressional Budget Office earlier estimated that the budget deal agreed to by congressional leaders and the White House would increase deficits by nearly \$1.7 trillion over a decade, assuming that spending continues to grow at the rate of inflation beyond 2021.



The U.S. Capitol is shrouded in mist on the night of Dec. 13, 2019.

The Border Wall

One of the thorny issues in negotiations between the White House and Democrats was the funding for the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. The deal awards the Trump administration more than \$1.37 billion for the border wall—equal to last year's funding level. This is significantly less than the \$8.6 billion the president had sought.

The deal, however, is a win for Trump as it preserves his authority to transfer funds for the wall from other accounts.

In February, Trump declared the border situation a national emergency, which allowed him to redirect more than \$6 billion from the Pentagon toward wall construction despite Democrats' objections.

Trump is expected to sign the spending measures at the end of the week, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway said.

"The president is poised to sign it to keep the government open," she told reporters on Dec. 17.

The border wall funding was a major

source of conflict between the White House and Democrats at the end of 2018, triggering a 35-day partial government shutdown, the longest in U.S. history.

"A year after [Democrats] called it a manufactured crisis, the president is getting \$1.375 billion for his wall, and they didn't mess with his authorities at all," Conway added. "There's a lot of good stuff in there."

In the three years since Trump took office, the administration has built 89.5 miles of border wall as of Dec. 6, a senior administration official told The Epoch Times.

In fiscal year 2020, the administration plans to build approximately 300 miles, with \$8.6 billion from Homeland Security and Pentagon accounts, the official added.

What's in the Package?

Defense spending increases \$22 billion in fiscal year 2020 from last year, which will help the U.S. military's modernization efforts, advance the F-35 combat jet program, and expand the Navy's fleet.

The spending package also includes

a 3.1 percent raise for both members of the military and federal civilian employees. In addition, for the first time in 20 years, it provides \$25 million for gun violence prevention research and \$425 million for election security grants.

The age to purchase tobacco products is increased to 21 from 18, in the spending measure. In an effort to combat the youth vaping problem, the ban will apply to both cigarettes and electronic cigarettes.

The deal also reauthorizes the U.S. Export-Import Bank, providing it a seven-year mandate, the longest in the credit agency's history.

The Trump administration has been urging Congress to revive the bank for both economic and national security reasons. Some Republicans and advocacy groups, however, have been opposing the bank, calling it "corporate welfare."

Abortion Funding Battle

Republicans managed to maintain the status quo in the abortion-funding battle.

In March, the Trump administration issued new rules to block the availability of Title X grants to clinics that provide abortions or offer abortion referrals. It also prevented foreign aid funds from going to organizations that perform or promote abortions overseas. Democrats had sought to reverse those prohibitions in the funding bills through "poison pill" riders, but failed.

Abortion-rights advocates reacted to the news.

"Congress had the chance—but failed—to protect reproductive health care in the U.S. and abroad in the 2020 spending bill," Planned Parenthood Action, a nonprofit advocacy group, stated on Twitter on Dec. 16. "Both the Title X and global gag rules stand, threatening access to birth control and other care for millions."

However, "it's not a total win" for Republicans, said Rachel Bovard, senior director of policy at Conservative Partnership Institute.

According to Bovard, Democrats and Republicans agreed at the 11th hour to expand abortion coverage as part of Obamacare's health coverage tax credit and the Indian employment credit.



Border Patrol agent Jose Girabay stands next to part of the 30-foot-high, 22-mile-long new fence on the U.S.-Mexico border east of San Luis in Yuma, Ariz., on Nov. 27, 2019.

Judge Declares American Samoans US Citizens; Samoan Government Objects

MATTHEW VADUM

A federal judge in Utah has ruled that American Samoans are full U.S. citizens and ordered the Trump administration to issue the plaintiffs in the case new passports reflecting their full-citizen status.

American Samoan officials argued that "imposition of citizenship by judicial fiat would fail to recognize American Samoa's sovereignty and the importance of the fa'a Samoa [the Samoan way of life]."

"It's an overwhelming victory, but it's the first step in what will likely be several more steps," Neil Weare, lawyer for the plaintiffs and president of the nonprofit Equally American, told CNN.

"It doesn't feel very good when the federal government says you're American, but not quite the same as other Americans, just a little bit different. Just being able to say they're real American citizens, I think that goes a long way, in addition to being able to vote."

The ruling came Dec. 12 after Ameri-

can Samoans living in Utah filed a lawsuit in 2018 in the case cited as *Fitisemanu v. United States of America*, asserting that because they are deemed "non-citizen nationals" instead of U.S. citizens, they are denied various rights, such as voting, that U.S. citizens take for granted. Their passports contain an endorsement that reads: "The bearer is a United States national and not a United States citizen."

American Samoa became a U.S. territory in 1900. Congress adopted laws granting citizenship to those born in other U.S. territories—the Northern Marianas, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico—but not for American Samoa.

The judge in the case, Clark Waddoups of the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, wrote in the 69-page ruling that the court was "not imposing 'citizenship by judicial fiat.' The action is required by the mandate of the Fourteenth Amendment as construed and applied by Supreme Court precedent," the judge stated.

The U.S. government had argued in court that federal courts can't make citizenship decisions.

It wrote: "Such a novel holding would be contrary to the decisions of every court of appeals to have considered the question, inconsistent with over a cen-



Neil Weare.



A beach in Saleapaga, Samoa, on June 2, 2017.



U.S. passport.

Officials Silent on Status of Indicted US Religious Commission Member

MARK TAPSCOTT

WASHINGTON—A spokesperson for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) declined to comment Dec. 17 when asked by The Epoch Times about the status of Commissioner Andy Khawaja, who was indicted earlier this month for allegedly helping to conceal \$3.5 million in illegal contributions to Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016.

"We're not commenting on Andy Khawaja's indictment," said USCIRF spokesperson Kellie Boyle. "Your best bet would be to contact Chuck Schumer's office, since that is who appointed Andy."

Boyle didn't respond when asked if Khawaja continues to participate in the commission's daily management, or if he's recused himself pending the outcome of the indictment that was announced Dec. 3 by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Khawaja's photograph and official biography remain posted on the USCIRF website.

Spokesmen for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), who appointed Khawaja, didn't respond to The Epoch Times' email and telephone requests for comment.

Khawaja is a 48-year-old Lebanese American businessman and high-dollar political donor with deep national-level connections in the Democratic Party. He's also been photographed with President Donald Trump in the White House, after making a \$1 million contribution to the president's 2016 inaugural celebration.

Khawaja is founder and chief executive officer of Allied Wallet Inc., an online payment processing firm. A spokesman for Allied Wallet didn't respond to The Epoch

Times' email and telephone requests for comment. The company has offices in Los Angeles, Germany, Ireland, India, Japan, and Macau.

"A federal grand jury in the District of Columbia indicted Ahmad 'Andy' Khawaja, 48, of Los Angeles, California, on Nov. 7, 2019, along with George Nader, Roy Boulos, Rudy Dekermenjian, Mohammad "Moe" Diab, Rani El-Saadi, Stevan Hill and Thayne Whipple," the DOJ stated in its announcement of the indictment.

"The 53-count indictment charges Kha-

waja with two counts of conspiracy, three counts of making conduit contributions, three counts of causing excessive contributions, 13 counts of making false statements, 13 counts of causing false records to be filed, and one count of obstruction of a federal grand jury investigation."

"According to the indictment, from March 2016 through January 2017, Khawaja conspired with Nader to conceal the source of more than \$3.5 million in campaign contributions, directed to political committees associated with a candidate for President of the United States in the 2016 election," the DOJ stated. The \$3.5 million came from an unnamed foreign nation.

Federal Election Commission records show the contributions went to Clinton, who was favored to defeat Republican Trump, who scored an upset victory in the 2016 election.

"By design, these contributions appeared to be in the names of Khawaja, his wife, and his company. In reality, they allegedly were

of historical practice by all three branches of the United States government, and conflict with the strong objection of the local government of American Samoa."

The judge disagreed, writing that "Plaintiffs are American Samoans. They brought this action seeking to realize their rights to citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment."

"Persons born in American Samoa are citizens of the United States by virtue of the Citizenship Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment," and that a federal law known as 8 U.S.C. § 1408(l) that designates them as non-citizen nationals is unconstitutional on its face.

The judge enjoined the United States from enforcing that law and ordered the government to issue the plaintiffs new passports that don't contain the endorsement stating the holder is a non-citizen national. According to NPR, the judge temporarily stayed enforcement of his order.

Waddoups didn't impose limitations on the geographic effect of his order and didn't qualify his statement that those born in American Samoa are U.S. citizens, so presumably, the ruling applies throughout the country, though more litigation on the issue seems likely. In 2016, the Supreme Court refused to take up a similar case from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that examined the citizenship status of people born in American Samoa.

It's unclear if the Trump administration will appeal the ruling.

The U.S. Department of Justice didn't respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment as of press time.

Government lawyers for the United States and American Samoa argued in the court case that only Congress can decide questions of citizenship.

American Samoan officials argued that "imposition of citizenship by judicial fiat would fail to recognize American Samoa's sovereignty and the importance of the fa'a Samoa [the Samoan way of life]," and would violate "fundamental principles of self-determination."



Andy Khawaja.

funded by Nader. Khawaja and Nader allegedly made these contributions in an effort to gain influence with high-level political figures, including the candidate," the announcement stated.

The USCIRF was created by President Bill Clinton and Congress in 1998 "to monitor violations of religious freedom or belief abroad. Such violations range from the denial of permits to build places of worship to the detention, torture, killing or displacement of individuals due to their holding or practicing a particular religion or belief," according to the commission's web site.

The present chairman of the commission is Dr. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council in Washington, following an appointment by Trump.

Gayle Manchin, the wife of Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), is vice chairman. She also was appointed by Schumer. Other Trump-appointed commissioners include former Reagan White House senior aide Gary Bauer and Nadine Maenza, executive director of Patriot Voices.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) appointed two of the present commissioners, Anurima Bhargava and Tenzin Dorjee.

There is nothing in Khawaja's USCIRF biography that connects him with specific religious institutions or international religious advocacy groups. His term officially ends in May 2020.



Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), who appointed Andy Khawaja to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

US Dismisses North Korea's Nuclear Deadline,

Urges Return to Negotiations

BOWEN XIAO

A senior Washington diplomat said on Dec. 16 that the United States won't accept a year-end deadline set unilaterally by North Korea to make concessions in nuclear talks. The official also urged Pyongyang to return to the negotiating table.

Stephen Biegun, U.S. special envoy for North Korea, said Washington is open to talks on denuclearization. Biegun was in Seoul for discussions with South Korean officials when he made the remarks dismissing Pyongyang's deadline, which the country had repeatedly brought up.

"On this point, let me be absolutely clear: The United States does not have a deadline," Biegun told reporters. "We are fully aware of the strong potential for North Korea to conduct a major provocation in the days ahead. To say the least, such an action will be most unhelpful in achieving lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula."

North Korea has recently conducted a number of weapons tests. On Dec. 8, Pyongyang launched a "very important" test at its once-dismantled rocket testing launch site, according to the state media agency KCNA.

Biegun said it's time for the two countries to get back to negotiating talks, which had stalled. The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment from The Epoch Times.

"Let me speak directly to our counterparts in North Korea: It is time for us to do our jobs. Let's get this done. We are here. And you know how to reach us," Biegun told reporters.

The current administration isn't giving North Korea the concessions it demands, Peter Huessy, a senior defense consultant and director of strategic deterrent studies at the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, told The Epoch Times.

"The North is playing the game of, 'Let's see if we can beat up the United States and get concessions, because that is what they do,'" he said. "They are like a bully or kind of a criminal gang that extorts people. We [the United States] are just not playing the extortion game anymore."

Huessy said the United States has

The north is playing the game of 'Let's see if we can beat up the United States and get concessions because that is what they do.'

Peter Huessy, director of strategic deterrent studies, Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the demilitarized zone on June 30, 2019.

historically been willing to give the communist regime some form of concessions, such as shipments of oil or food, but that's changed under the current leadership.

"This administration has said no to all of that with one exception: We did change the nature of some of our military exercises with South Korea," Huessy said. "What the president is trying to do is to change the story, change the narrative."

In October, negotiations in Stockholm between U.S. and North Korean officials broke down, with the two countries leaving without any progress or deal made. It was the first round of talks between the countries in more than seven months.

Biegun later held separate meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Unification Minister Kim Yeon-Chul, Seoul's point man on North Korea. Moon's office stated that during his visit to the presidential Blue House, Biegun said the Trump administration wouldn't give up on seeking diplomatic progress with North Korea, but it didn't elaborate further.

North Korea's military chief, Pak Jong Chon, asserted Dec. 15 that the North has built up "tremendous power," and findings from the recent tests would be used to develop new weapons to allow the regime to "definitely and reliably" counter U.S. nuclear threats.

In November, the United States and South Korea said they would postpone

joint military drills in a bid to bolster peace efforts with North Korea, while also assuring that military readiness would remain at high levels. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Nov. 17 that the decision wasn't a concession to Pyongyang, but part of a "good faith effort" to reignite peace talks.

President Donald Trump, meanwhile, recently warned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un not to act in a "hostile" manner.

"Kim Jong Un is too smart and has far too much to lose, everything actually, if he acts in a hostile way. He signed a strong Denuclearization Agreement with me in Singapore," Trump wrote on Twitter on Dec. 8.

"He does not want to void his special relationship with the President of the United States or interfere with the U.S. Presidential Election in November," Trump continued. "North Korea, under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, has tremendous economic potential, but it must denuclearize as promised. NATO, China, Russia, Japan, and the entire world is unified on this issue!"

Trump's comments followed remarks by North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, who said on Dec. 7 that denuclearization is now off the negotiating table with the United States, and lengthy talks with Washington aren't needed.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

AP PHOTO/LEE JIN-MAN



U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun (2nd R) arrives at Incheon International Airport in Incheon, South Korea, on Dec. 15, 2019.

Congress Holds Forum Discussing Potential of Faith-Based Programs Helping Veterans Suffering PTSD

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES



Veterans stand for the opening prayer at the 119th annual Veterans of Foreign Wars Conference in Kansas City, Mo., on July 24, 2018.

NATHAN SU

Members of the House of Representatives held a roundtable forum on Dec. 11 to discuss the role of faith-based spiritual programs in addressing the suicide epidemic among veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The number of veterans who commit suicide has increased to an average of 17 per day, according to the 2019 National Suicide Prevention Annual Report, and the bipartisan group of legislators is looking to do something to try to reverse the trend.

The report was prepared by the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Veteran suicides exceeded 6,000 each year from 2008 to 2017, indicating that more than 60,000 veterans who had served their country committed suicide in those 10 years.

The report also counted an average of 15.9 veteran suicides per day in 2005, with this number increasing to 16.8 in 2017. The report compared the suicide rates of veterans and nonveterans, and found that in 2017 the suicide rate of veterans was 1.5 times the rate of nonveterans.

"We have been throwing millions of dollars into the military suicide issue, and many other military behavior health issues. The statistics keep getting worse and worse. We are not doing something right. We need to integrate faith-based solutions," said retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Bob Dees after the forum. Dees is also a former vice director for operational plans and interoperability for the Department of Defense.

He said faith-based solutions are incredibly important to veterans and the military. "I have found as a senior military commander over the many years that is what really works. We have got to heal not just heart and soul, but the very spirit of each one of our men and women wearing our nation's uniform."

The bipartisan forum was hosted by Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.), and joined by several other lawmakers. Staff from the Mental Health Caucus, Veteran Affairs Committee, and Armed Services Committee participated in the discussion.

Hartzler told The Epoch Times that there are families in her district that have been impacted by veterans who had committed suicide because of PTSD, and she thinks currently available programs provided to veterans aren't sufficient.

Hartzler started her own journey looking for "programs that are actually working and helping bring lasting healing and hope to our soldiers, sailors, and marines without just automatically prescribing them opioids," she said. She was amazed to find alternative programs that already exist, she said, that could

effectively help veterans who suffer from PTSD. She decided to bring some of her colleagues to hear how these programs work, so they can also utilize these programs to deal with similar issues in their own districts.

Three faith-based veteran PTSD programs with successful track records—Mighty Oaks Foundation, Reboot Recovery, and Operation Restored Warrior—were invited to present their stories and past experiences to the forum.

We have got to heal not just heart and soul, but the very spirit of each one of our men and women wearing our nation's uniform.

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Bob Dees

"A spiritual wound of a war needs a spiritual solution," said Chad Robichaux, founder of Mighty Oaks Foundation. He said after the forum that he "walked away very encouraged seeing that we have congressional leaders who share our passion for our warriors, and also share our ideas."

Robichaux was a special operations Force Reconnaissance Marine who finished eight deployments operated by the Joint Special

Operations Command Task Force in Afghanistan.

He developed PTSD during his service in the Marine Corps, and eventually lost his position there. After he retired from the military, Robichaux tried to deal with his PTSD by focusing on martial arts, hoping the new challenge would get rid of his emotional problems. He became the national champion of pro MMA (mixed martial arts) in 2010. However, his PTSD symptoms continued.

He separated from his wife and found himself on the verge of losing his marriage. He started thinking of suicide and tried to convince himself that his family would be better off without him.

Robichaux eventually reconnected with his church through the help of his wife and recovered through his spiritual practice. He learned from his own experiences and founded the Mighty Oaks Foundation using the same approach to help other veterans.

Since 2011, the success of Mighty Oaks programs has helped more than 2,600 veterans recover from PTSD.

"As commander in chief, I extend my personal gratitude to you for your distinguished and steadfast service to our country," President Donald Trump wrote in a personal letter to Robichaux.

Mike Lindell, the inventor and CEO of MyP-

illow, also attended the forum. Lindell was also the founder of Lindell Foundation, a faith-based organization that helps addicts.

Lindell had been addicted to crack cocaine and alcohol earlier in life. He said addictions cause wounds similar combat traumas. He was invited to watch how the Operation Restored Warrior program helped veterans. He gave his conclusion to the forum: "There is nothing better on this planet than [the faith-based PTSD assistance program] to help veterans suffering PTSD."

"We need more awareness of these programs within the DOD as well as VA," Hartzler told The Epoch Times, adding that veterans suffering from PTSD should have faith-based treatment programs available as options.

A report from the Military Psychology Journal was presented to the forum. The report was based on the studies conducted by Dr. Jenny Owens of Reboot Recovery (RR). The studies were based on the findings from the performance of 254 adults treated by one of RR's programs called Reboot Combat Recovery.

The studies found participants had "improvement for pain interference, fatigue, sleep disturbance, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, and social participation. Improvement was uniform except that veterans benefited more than currently serving military personnel with respect to anxiety symptoms."

NATHAN SU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Congress held a roundtable forum to hear how faith-based organizations are helping veterans suffering from PTSD on Dec. 11, 2019.



ICE repatriates 37 Cambodian nationals, most convicted criminals, back to Cambodia on July 4, 2019.

ICE Director: 13,000 Criminals Not Arrested Due to Border Crisis, Sanctuaries

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON

WASHINGTON—More than 267,000 aliens were deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in fiscal 2019, slightly up (4.4 percent) from the previous year, the agency said on Dec. 11.

However, the surge at the southern border, on top of sanctuary jurisdictions, drew resources away from interior enforcement, and arrests of convicted criminals by ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) decreased by 12 percent.

Acting Director for ICE Matthew Albence said the decrease equated to around 13,000 fewer criminal aliens arrested compared to fiscal 2018.

"And what that means is, there's 13,000 more criminals that we could've gotten our hands on, could have got off the street, that are still out there and able to reoffend," he said.

Eighty-six percent of ERO's administrative arrests were aliens with criminal convictions or pending criminal charges.

The 123,000 aliens with criminal convictions or pending charges who were arrested by ERO in fiscal 2019 represented a total of 489,000 crimes, convicted and pending.

"Which equates to an average of four criminal arrests or convictions per alien, highlighting the recidivist nature of the aliens that ICE arrests," ICE stated in a report.

Albence said that with only 5,000 officers working on arresting and removing criminal aliens, ICE's reach is limited.

"More criminal aliens are out there on the street and these criminal aliens are known to be recidivists. That means there'll be more victimization out there," he said.

"Unfortunately, some of our law enforcement partners have chosen not to cooperate with us, when we have a unique capability to actually prevent crimes because we know that these individuals, if we take them off the street, if we take them out of the communities, if we remove them from the

country, those are crimes that are not going to be committed that they would have otherwise committed."

Albence said the agency's challenges were exacerbated by sanctuary jurisdictions that decreased cooperation with ICE by not sharing information or granting access to jails to allow agents to pick up criminal aliens.

In fiscal 2019, ICE lodged 7 percent fewer detainees, which ask jails to provide information on the release of an alien, or to hold the alien for up to 48 hours for custody transfer.

The more than 165,000 detainees that were lodged included those for aliens with accumulated criminal histories of more than 56,000 assaults, 14,500 sex crimes, 5,000 robberies, 2,500 homicides, and 2,500 kidnappings.

Albence said the number of aliens in ICE custody is around 44,000. But its nondetained docket has increased to 3.2 million—600,000 more than last year and 800,000 more than in fiscal 2017, and the first time it has exceeded 3 million, Albence said.

"Nondetained docket cases could take years—many years, in fact—to work their way through the system, especially depending on the location," he said.

ICE has also expanded its use of "alternatives to detention" (ATD), mostly through issuing more ankle monitoring bracelets. ATD had 23,000 participants in 2014, whereas it was up to 96,000 by the end of fiscal 2019.

"This expansion has come with a

Matthew Albence, acting director, ICE

Acting ICE Director Matthew Albence testifies in Congress in Washington on July 25, 2019.



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

number of challenges, including high levels of absconders among recently enrolled family units," Albence said. He said family units absconded at a rate of almost 27 percent, more than double the 12.3 percent absconder rate for non-family unit participants.

Albence said for \$200 million, ICE removes about 3,000 people a year on the ATD program. He said if that money was instead used to detain aliens during their court cases, "I could probably remove about 10 times that."

We have a unique capability to actually prevent crimes because ... if we remove them from the country, those are crimes that are not going to be committed.

Matthew Albence, acting director, ICE

He said the Migrant Protection Protocols, which allow for the United States to return aliens to Mexico while they await their immigration court hearings, has had the biggest impact on fraudulent asylum claims so far.

"This is the whole reason why these single adults were renting children to come across the border illegally and present as a family unit, because they knew that they would be released," he said. "If they could have been released as a single adult, it would not have involved the process of renting children."

More than 600,000 aliens are now considered fugitives by ICE. They are those who have been issued a final order of removal by an immigration judge but have not left the United States.

The number of aliens removed back to Mexico (127,000) was the highest, followed by Guatemala (55,000), Honduras (41,000), and El Salvador (19,000).

The next highest countries had fewer than 2,300 removals each: Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Brazil, and India.

FBI Monitored Trump Campaign Aide Months Before Launching Crossfire Hurricane

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

The FBI began monitoring Carter Page shortly after he joined the 2016 Trump presidential campaign and months before the bureau opened a formal investigation of the campaign, according to details from a report released on Dec. 9 by the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Inspector General (OIG).

One week after the Trump campaign named Page as one of its foreign policy advisers on March 24, the FBI headquarters instructed the New York field office to open a counterintelligence investigation into Page.

After receiving the instructions from headquarters, the New York field office opened the investigation of Page on April 6, 2016. The New York field office told the inspector general they opened the investigation because of Page's contacts with Russian intelligence officers and because Page told Russian officials that he was one of the unnamed witnesses in a U.S. indictment of Russian intelligence officers.

After opening the investigation, the New York field office monitored Page to see if Russian intelligence officers would contact him again, according to the report. An FBI counterintelligence officer told the IG that she drafted national security letters to obtain Page's cellphone numbers and residence information. The officer said she conducted "limited investigative activity" in the case before transferring it in August 2016 to the team running the investigation of the Trump campaign.

The FBI opened the investigation into Page's contacts with Russians in April 2016 despite being aware, since as early as 2009, that Page regularly provided information about his contacts with Russians to the CIA.

The monitoring of Page's contacts began around the time that FBI Director James Comey and Deputy Director Andrew McCabe briefed Attorney General Loretta Lynch about intelligence linking Russian intelligence to Page. Lynch told DOJ Inspector General (IG) Michael Horowitz that in spring 2016, Comey and McCabe pulled her aside after a weekly meeting at FBI headquarters and shared information about Page that Lynch believed they learned from a member of the intelligence community.

"According to Lynch, Comey and McCabe provided her with information indicating that Russian intelligence reportedly planned to use Page for information and to develop other contacts in the United States, and that they were interested in his affiliation with the campaign," the Dec. 9 report states.

The inspector general's finding about the FBI's April investigation of Page substantiates the claims long lodged by House Intelligence Committee ranking member Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), who told The Epoch Times in October that there is evidence the Trump campaign was being investigated long before the FBI opened a formal probe in late July 2016.

"There are many indications that surveillance was being conducted against the Trump campaign before the official opening of the investigation," Jack Langer, spokesman for Nunes, told The Epoch Times. "If this is the case, we want to know what exactly happened, why it happened, and who ordered it. This is an issue of continuing concern to Intelligence Committee Republicans."



Former FBI Director James Comey leaves the Rayburn House Office Building following a closed meeting of the House Judiciary Committee on Dec. 7, 2018.

The timing of the encounter between Lynch, Comey, and McCabe raises questions about what actions the nation's law enforcement and intelligence agencies took in connection to the Trump campaign before formally opening a counterintelligence investigation—code-named Crossfire Hurricane—on July 31, 2016.

Comey and McCabe both told the inspector general they don't remember briefing Lynch about Page in spring 2016. Comey said he didn't become aware of Page until mid-2016; McCabe said he wasn't aware that the New York field office was investigating Page, according to the report.

Comey's lack of recollection is notable because the New York field office provided information

to the FBI headquarters to be used for a "Director's note" and a separate "Director's brief" to be held on April 27, 2016, according to a footnote in the IG report. The inspector general noted that investigators were unable to question Comey on the matter because he declined to have his security clearance reinstated.

Comey and McCabe told Lynch they were considering providing a defensive briefing to the Trump campaign, but Lynch believed the possibility was "preliminary" and "something that might happen down the road," the report states. The FBI never provided the defensive briefing, according to the report.

The FBI opened the investigation into Page's contacts with Russians in April 2016 despite being aware, since as early as 2009, that Page regularly provided information about his contacts with Russians to the another government agency. Page has identified that agency as the CIA.

The White House didn't label the Page probe a "sensitive investigative matter," a designation usually given to investigations of persons tied to political parties and campaigns.

FBI officials told the inspector general that the announcement that Page joined the Trump campaign didn't influence their decision to open the investigation. According to the report, "their concerns about Page, particularly his disclosure to the Russians about his role in the indictment, predated the announcement."

The White House didn't respond to a request for comment.

Within days of taking over the case from the New York field office, the Crossfire Hurricane team sought to obtain a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant on Page, according to the IG report. On Aug. 15, 2016, a Crossfire Hurricane case agent submitted a request to the FBI's general counsel for a FISA warrant on Page. The effort fizzled on Aug. 22, 2016, when the general counsel determined that there wasn't enough evidence to warrant surveillance.

The Crossfire Hurricane team renewed its efforts to surveil Page immediately after receiving several reports compiled by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele on Sept. 19, 2016. The FBI obtained the FISA warrant on Page on Oct. 21, 2016.

Horowitz concluded that the FISA warrant applications on Page contained 17 "significant errors." Among the stated errors, the FBI concealed from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) its knowledge that Page was re-

porting his contacts with Russian intelligence officers to another U.S. government agency.

The FISC presiding judge, Rosemary Collyer, issued a rare order on Dec. 17 in response to the DOJ OIG's findings. Collyer ordered the Justice Department to submit a formal explanation of what will be done to prevent the court from being misled again.

"The FBI's handling of the Carter Page applications, as portrayed in the OIG report, was antithetical to the heightened duty of candor described above," Collyer wrote. "The frequency with which representations made by FBI personnel turned out to be unsupported or contradicted by information in their possession, and with which they withheld information detrimental to their case, calls into question whether information contained in other FBI applications is reliable."

Horowitz concluded that the failures implicated the entire chain of command at the FBI. The inspector general said he didn't find evidence to suggest that bias against then-candidate Donald Trump contributed to the FBI's failures.

According to Horowitz, Lynch's recollection about the spring 2016 conversation with Comey and McCabe is "consistent" with the information related to the New York field office's investigation and subsequent indictment of Russian intelligence officers.

It is unclear who, if anyone, Lynch identified as the member of the intelligence community who she believed was the source of information on Page from Comey and McCabe. Notably, then-CIA Director John Brennan and then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper began receiving foreign intelligence about alleged links between the Trump campaign and Russia in spring 2016, concurrent with the conversation of Comey, McCabe, and Lynch. Brennan has testified that he forwarded the intelligence to the FBI. That intelligence "served as the basis for the FBI investigation," Brennan said.

Attorney General William Barr appointed U.S. Attorney John Durham earlier this year to investigate the origins of the FBI's investigation of the Trump campaign, among other issues. Brennan said in October that "I am supposedly going to be interviewed by Mr. Durham as part of this non-investigation."

Special counsel Robert Mueller investigated the allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia and couldn't find evidence to substantiate the claims.



Attorney General Loretta Lynch speaks during a press conference, flanked by FBI Director James Comey, at the Department of Justice in Washington on March 24, 2016.



Carter Page, former foreign-policy adviser to Donald Trump during his 2016 presidential election campaign, in Washington on May 28, 2019.

Virginia Sheriff Says He'll Deputize Citizens in 'Second Amendment Sanctuary'

BOWEN XIAO

As a majority of local counties in Virginia are declaring themselves "Second Amendment sanctuaries," a direct response to a new push by Democrats to pass stricter gun control measures, one of the state's county sheriffs says he'll "deputize citizens" as auxiliary deputies to protect their constitutional right to bear firearms.

Officials in Second Amendment sanctuaries generally state that they won't follow new gun laws they believe are unconstitutional. Over 70 of the 95 counties in the state have declared or adopted some form of sanctuary policy, as of Dec. 18.

Local leaders and an increasing number of sheriffs argue that gun control measures proposed by Democrats, which could be approved by the state legislature as soon as next year, are unnecessary and overreaching.

"To be short, there is no need for further gun restrictions," Culpeper County Sheriff Scott Jenkins told The Epoch Times. "The proposed laws that are designed to supposedly restrict criminal activity, in fact, will only impact law-abiding citizens."

While Jenkins said he had taken a strong stance by announcing his willingness to deputize citizens, he said he hopes the legislature will work to reach sensible solutions.

"I plan to properly screen and deputize thousands of our law-abiding citizens to protect their constitutional right to own firearms," Jenkins wrote in a Dec. 4 Facebook post, if Virginia's General Assembly passes the proposed bills.

In early December, Culpeper County's Board of Supervisors voted 7-0 to affirm itself as a "constitutional County," sparking a standing ovation by residents present for the vote. Jenkins lauded the leadership for making a public statement showing that the county supports citizens' rights to defend themselves.

The move to create Second Amendment sanctuaries gained momentum after both houses of the state legislature recently gained a Democratic

The proposed laws that are designed to supposedly restrict criminal activity, in fact, will only impact law-abiding citizens.

Scott Jenkins, sheriff, Culpeper County, Va.



Culpeper County Sheriff Scott H. Jenkins.

majority. The newly elected legislature began discussing several proposals, including a ban of "assault-style" rifles and high-capacity magazines, as well as raising the minimum age to buy a rifle or shotgun from 18 to 21, according to Dick Saslaw, the top Democrat in the state Senate.

Jenkins said the gun restriction proposals "shook the core of conservative and libertarian groups throughout the commonwealth." He described the legislature's proposals as "a far-left agenda that continues to be pushed throughout our country."

Aside from the counties, there are also a number of independent municipalities in Virginia that have become sanctuaries.

"I think [local officials] are fully awake now and have become laser-focused on the goal of stopping this government overreach and restriction of our constitutional rights," he said.

About 287 miles away from Culpeper lies Tazewell County, whose board voted to declare the county a Second Amendment sanctuary on Dec. 3 and also approved a separate resolution emphasizing the right to form a militia, as described in the U.S. Constitution and in the state's constitution.

Tazewell's board is made up of three Democrats and two Republicans. Both resolutions passed unanimously.

Under Article I, Section 13, of Virgin-

ia's Constitution, it states, "That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state, therefore, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; that standing armies, in time of peace, should be avoided as dangerous to liberty; and that in all cases the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power."

Jenkins said he was "pleasantly surprised" by the growing number of Virginia counties that have joined what he described as an "organic movement."

"[I]t sends a message to Richmond [Virginia's capital] that the majority of our commonwealth would like the laws to remain as they are and not further restrict and punish our law-abiding citizens," he said.

Jenkins said he's aware of reports saying that some Virginia counties are discussing whether to establish militias; he said that isn't something that he's discussed or given any consideration.

He said the state legislature should direct its focus and energy toward mental health issues and other social problems that are "the core of these [shooting] incidents."

"These [gun] restrictions will do nothing to stop a person that is hell-

bent on evil, and killing innocent people," Jenkins said.

National Guard

In response to the rising number of Second Amendment sanctuaries, a U.S. House Democrat floated the idea that Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam could direct the state's National Guard to help enforce the proposed gun restrictions. Northam is also a Democrat.

Rep. Donald McEachin (D-Va.) made the proposal on Dec. 11, while also suggesting cutting off state funds to counties that don't comply with gun control measures that might pass in the state.

"And ultimately, I'm not the governor, but the governor may have to nationalize the National Guard to enforce the law," McEachin told the Washington Examiner. "That's his call, because I don't know how serious these counties are and how severe the violations of law will be. But that's obviously an option he has."

Jenkins, meanwhile, called McEachin's comments "reckless."

"I'm hoping that was said off the cuff and without too much thought of the impact a statement like that would have on our citizens," he said. "It's definitely the wrong direction to go with the conversation."

The Virginia National Guard responded with a string of Twitter posts, in which they said they haven't received any requests from the governor.

"We understand and respect the passion people feel for the U.S. Constitution and 2nd Amendment rights," Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, wrote. "We will not speculate about the possible use of the Virginia National Guard."

"We have not received any requests from the Governor, or anyone on his staff, about serving in a law enforcement role related to any proposed legislation," he said.

Williams added that personnel "are free to express their opinions to their elected officials, but they should not engage in any political activity while in a uniformed status."

JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Assault rifles hang on the wall for sale at Blue Ridge Arsenal in Chantilly, Va., on Oct. 6, 2017.



The Three Steps to Justice for the Spycgate Scandal

BRIAN CATES



Commentary

Just over a year and a half since Department of Justice Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz began his review of serious questions regarding the FBI's surveillance of the Trump presidential campaign during the 2016 election, his final report was publicly released on Dec. 9, and he appeared before Congress on Dec. 11 to discuss it.

After reading the report myself, I can confidently state that this report hammered the final nail in the coffin of more than three years of a massive hoax that was perpetrated on the country by corrupt officials in the federal agencies and irresponsible reporters in many of the major news media outlets.

All expectations turn to Durham as the country waits to see what he has found when his investigation ends.

The story told by this FISA Abuse report is a sad and infuriating one: how top DOJ-FBI officials got caught red-handed faking their probable cause to get legal electronic surveillance on a presidential campaign during an election.

A key part of faking that probable cause meant taking false allegations from a paid Hillary Clinton political operative, namely, Christopher Steele. The goal of the hoax was to prevent the election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States, and failing in that, to essentially paralyze the country and sabotage the new administration until Trump could be removed from office.

As you can see, if you look around, these people utterly failed. Trump not only survived the sabotage attempt, but he's also stronger and his presidency is more robust than ever. Despite the recent impeachment farce in the House of Representatives—which is now wrapping up as I write this—the needle failed to move at all when it comes to public support for impeaching this president. In fact, recent polls now show Trump is gaining support, not losing it. Several polls now show Trump leading all his Democratic challengers in several of the key swing states, less than a year from the 2020 election.

But as President Trump himself has often said, steps need to be taken to make absolutely sure this kind of



1. Former special counsel Robert Mueller testifies before Congress in Washington on July 24, 2019. Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images

2. Department of Justice Inspector General Michael Horowitz testifies before the Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington on Dec. 11, 2019. Charlotte Cuthbertson/The Epoch Times

3. President Trump at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Dec. 14, 2019. Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images

4. John Durham, U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut. United States Department of Justice

hoax is never tried on a president and the country ever again.

That's why it's a good thing that two of the necessary steps to ensure this kind of fraud is never tried again have already been completed.

The Three Steps to Justice

It helps to think of this unfolding Spycgate drama in three separate and distinct acts, each one carried out by a different person.

1. Special counsel Robert Mueller: Kills the RussiaGate hoax by revealing there never was any evidence for it.
2. Inspector General Michael Horowitz: Performs an internal FBI autopsy on the RussiaGate hoax to learn how a fiction based on no

evidence was used by the FBI to obtain a FISA warrant and three renewals on Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

3. U.S. Attorney John Durham: Buries the dead RussiaGate hoax as he brings accountability to those who perpetrated this fraud on the country.

Step One

A nonpartisan independent icon of the law enforcement community, a former director of the FBI itself, Robert Mueller, was handpicked by former Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to run a special counsel investigation that was given a historic and ever-expanding scope for his search for any evidence whatsoever establishing Trump campaign collusion with the Russian

government during the 2016 election and afterward.

Step Two

Because Mueller definitively demonstrated that evidence of the Trump presidential campaign colluding with Russia didn't exist, this immediately raised the important question of how the FBI came to claim to the FISA Court that there was sufficient probable cause to start counterintelligence investigations of four U.S. citizens associated with the Trump campaign, and how at least one surveillance warrant on one of these citizens kept being repeatedly renewed, despite that exculpatory evidence kept being discovered by the FBI's own continuing investigation.

Even before the Mueller special counsel's office completed its investigation in March, it became evident that the DOJ officials involved had perpetrated a massive fraud on the court by withholding and even hiding the exculpatory evidence for Page that their own investigation was discovering, as well as hiding damaging information concerning the credibility of the confidential human source who had provided the allegations they were using as their probable cause in the surveillance warrant, Horowitz announced in a review of these FISA issues in March of 2018.

Step Three

Building on the foundation of what the Mueller investigation had revealed, and upon what the inspector general's investigation was finding, nonpartisan and independent U.S. Attorney for Connecticut John Durham was tapped by Attorney General William Barr to begin an investigation into the issues uncovered by Mueller and Horowitz.

That criminal investigation led by Durham is now well underway. Barr has said in recent interviews with both NBC News and The Wall Street Journal that he expects Durham to finish sometime in the late spring or early summer of 2020.

Horowitz's final report was absolutely crucial in unveiling the final bits of evidence that proved the Steele dossier was a fraud and that the Spycgate scandal is very real.

Now, all expectations turn to Durham as the country waits to see what he has found when his investigation ends.

Brian Cates is a writer based in South Texas and the author of "Nobody Asked For My Opinion ... But Here It Is Anyway!"

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Watson Bryant Jr., Nadya Bryant, Barbara "Bobi" Jewell, Clint Eastwood, David Ralston, Paul Walter Hauser, Kathy Bates, Sam Rockwell and Jon Hamm onstage during "Richard Jewell" Atlanta screening at Rialto Center for the Arts in Atlanta, Georgia, on Dec. 10, 2019.

Richard Jewell as Everyman

CAROL M. SWAIN

Commentary

I left the theater saddened after watching Clint Eastwood's latest directorial work, "Richard Jewell," a film about the falsely accused Atlanta Olympic Park bomber and the media's rush to judgment.

I was disheartened because Jewell, now deceased, represents every American and especially the Trump "deplorables." Any one of us can be falsely accused of a crime, and our ability to defend ourselves often depends on resources and knowledge many of us lack.

We live in a society where trials-by-media are commonplace, and due process and the presumption of innocence are fading away, part of a bygone era. In the U.S. judicial system, due process is supposed to mean that every citizen is accorded legal rights and protection from governmental overreach.

We find protection in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which states, "No person shall ... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law," and it applies to the states via the 14th Amendment.

Due process is accompanied by the presumption of innocence unless proven guilty in a court of law. So much for that; witness the recent cases marked by a total breakdown in due process and the presumption of innocence for both Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and Judge Roy Moore in their media trials. They represent current examples of a trend that started more than two decades ago.

In the Jewell story we see a flawed and man-eating media, as well as an FBI that apparently either forgot or ignored its own mission statement to protect the American people and uphold the U.S. Constitution.

Here we are today, more than 20 years after the Atlanta Park Bombing, and once again the FBI—or at least elements and former elements of the FBI—has been brought into question concerning not only the current impeachment proceedings but also that

We live in a society where trials-by-media are commonplace, and due process and the presumption of innocence are fading away, part of a bygone era.

the FBI might have spied on President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign. For real. Protect whom; uphold what?

The Atlanta Park Bombing

At the time of the 1996 Summer Olympics held in and around Atlanta, Richard Jewell was a blue-collar security guard for AT&T and a law-enforcement enthusiast. He then entered the annals of American history when he stumbled upon a backpack loaded with three pipe bombs that was left abandoned in Centennial Olympic Park.

Seeing the backpack as suspicious, Jewell alerted Georgia law enforcement and then worked fervently with them to warn nearby people to abandon the area before the bomb exploded, killing two people and injuring more than 100 more. It could have been much worse, as the park was teeming with people.

After spending two days as a hero who potentially saved hundreds of lives, Jewell saw his life quickly flipped. False tips from a previous employer of Jewell's made him the unwitting subject of an FBI investigation and the victim of a destructive media frenzy that lasted 88 days before the FBI cleared his name. However, there was no undoing the profound damage that had been done to Jewell and his mother Bobi, with whom he lived.

Jewell's salvation came in the form of attorney Watson Bryant, who was familiar with and sympathetic to easily victimized underdogs, such as Jewell. Without Bryant intervening on Jewell's behalf, it's a given that the FBI would have eventually arrested and railroaded a naive man who had trusted the American system of justice.

Jewell fit the stereotype of a demographic Hillary Clinton once described as deplorables. He was obese, lived at home with his mother, liked guns and hunting, and was a Southern Baptist. He was also a white, heterosexual southern man concerned about being falsely labeled as a homosexual. In other words, he's like catnip to an extreme liberal like Clinton and others of her ilk.

Jewell's victimization and trial-by-media began three days after the bombing, when the Atlanta Journal-Constitution published an exclusive

story identifying him as a suspect. One of the more memorable lines from the film is uttered by Bryant's assistant Nadya Light, a Russian emigre suspicious of the media reports. She tells Bryant that where she comes from, "When the government says a man is guilty, I know he is innocent." In other words, he didn't do it.

As we now have long since known, it turned out that Jewell was indeed innocent and never actually charged by the FBI. He died of heart disease in 2007 at the relatively young age of 44. Eric Rudolph, the real Atlanta bomber, was arrested seven years after the 1996 bombing and ultimately confessed to his role in the bombing as well as several others that occurred during the mid-1990s. During the summer of 2005, he made a plea agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice in which he was sentenced to four life sentences.

Back to the FBI

We now know from the Department of Justice that the FBI engaged in deception by trying to get Jewell to waive his constitutional rights by telling him that he had been selected to help them make a training video about bomb detection. In doing so, they took advantage of Jewell's trust in law enforcement and his eagerness to help them solve the case.

But Jewell was no FBI patsy. He had enough old-fashioned common sense and law enforcement knowledge to realize he needed a lawyer. Bryant was the only lawyer he knew, and he had worked in a firm that employed Jewell as a supply clerk some 10 years earlier. Bryant took on the role of protector of Jewell's civil rights.

In recent years, we have watched the erosion of our civil liberties and the complicity between political parties, the media, and governmental institutions such as the Internal Revenue Service and the FBI. In a decade that has given us a partisan former FBI director in James Comey, FISA warrants and judges, and questionable actions involving our attorneys general, a degree of skepticism by the people is always warranted.

The Film's Characterization of Media

Feminists and her friends and family

are upset because the film portrays Journal-Constitution reporter Kathy Scruggs as a self-promoting, morally questionable woman who traded sex for the FBI tip that named Jewell as the lead suspect. Eastwood and Warner Brothers are accused of making up a story that sullies Scruggs' reputation because, or so we are told, we know that women do not trade sex for job advancement, at least not in the 21st century. We know the media is above reproach, and they always report the facts without spin and interpretation (eye roll).

Scruggs died of a drug overdose in 2001 at age 42. In a Variety article, her former editor described her as "aggressive and colorful but professional and serious about her work." After defending her against the sex-for-tips implication, her brother said, "She had big hair, wore short skirts, smoked cigarettes, and cussed like a sailor. She was no saint but she always told the truth."

The fallout from Scruggs being the catalyst for the publication of the initial story is said to have taken an enormous toll on her. One could argue she became a victim of her own ambition, regardless of what she did or didn't do in getting her scoops.

The Journal-Constitution is suing Warner Brothers and Clint Eastwood for their portrayal of Scruggs and their newspaper's rush-to-judgment. This controversy detracts from the irresponsible behavior of the media and its feeding frenzy as well as the unscrupulous and morally questionable actions of the FBI.

Although Jewell and his mother Bobi got to see him exonerated and given remuneration for some of their suffering, we know deep down false accusations take their toll and lives injured can never be fully restored.

Carol M. Swain is a former tenured professor at Vanderbilt and Princeton universities. Her Be The People News blog and podcast empower individuals to think independently, understand their responsibility, and make a difference in the world.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

Do We Now Have Social Classes of Hate Killers?

BARBARA KAY



On Dec. 10, religious fanatics Francine Graham and David Anderson went on a bloody rampage in Jersey City, New Jersey. It began in a cemetery, where they opened fire on

Detective Joseph Seals, a father of five who had been investigating the murder of an Uber driver the day before, to which Graham's and Anderson's stolen U-Haul had been linked.

When Seals approached them, they shot him dead, then drove to the nearby JC Kasher Supermarket. There they began shooting with long assault rifles, with surveillance footage indicating a small yeshiva next door with about 50 children inside as the first target. The racket attracted two police officers in the neighborhood to the scene, and Graham and Anderson barricaded themselves in the store. A two-hour gun battle with police and SWAT teams ensued. Breaching the door with an armored car, the police found the killers dead along with three of their innocent victims.

It's instructive, although deeply troubling, that two highly public figures were so robotically inclined to blame a hate crime on whites that they didn't even wait to learn the facts.

Inside the U-Haul, police found a pipe bomb and a short, rambling manifesto. Both killers identified as members of the Black Hebrew Israelites, a 100-year-old movement the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated as hateful.

Black Hebrew Israelites believe they are the descendants of the biblical Hebrews. They see the Africans enslaved in the Americas as Israelites severed from their heritage. In their eyes, Jews are imposters, so their hatred for Jews is justified. Anderson kept a YouTube playlist of anti-Semitism material. In one video, a Black Hebrew Israelite preacher shouts "Satan is in you" at a Jewish man. "You stole our history. You are pretending to be us. The messiah, who is a black man, is going to kill you."

Yet strangely, reaction to the crime from politicians and celebrities on the left ignored this elephant in the room. Indeed, "ignored" is a euphemism for the response of Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), who wrote on Twitter, "White Supremacy kills!" (deleted after well-deserved mockery erupted). ABC talk show host Joy Behar blamed "white nationalists" and President Donald Trump, America's "liar-in-chief," for the massacre without

bothering to wait for confirmation of the killers' identities. She, too, was subjected to derisory scolding.

It is instructive, although deeply troubling, that these two highly public figures were so robotically inclined to blame a hate crime on whites that they didn't even wait to learn the facts before bruited an allegation that might—and did—turn out to be false.

But most startlingly, Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) issued a statement to his constituents about the massacre, without a word about the victims being targeted as Jews, or anti-Semitism as the motive. Was it because the perpetrators were black that Booker referred to the victims only as neighborhood "residents" and their deaths as "tragedies"? It is certainly fair to ask, because if the perpetrators had been neo-Nazis and the victims black, Booker would have been keen to tell it like it was: a hate crime—even an act of terrorism—by vicious white supremacist racists, and moreover proof that racism continues to run rampant in the United States.

Some commentators were quick to see a parallel between this glaring omission and then-President Barack Obama's remarks following the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo journalists' massacre in Paris, referring to the jihadi terrorists who went on to murder Jews in a kosher supermarket as "zealots who behead people or randomly shoot a bunch of folks in a deli in Paris." "Zealots," not Islamists? "Randomly" in a kosher supermarket? "Folks," not Jews? His words demonstrated an instinct for deference to Muslims at the expense of truth about a recognizable hate pattern.

These reflexive impulses in the corridors of power to "disappear" black and Islamist Judeophobia are an insult to the intelligence of ordinary citizens, but a balm to the progressive mindset, which cannot comfortably process news of victimizing behavior in designated victim groups.

The left's collusion in the pretense that ethnic identity is a sidebar when hate crimes are committed by blacks cannot be indefinitely sustained. The Jersey City incident isn't an anomaly, but part of a disturbing trend. In a July article in Tablet Magazine titled "Everybody Knows," Armin Rosen chronicles a "typhoon of violence" against religious Jews in New York boroughs by blacks and Hispanics.

So, much as progressives might wish it to be so, white nationalism is not the story here. Yet, rather than face the music, Tlaib, Behar, Booker, and others on the left have on one occasion or another effectively chosen to provide cover for black anti-Semitism, something nobody on the right of the political spectrum would ever dream of doing for actual white supremacists.

For example, when a white anti-Semite, Robert Gregory Bowers, massacred 11 members of Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue in October 2018 and injured four police officers, the progressive media

eagerly covered the incident, "likely the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the history of the United States," in lavish detail, dwelling on Bowers's hatred of Jews. But so did the right-wing Fox News.

On the other hand, consider the brouhaha over January's "Covington" affair. In an out-of-context video clip, a student from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky, who was visiting Washington with his peers for its annual March for Life, seemed to be baiting a chanting, drum-beating Native American protester. The entire left-wing mainstream media, meaning virtually all media apart from a handful of exceptions like The Epoch Times and Fox News—which waited until the facts were in—immediately came after the student for his presumed racism with the fervor of a torches-and-pitchforks medieval mob.

Only later, when the full video was released, was it made clear that the native activist was the aggressor. It also showed that the real bigots at the scene were Black Hebrew Israelites. They were captured on the full video insulting Native Americans as "savages" and hurling disgusting anti-Catholic, homophobic insults at the Covington boys such as "faggots," "crackers," and "pedophiles"—vile bait the boys maturely refused to take.

The Jersey City incident isn't an anomaly, but part of a disturbing trend.

Yet even after the contextualized material vindicated the boys, many of their most virulent media accusers refused to apologize. Don Lemon of CNN even argued that the MAGA hats the boys were wearing carries a connotation that can provoke a "conditioned reaction," especially from "marginalized people." Todd Byrd, who teaches race and culture at UCLA, says many black people consider the Black Hebrew Israelites "a harmless part of their communities." Tom Metzger, founder of the neo-Nazi organization White Aryan Resistance, calls them "the black counterparts of us." Between them, which one is infanziling black supremacists, and which is granting them moral agency?

Barbara Kay has been a weekly columnist for the National Post since 2003 and also writes for other publications including ThePostMillennial.com, Canadian Jewish News, Quillette, and The Dorchester Review. She is the author of three books.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Police officers arrive on the scene during a shooting at JC Kasher Supermarket in Jersey City, N.J., that left six dead, including the two armed suspects, on Dec. 10, 2019.

Handicapping the 2024 (!) Presidential Election

ROGER L. SIMON



2024? What? Don't we have the 2020 presidential election to deal with first? Has the fat lady already sung?

Leaving aside the decidedly un-PC character of that hoary tradition (are we "fat-shaming" the electorate now?), yes, maybe she has. What with the booming economy with lowest-ever unemployment, the utter failure of the Mueller Russia investigation (with severe punishments for the investigators themselves possibly ahead), the embarrassing, ludicrously partisan impeachment, and now, the near-total destruction of the British Labour Party (and consequently the globalist left) by Boris Johnson and the Tory Party, it certainly looks good for President Donald Trump in 2020.

And this isn't even counting what may be the president's most consequential contribution—the appointment of some 174 federal judges—or Trump's extraordinarily well-organized, high-tech 2020 campaign under the management of Brad Parscale and Jared Kushner that even the devoutly liberal Axios couldn't help but admire.

So, on to 2024.

Even though he won't be running, the specter of Trump will loom heavily over this election as well. He has changed everything, at least for the short run. Overly traditional candidates will seem boring, especially to the omnipresent mainstream media who may have hated Trump (hate him right now) but live off his drama like parasitic barnacles on a whale.

The electorate, too, has been conditioned for something exciting. Some will say they will yearn for the bland after years of this nonstop Trump drama, but I think not. In our competitive, techno-driven world, the bland fades quickly away, deserving or not. In 2024, a dull candidate won't get much attention on your iPhone 15 SuperProMaxPlus with nine drone-attached cameras.

On the Republican side, that's bad news for Mike Pence. Whatever the pluses and minuses, iPhone or otherwise, of the vice-president, he remains and always has been a traditional pol with a so-so charisma factor.

Searching for someone original who still carries on the Trump tradition,

Searching for someone original that still carries on the Trump tradition, I believe there's a strong chance the Republicans will nominate a woman [in 2024].

Roger L. Simon is *The Epoch Times'* senior political analyst. His most recent novel is "The GOAT."

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Epoch Times*.



Voters line up outside Bethel Missionary Baptist Church during the 2008 U.S. presidential election, in Birmingham, Ala., on Nov. 4.

I believe there's a strong chance the Republicans will nominate a woman. For those still laboring under the misconception that conservatives are misogynistic, I would remind them the most consequential British PM since Churchill was a Tory woman whose name rhymes with "match her." It wouldn't even be that surprising at this point if the first U.S. female president were a Republican.

The former South Carolina governor and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley has clearly been angling for this honor for some time. She certainly has presidential-level foreign policy creds and solid name recognition this early in the game, but Haley has been on-and-off the Trump Train the past few years. Recently, however, she's been all aboard, for obvious reasons.

Still, she doesn't have the field to herself. Sneaking up the side is the new U.S. senator from Tennessee, Marsha Blackburn. The personable Blackburn has been appearing on cable quite a bit lately and is a solid Trumpista. More importantly, as a member of the Judiciary Committee, she has taken a special interest in negotiating privacy and data agreements with the tech giants—Facebook, Google, and so on—that are certain to keep her in the public eye for the next few years.

Another Republican junior senator to be watched is Missouri's Josh Hawley who, ironically, has also taken the lead in dealing with the tech giants, something that affects every American, indeed every human.

And speaking of Judiciary, it should be obvious that its chairman, Lindsey Graham, has had, for years, his eye on the big prize. But as most of us know, Lindsey has had

an on-again-off-again relationship with the Republican rank-and-file. The next few years will determine whether he can stick on the on-side enough to make an impact.

Other possibilities are old reliable Ted Cruz of Texas and South Carolina's Tim Scott, but let's switch over to the Democrats for fun.

Of the present candidate crop, only South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg seems to have staying power for 2024. He has a modicum of charisma and an ability to handle himself under fire that is better than the others. Sanders, Biden, and Warren will be too old, if they aren't already. Booker, Harris (now departed), Klobuchar, and others, have been polling mostly in the low-single digits, hardly inspiring for yet another campaign.

But the Dems' real problem is they have become two parties: One is a center-left party resembling, at least vaguely, the one many of us grew up with, while the other is a hard left party with the basic ethos of campus social justice warriors. The situation is untenable. In a parliamentary system, they would have split from each other long ago. In our system, the SJWs, who aren't in the slightest interested in compromise, have the old center-left party by the short hairs.

How this will resolve before 2024 is anybody's guess. If they swing left, they will be an extreme minority party in our culture. If they swing to the center, the left will have a fit, act out, and destroy the party's reputation.

This leaves us with a final question. Will the two-party system still be with us in a functional way for 2024?

Historically speaking anyway, it was good while it lasted.

In 2024, a dull candidate will not get much attention on your iPhone 15 SuperProMax-Plus with nine drone-attached cameras.



People wait in line to vote in San Francisco, on Nov. 4, 2008.