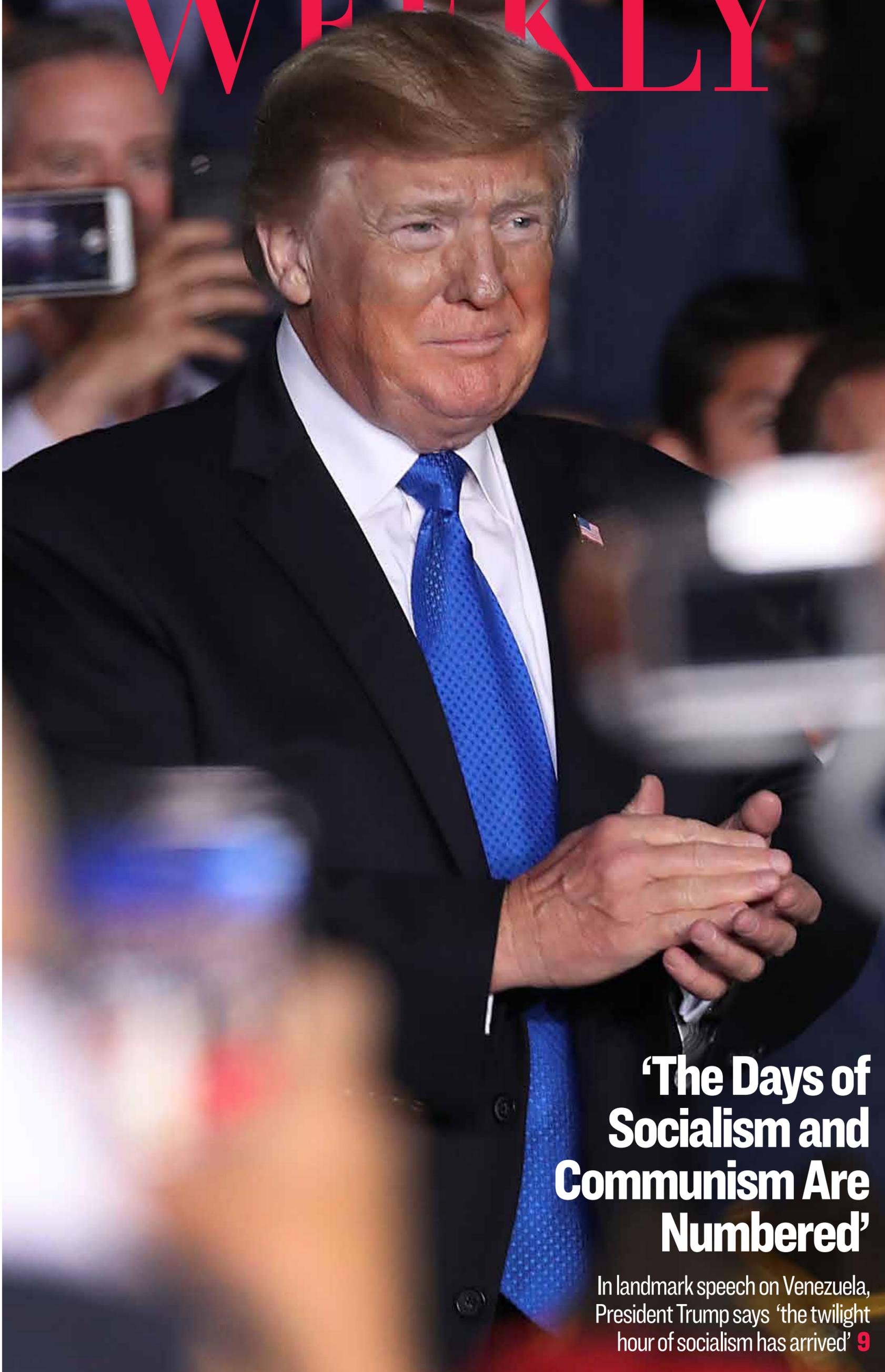


WEEK 8, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

AMERICA WEEKLY



'The Days of Socialism and Communism Are Numbered'

In landmark speech on Venezuela, President Trump says 'the twilight hour of socialism has arrived' **9**

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Returns to the Bench After Lung Cancer Surgery

JANITA KAN

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has returned to the bench eight weeks after undergoing lung cancer surgery.

The 85-year-old justice joined her eight colleagues for a scheduled one-hour argument in a case involving the U.S. Postal Service on Feb. 19.

She wore one of her signature decorative collars and stood with the other eight justices as the court marshal called the court to order, before taking her usual seat to the right of Chief Justice John Roberts.

Prior to returning to the bench, Ginsburg had returned to the court for the justices' private conference on Feb. 15 for the first time since December 2018.

The oldest judge of the court's nine justices underwent surgery to remove two malignant growths in her left lung at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center on Dec. 21, 2018. She was released from the New York hospital on Christmas Day.

The court said in December 2018 that growths were found incidentally during tests when she was being treated for rib fractures sustained in a fall at her office on Nov. 7, 2018. They added that there was no evidence of remaining disease after surgery and no further treatment was planned.

In January, for the first time in her 25-year tenure, the liberal judge missed oral arguments in court but participated in the cases through briefs and the transcripts of oral arguments. She also missed the State of the Union on Feb. 5.

Her absence caught national attention and attracted speculation about her health and whether her time on the court might be coming to an end.

If Ginsburg is unable to continue serving, Trump could replace her with a conservative judge, which would shift the court further to the right. Since 2017, Trump has appointed two conservative judges—Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh—to the highest court.



Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg poses for the official photo at the Supreme Court in Washington on Nov. 30, 2018.

ugh—to the highest court.

But Ginsburg has previously indicated that she has no plans of retiring by hiring clerks for the term that extends into 2020. Moreover, in an interview August 2018, she said that she wanted to stay on the bench until at least the age of 90.

"I'm now 85," she said, according to CNN. "My senior colleague, Justice John Paul Stevens, he stepped down when he was 90, so think I have about at least five more years."

After her surgery, Ginsburg spent about a month out of the public eye, but she attended a concert dedicated to Ginsburg called "Notorious RBG in Song" on Feb. 4, according to re-

ports. The concert took place at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Appointed by former President Bill Clinton in 1993, Ginsburg has shown determination to remain on the bench despite undergoing surgery for colon cancer in 1999 and pancreatic cancer in 2009, as well as other health scares. However, these did not cause her to miss any argument sessions.

Weeks after her fall in November, Ginsburg showed no signs of slowing down. She asked questions at high court arguments, spoke at a naturalization ceremony for new citizens, and was interviewed at screenings of the new movie about her, "On the Basis of Sex."

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump previously told reporters that he hoped Ginsburg would get better and serve on the supreme court for "many, many years."

"I wish her well. She said something very inappropriate during the campaign but she apologized for it. I wouldn't say she's exactly on my side. But I wish her well," Trump said.

During the 2016 presidential election, Ginsburg criticized Trump and called him a "faker," which is an uncharacteristic move for a Supreme Court justice. She later apologized for her comment.

Reuters contributed to this report.

China May Use N. Korea as Bargaining Chip in Trade Talks, Expert Says

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—U.S. and Chinese negotiators meet this week for the last time before a March 1 deadline set by the two countries to reach a deal on trade. If talks don't yield a satisfactory outcome, an increase in tariffs and the resulting tensions may hurt U.S.—North Korea engagement as well, an expert said.

A Chinese delegation arrived in Washington to start another round of trade talks with the U.S. trade officials on Feb. 19. The White House earlier said that if both sides fail to reach a deal by March 1, the United States would increase tariffs on Chinese goods.

Right before the "hard deadline," President Donald Trump will hold a second summit with North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un on Feb. 27 and 28 in Vietnam.

The timing of these meetings is critical as the U.S.—China relationship is a significant part of the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula, according to Harry Kazianis, director of Korea Studies at the Center for the National Interest, a foreign policy think tank.

"It's very hard for the United States because, unfortunately, we've made a tactical mistake when it comes to China and North Korea," Kazianis told NTD, part of The Epoch Media Group.

"Essentially, our maximum pressure policy of economic sanctions is almost entirely enforced by Beijing because 90 percent of North Korea's exports go through China," he explained.

The Trump administration launched a maximum pressure campaign against North Korea in 2017 to try to end its illicit missile and nuclear activity, through sanctions and regional alliances.

China may use North Korea as a bargaining chip in the trade talks, Kazianis argued.

If China fails to meet U.S. demands on trade, Washington may hit it with increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods on March 1. In retaliation, however, China may end the maximum pressure campaign on North Korea,



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (L) shakes hands with US President Donald Trump (R) at the start of their historic US-North Korea summit, at the Capella Hotel on Sentosa island in Singapore on June 12, 2018.

Kazianis said.

"Unfortunately, they could do that by opening the border," he argued. "So there's a balancing act I think the Trump administration is trying to do here."

However, both sides have reasons to com-

promise, according to Kazianis, as China's economic woes continue to put pressure on Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

The Chinese economy has come under greater downward pressure mainly due to trade friction with the United States. Economic growth

in China slowed to its weakest pace in nearly three decades in the fourth quarter. If both sides fail to reach a deal and trade tensions resume, China's troubles will deepen, according to experts.

'Very Complex Talks'

The new round of U.S.—China trade talks kicked off Feb. 19 at the deputy-level, and principal-level meetings will begin Feb. 21, according to the White House. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will lead the talks on the U.S. side, while the Chinese team is headed by Vice Premier Liu He, China's economy czar.

The meetings are a part of an agreement reached by Trump and Xi in early December in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where both sides declared a 90-day ceasefire on tariff increases. "They are very complex talks. They're going very well," Trump told reporters during an Oval Office signing ceremony on Feb. 19.

"We're asking for everything that anybody has ever even suggested. These are not just, you know, 'Let's sell corn or let's do this.' It's going to be selling corn but a lot of it—a lot more than anyone thought possible."

As part of the deal between Trump and Xi, Beijing agreed to deliver structural reforms in 90 days. These structural changes aim to end China's unfair trade policies and practices including forced technology transfer, intellectual property theft, non-tariff barriers, cyber intrusions, and cyber theft. China has also pledged to purchase a substantial amount of goods and services from the United States.

When asked about tariff hike on March 1, Trump said China wouldn't like that to happen. "So I think they're trying to move fast so that doesn't happen," he said.

Trump also expressed optimism about the upcoming meeting with the North Korean leader.

"I'd just like to see, ultimately, denuclearization of North Korea. I think we will see that ultimately," he said. "I have no pressing time schedule."

A List of FAKE HATE CRIMES in the Trump Era

BOWEN XIAO

The Jussie Smollett investigation recently made a major turn when new reports said the two Nigerian brothers arrested for the alleged assault against "Empire" actor Jussie Smollett were paid to stage the attack. Authorities no longer list the two brothers as suspects in the case. Production sources told TMZ on Feb. 19 that Smollett's screen time was cut significantly.

The actor could face time in prison for potentially filing a false police report. While authorities have yet to release a new statement, it comes as similar high-profile hate crime hoaxes plague the Trump era.

1 Vandalized Indiana Church

After President Donald Trump was elected in 2016, a church in Brown County, Indiana, which recognizes same-sex marriage, was allegedly vandalized with "Heil Trump,"

swastikas, and an anti-gay slur. It was later revealed that the incident—which generated widespread media coverage and stoked fear in the community at St. David's Episcopal Church—was a hoax.

The church's gay organ player George Nathaniel Stang was the perpetrator. Stang faced a misdemeanor charge of criminal mischief for vandalism.

2 Brooklyn Synagogue and Fires

Trump supporters took the blame for a series of hate crimes including Nazi vandalism at a Brooklyn synagogue and fires in a Jewish community—just days after the Pittsburgh massacre. The perpetrator was actually an African-American man named James Polite who worked for Christine Quinn, a New York City council speaker at the time. Polite faced four counts of criminal mischief as a hate crime and making graffiti.

3 Mississippi Black Church Fire

A historic black church in Greenville, Mississippi, was set on fire about one week before the 2016 presidential election and was widely dubbed a hate crime when the words "Vote Trump" were found spray-painted on the outside of the charred building.

An investigation soon revealed that the perpetrator was not a Trump supporter but an African-American member of the church named Andrew McClinton. He was charged with first-degree arson of a place of worship.

4 Muslim Student Assault Hoax

Also in 2016, a Muslim student at the University of Louisiana claimed two white Trump supporters physically attacked her and stole her hijab—the story went viral. But the Lafayette Police Department revealed later that the student had made up the whole story.



Jussie Smollett in New York on Nov. 28, 2018.

Socialist Bernie Sanders Announces 2020 Presidential Bid

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

en. Bernie Sanders, a self-identified socialist, announced his 2020 presidential bid on Feb. 19, joining a crowded field of far-left candidates vying for the Democratic nomination.

Sanders (I-Vt.) announced his candidacy in an email to supporters and a video posted on Twitter. The video features the socialist policies which have helped steer the Democratic party to the hard left, including Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, free public university tuition, and the \$15 minimum wage.

"Our campaign is about creating a government and economy that works for the many, not just the few," Sanders said in an email to supporters.

In 2016, Sanders lost the Democratic presidential primary election to Hillary Clinton. Sanders' push against Clinton, a former first lady, U.S. senator and secretary of state, was notable because few Democrats seemed inclined to challenge her claim on the nomination.

Emails hacked from the Clinton campaign showed that the Democratic National Committee, which isn't supposed to favor candidates, conspired with the Clinton campaign to defeat him.

While he has remained mum about Clinton and the DNC, Sanders has relentlessly criticized President Donald Trump. In response to Sanders's 2020 bid announcement, Trump's campaign issued a statement pointing out that Sanders is a socialist.

"Bernie Sanders has already won the debate in the Democrat primary because every candidate is embracing his brand of socialism," Kayleigh McEnany, the Trump campaign spokeswoman, said. "But the American people will reject an agenda of sky-high tax rates, government-run health care and coddling dictators like those in Venezuela. Only President Trump will keep America free, prosperous and safe."

Sanders joins a Democratic primary field

already populated by a number of far-left Democrats who are steering clear of the "moderate" label, including Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.).

While the contestants share much of Sanders's platform, most are either women or ethnic minorities, characteristics bearing an advantage from the perspective of the intersectional politics of the Democratic party. Sanders showed that he was aware of the disadvantage and tackled it in an interview with Vermont Public Radio.

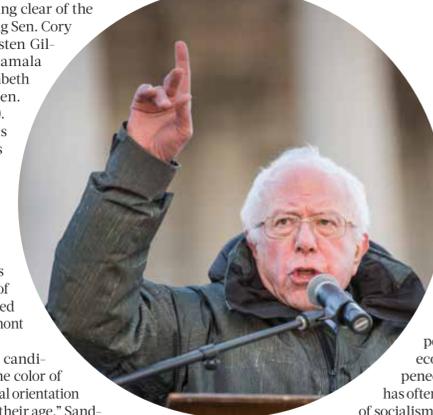
"We have got to look at candidates, you know, not by the color of their skin, not by their sexual orientation or their gender and not by their age," Sanders said. "I think we have got to try to move us toward a non-discriminatory society which looks at people based on their abilities, based on what they stand for."

The primaries and caucuses that determine the party's nominee will begin in February 2020 in Iowa, and the Democratic winner is likely to face Trump in the general election in November.

Sanders announced his bid the day after Trump delivered a speech on socialism to the Venezuelan community in Florida. The president vowed to support Venezuela's interim President Juan Guaidó and slammed socialist dictator Nicolas Maduro as a puppet of the Cuban communist regime. Trump said the "days of socialism and communism are numbered" in South America and the world.

In an interview with CBS, Sanders said he was expecting Trump to suggest that socialist

SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES



Heartland Institute's Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in Columbia, S.C., on Jan. 21, 2019.

Bernie Sanders has already won the debate in the Democrat primary because every candidate is embracing his brand of socialism.

Kayleigh McEnany, Trump campaign spokeswoman

The young woman's identity was not revealed and the university said they could not comment on if the student would face disciplinary action, citing federal privacy law.

5 Long Island Swastika Case

Trump's name came up again in relation to a string of anti-Semitic graffiti across Nassau Community College in Long Island. The perpetrator was actually 20-year-old student Jasskirat Saini.

Authorities said Saini drew 110 swastikas—along with phrases such as "KKK," and "Heil Hitler"—as a reaction to what he believed were insults from the Jewish community. The student's graffiti spree started before Election Day in 2016.

6 NYC Subway 'Attack'

A Muslim woman lied that she had been attacked by three white Trump supporters in New York City while on the subway. She claimed the men had tried to rip off her hijab while screaming "Trump! Trump!" in December 2016.

Yasmin Seweid, 18, was charged for filing a false report and for obstructing governmental administration, the police said, both misdemeanor charges. She was a student at Baruch College.

7 Fake Note and Slashed Tire

A 19-year-old student Adwoa Lewis lied to police in September 2018 about a hateful note on her car and a slashed tire. Lewis said a group of teens yelled "Trump 2016" after confronting her and told her she "didn't belong here."

Authorities found that she had faked the whole incident. Lewis admitted she had written the note herself and placed it in her vehicle. She was charged for faking a punishable written statement.

8 Graffiti on Campus

In November 2018, students at Goucher College demanded social justice training and safe spaces after racist, Nazi, and KKK graffiti were found on campus. Someone even wrote the names of black students. Trump supporters were blamed.

Authorities charged a biracial student at Goucher College near Baltimore after he had confessed to the race hoax.

Fynn Arthur, 21, wrote down the phone numbers of three black students, including himself, as well as a swastika on a campus bathroom stall in December 2018 to fake a racially motivated threat. At the time, a number of students at the college demanded social justice training and safe spaces as a response to the now debunked incident. Arthur, an African-American himself, later confessed to the crimes and faces two counts of malicious destruction of property.

policies would collapse the U.S. economy much like what happened to Venezuela. The president has often used Venezuela as an example of socialism's failure. Once an oil-rich nation, Venezuela has been crippled by socialist policies instituted by Maduro and his predecessor.

"Socialism has so completely ravaged this great country that even the world's largest reserves of oil are no longer enough to keep the lights on. This will never happen to us," Trump said as the crowd in Miami.

A former mayor of Burlington, Vermont, Sanders won a House of Representatives seat in 1990, making him the first independent elected to the House in 40 years. In 2006, he won a Senate seat and in 2018 was voted in for a third six-year term.

"Personally, I think he missed his time," Trump said on Feb. 19. "I wish Bernie well, it will be interesting to see how he does. He was not treated with respect by Clinton."

Reuters contributed to this report.

Testimony by FBI Lawyer Trisha Anderson Reveals Extensive Role in TRUMP, CLINTON INVESTIGATIONS

JEFF CARLSON

A key player in the FBI's counterintelligence investigation of Donald Trump and his 2016 presidential campaign was Trisha Anderson, who, at the time, was the No. 2 lawyer at the agency's Office of General Counsel.

Despite having no specific experience in counterintelligence before coming to the FBI, Anderson was, in some manner, involved in virtually all of the significant events of the investigation.

Anderson told members of the House Judiciary and Oversight committees in August last year during closed-door testimony that she was one of only about 10 people who had known about the Trump-Russia investigation prior to its official opening.

A transcript of Anderson's testimony, which was reviewed for this article, reveals that she had read all of the FBI's FD302 forms detailing information that the author of the Steele dossier, former British spy Christopher Steele, had provided to high-ranking Department of Justice (DOJ) official Bruce Ohr.

Anderson also told lawmakers that she personally signed off on the original application for a warrant to spy on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page without having read it. The FBI relied heavily on the unverified information in the Steele dossier—which was paid for by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee—to obtain the FISA warrant.

Anderson also was part of a small group of FBI personnel who got to read then-FBI Director James Comey's memos about conversations he had with President Donald Trump.

Besides the investigation into Trump, Anderson also was involved in the FBI's investigation of Hillary Clinton for sending classified information using a private server.

Anderson's testimony reveals that she received the original referral from the inspectors general for both the State Department and Intelligence Community on Clinton after hundreds of classified emails had been found on her server.

Her testimony also raises questions as to whether then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch had a conflict of interest.

Lawmakers also questioned Anderson about whether she advised Comey against making a public announcement that the FBI had reopened its investigation into Clinton following findings on the laptop of former Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) because Comey would have been "responsible for getting Donald Trump elected."

Anderson Reviewed the Ohr 302s

Anderson testified that she knew Ohr from her time in the deputy attorney general's office, where she'd "had a couple of meetings with him," but didn't have any interaction with Ohr while she was with the FBI.

Ohr was approached by Steele—whom he had known since 2007—in July 2016 with information about the Trump campaign. Ohr would pass the information to the FBI. After the FBI officially stopped working with Steele, Ohr would continue to meet with Steele and pass information to the FBI. These conversations between Ohr and his FBI handler, agent Joseph Pientka, were recorded by Pientka on FD302 forms.

In response to a question regarding any information she might have gotten from Ohr, Anderson—after a brief consult with counsel—told congressional investigators that she had personally reviewed all of the 302s relating to Ohr's meetings with Steele:

MS. ANDERSON: "Yeah, so at some point, I received the 302s, the written summaries of the interviews that FBI personnel conducted with Mr. Ohr about his interactions with Christopher Steele. But it was not contemporaneous with the drafting of those 302s; it was much later."

Besides the investigation into Trump, Anderson also was involved in the FBI's investigation of Hillary Clinton for sending classified information using a private server.

Anderson told investigators she reviewed the Ohr 302s "after the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence produced its memo on the Carter Page FISAs" in January 2018.

MS. ANDERSON: "So I received them in the course of the oversight process. So I believe the first time I reviewed them was probably after the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence produced its memo on the Carter Page FISAs. I believe there was a reference in that memo to statements that Mr. Steele made to Bruce Ohr that were documented in our 302s. And that was the first time I received those 302s and reviewed them."

Anderson didn't reveal why she chose to review the Ohr 302s, nor what it was that she was specifically looking for.

Anderson testified that she previously had been unaware that Ohr had been meeting with FBI personnel, and made no mention of Ohr's FBI handler, Pientka. She said she was aware of one meeting Ohr had with McCabe, which almost certainly refers to the early August 2016 meeting that Ohr had with McCabe, following Ohr's breakfast meeting with Steele on July 30, 2016.

The Carter Page FISA

Anderson signed off on the original application for a warrant to spy on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page—before the application went to Comey—despite not having read it.

During her testimony, Anderson highlighted the unusual nature of the Page FISA application process and the curious roles of McCabe and then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, who provided approvals of the Page FISA before normal FBI and DOJ approvals had been obtained:

MS. ANDERSON: "All necessary approvals, including up through and including the leadership of the FBI and the leadership of the Department, by the time I put that signature on the cover page had already been obtained."

These early high-level approvals were distinctly outside of the normal FISA process. Anderson and others were supposed to have provided approvals before the FISA was presented to senior FBI and DOJ officials. Anderson appeared to be fully aware of the uniqueness of this particular application process:

MS. ANDERSON: "There were individuals, all the way up to the Deputy Director and the Deputy Attorney General on the DOJ side, who had essentially given their approval to the FISA before it got to that step in the process. That part of it was unusual, and so I didn't consider my review at that point in the process to be substantive in nature."

Anderson told congressional investigators that with regard to the Page FISA, by signing off she "was simply signaling, yes, this package is ready to go forward."

Anderson attempted to provide an explanation for the unusual process, noting, "We understood, because of who Carter Page was, that people would second-guess the appropriateness of submitting the FISA application, and so we were taking extra care with the application itself."

Yet, at the same time, Anderson admitted that not only had she not read the original Page FISA application, but she was also unable to recall if she had read any of the Page FISA renewals.

Anderson Defines 'Spy'

Trump on several occasions has made reference to a spy placed within his campaign. We know the FBI used Stefan Halper as "a government informant" in relation to his contacts with Trump campaign advisers George Papadopoulos and Carter Page, but the FBI has denied the use of an actual spy.

Anderson also stated she had no knowledge of a spy, but was later asked to define her understanding of the word:

MR. BREITENBACH: "Does a spy, in your mind, include a human confidential source?"

MS. ANDERSON: "No."

MR. BREITENBACH: "Does a spy include an undercover FBI employee?"

MS. ANDERSON: "I don't know."

After more questioning, Anderson provided her reasoning in stating there had been no spy in the Trump campaign.

MS. ANDERSON: "First, the word 'spy' did not seem commensurate with what I understood had been done in this particular case. And the other thing was the verb, the use of the verb 'place' a spy or 'place' a source within a campaign. To my knowledge, the FBI did not place anybody within a campaign but, rather, relied upon its network of sources, some of whom already had campaign contacts, including the source that has been discussed in the media at some length beyond Christopher Steele."

Anderson was referring back to the FBI's use of Halper.

Anderson was very careful during her testimony but, at times, her statements were contradicted by testimony from other individuals interviewed by the House committees. Her involvement in matters relating to both the Clinton and Trump-Russia investigations exceeded what had been publicly known and appears to have been at a level comparable to that of her former boss, FBI General Counsel James Baker.

Anderson Briefed Early on Weiner Laptop

Anderson was briefed by FBI attorney Sally Moyer regarding the existence of potential evidence on the laptop of former Rep. Weiner—who is married to longtime Clinton aide Huma Abedin—on Sep. 29, 2016. Anderson downplayed the early notification, telling investigators that she only recalled being told that "there were materials associated with Huma Abedin that may have been identified on the laptop," and said she had no interaction with the New York field office that was processing the Weiner laptop.

According to Anderson, her next interaction in relation to the Weiner laptop came on Oct. 27, 2016, when she had a meeting with FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe on the matter—directly preceding the more formal meeting where the team working on the Clinton investigation, codenamed "Mid-Year Exam," briefed Comey for the first time of the existence of Clinton emails on Weiner's laptop.

During the Comey briefing, Anderson said the discussion included the possibility of obtaining a search warrant—and, if so, what public statements should be made about it. Anderson also noted that she was "concerned that the disclosure of what we had was—could be viewed as affecting the outcome of the election."

"I was concerned that, that there wasn't, there wasn't any form of a public statement that we could make that would not overinflate or overrepresent the significance of those emails in a way that would be unfair to an uncharged subject," she said.

'You Might Be Helping' Trump

However, Comey attributed a different take to Anderson's statement in his book, "A Higher Loyalty":

"As we were arriving at this decision, one of the lawyers on the team asked a searing question. She was a brilliant and quiet person whom I sometimes had to invite into the conversation. 'Should you consider that what you are about to do may help elect Donald Trump for president?' she asked."

Comey provided a similar recollection to the IG, telling him that Anderson said, "How do you think about the fact that you might be helping elect Donald Trump?"

Anderson acknowledged during her testimony that this specific passage from Comey's book referred to her comments, but she also denied that she ever mentioned a specific candidate, claiming she was only concerned the FBI could be perceived as having an impact on a presidential election.

However, Anderson's then-boss, James Baker, during interviews with the IG, sided with Comey's recollection of the actual concerns being voiced by Anderson:

"We're going to interject ourselves into the election in a way that's, that potentially or almost certainly will change the outcome. And I am, I, Trisha, am quite concerned about that. And I'm concerned about us being responsible for getting Donald Trump elected."

Anderson was asked about her recollection at several different points during her testimony. Each time, she denied she had referred to a specific candidate.

Anderson signed off on the original application for a warrant to spy on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page—before the application went to FBI Director James Comey—despite not having read it.

The Comey Memos

Several officials, including McCabe's special counsel Lisa Page and FBI agent Peter Strzok, were asked about Comey's memos and admitted to having been part of a small group that had read them. Anderson also was a member of this group:

MS. KIM: "With regard to the Comey memos, were you one of the small group of people with whom Director Comey shared details about his conversations with President Trump contemporaneously?"

MS. ANDERSON: "I was aware contemporaneously of certain of the meetings with—that Director Comey had with the President, yes."

But there was one difference. When Anderson was asked additional questions that extended beyond her awareness of the memos, an FBI counsel immediately intervened:

MS. KIM: "Did you generally find that Director Comey's descriptions of these events in his written and oral testimony, and in his book, were consistent with the contemporaneous descriptions that he shared with you?"

MR. WELLS: "May we confer with the witness, please?"

MS. KIM: "Yes, please."

MR. WELLS: "Thank you." [Discussion off the record.]

MR. WELLS: "Thank you. The FBI is instructing the witness not to answer the last question asked or any other questions that delve into the details or contents of what are commonly referred to as the Comey memos, as we view that as evidence that pertains to the special counsel's purview. Thank you."

House Oversight Committee minority staff immediately objected on the grounds that the same question had been put to other witnesses who had been allowed to answer. Also noted was the fact that Comey's memos had not only been declassified by this time, but had been released to the public. However, the FBI counsel stayed firm:

MR. WELLS: "Thank you. The instruction stands for purposes of this line of questioning right now. If there is a particular document that has been officially declassified by the U.S. Government if you wish to show the witness, that may help move things along."

MS. KIM: "So, the FBI would not object to our bringing the Comey memos in and asking line by line if the witness agrees with the Director's characterizations?"

MR. WELLS: "We're going to maintain the same objection at this time. I'm going to represent to you that if you have an officially declassified document by the U.S. Government, that may move things along."

That earlier witnesses, such as Page and Strzok, were allowed to answer questions in June and July 2018, but Anderson was prevented from doing so a month later, raises questions as to what might have been uncovered during the intervening periods between the three testimonies.

Anderson Received First Call from IC Office

The Clinton email server investigation, known

as the Mid-Year Exam, originated from a disclosure contained in a June 29, 2015, memo sent by the inspectors general for both the State Department and the Intelligence Community to Patrick F. Kennedy, then-undersecretary of state for management. The IG's memo included an assessment that Clinton's email account contained hundreds of classified emails, despite Clinton's claims that there was no classified information present on her server.

On July 6, 2015, the IG for the Intelligence Community made a referral to the FBI, pursuant to the Intelligence Authorization Act.

According to her Aug. 31, 2018, testimony, Anderson was the person that Jeannette McMillan, counsel for the Intelligence Community IG's office, reached out to in order to determine where to send the IG's Section 811(c) referral on Clinton. These referrals are used to "advise the FBI of any information, regardless of origin, which may indicate that classified information is being, or may have been, disclosed in an unauthorized manner to a foreign power or agent of a foreign power."

Anderson immediately "looped in" Sally Moyer, also known as FBI Attorney 1 in the DOJ inspector general's June 2018 report. Ultimately, the IG referral was sent to Randy Coleman, then-head of the FBI's counterintelligence division.

The FBI then formally opened an investigation into the Clinton emails on July 10, 2015.

Anderson, who was asked her opinion of Clinton's actions in the use of her server, didn't hesitate to make her feelings known:

MS. ANDERSON: "We all held a sense that—that it was a pretty stupid thing to do, that anybody who has held a security clearance, anybody who has worked in the government understands that you have—the cardinal rule that you have to do your work on a government system. "So we all recognized from the outset that from a commonsense perspective from somebody who has worked—from the perspective of somebody who has worked in the government that it seemed like a pretty dumb thing to do."

But Anderson also maintained—as did Page, Baker, and the others—that Clinton shouldn't have been charged under the "gross negligence" statute, as they lacked evidence of intent.

Conflict of Interest Discussions

During her testimony, Anderson was asked about an email chain that had been originated by her, specifically a response she sent to an unknown party:

"Could you please follow up with [redacted] to get more detail about what she found on the conflict of interest

component? Anything about whether there is usually

"FBI Attorney 1 told us that the FBI Mid-Year team discussed whether they needed a special counsel at the beginning of the investigation in 2015. She said that at that time they had a legal intern research the statute."

The appointment of a special counsel is specifically predicated on a conflict of interest for the DOJ.

Discussions Regarding Lynch 'Classified Matter'

The issue of a special counsel appointment would be revisited by the FBI team again in March 2016 and, as Strzok told the IG, the topic resurfaced, due to "the discovery of classified information relating to Lynch." This information is contained in the fully classified appendix of the inspector general's report.

The "classified matter" related to a Russian document the FBI had received in early 2016, which reportedly referenced an email from Debbie Wasserman Schultz, then-chair of the Democratic National Committee, to Leonard Berardo, an official with the George Soros-funded group Open Society Foundations.

In the email, Wasserman Schultz reportedly claimed that former Attorney General Lynch had assured Clinton campaign staffer Amanda Renteria that she wouldn't allow the FBI investigation of Clinton to "go too far." Comey later testified that he believed the document to be genuine but was unable to corroborate the information it contained.

The ongoing discussions of Lynch's potential conflict of interest also were referenced in an email, sent by Moyer, that mentioned "secret meetings" between Anderson and her former boss, then-FBI General Counsel Baker. Part of the email was quoted by congressional investigators during testimony by Moyer:

"All these 'secret meetings' that Trish and Jim are having regarding, MYE and [redacted] include George Toscas. I get that TBA might want to brainstorm with Stu on these issues (although I don't really see how it's in his lane). But why is George included and not our own people, especially when, if the reporting is true, there is a real conflict of interest?"

Anderson told investigators that she believed the email related to "a classified matter that's discussed in the appendix to the IG report." A bit later in her testimony, Anderson said she believed the email in question was referring to the classified Lynch "matter."

Anderson's previous tenure in the deputy attorney general's office, where she held the positions of attorney-adviser in the Office of Legal Counsel and associate deputy

attorney general, may have proved useful during the sequence of investigations.

The first attorney noted, "I think his special assistant is the best option... special is the best option, he's number 2." The responding attorney agreed, stating: "Yeah, pretty demoralized by the whole thing. Not sure if Trisha will be there or not. Kind of hoping not. I can be more frank if she's not."

Anderson claimed to have no knowledge regarding this email despite repeated questioning. Page would be given the title of special counsel.

Anderson also corroborated reports that Page often circumvented the established chain of command, not only with McCabe, for whom she reportedly served as a conduit for Strzok, but also with Baker:

MS. ANDERSON: "There were times when Lisa [Page] would talk directly with Jim Baker when I felt that she should be talking in the first instance directly with the attorney who reported to me."

Anderson was also aware of concerns that Page bypassed both the executive assistant director for the National Security Branch—first Giacalone and then Steinbach—and Priestap, the head of counterintelligence:

MR. BAKER: "Did you ever hear specifically either Mr. Giacalone or Mr. Steinbach complain about the role of Lisa Page, not necessarily her role in what she had responsibility for, but because she had access to Mr. McCabe and she also would get information from Strzok, that those people, Steinbach or Giacalone and I guess Priestap to a certain extent, they would probably be the ones most affected by information not coming through them. Did you ever hear any one of them specifically complain about that?"

MS. ANDERSON: "I didn't have any—I don't believe I heard either of them—neither of them personally complained to me, but I was aware of their concerns."

In the summer of 2018, Anderson rejoined former Attorney General Eric Holder, when she returned to her old law firm, Covington, as a partner.

Jeff Carlson is a regular contributor to The Epoch Times. He also runs the website TheMarketsWork.com and can be followed on Twitter @themarketswork.



All necessary approvals, including up through and including the leadership of the FBI and the leadership of the Department, by the time I put that signature on the cover page had already been obtained.

Trisha Anderson



She noted that at one point, she "was more involved in meetings with DOJ when there were specific issues that came up that required high-level supervisory or executive engagement."

Anderson described two meetings that took place at the DOJ. The first meeting, which occurred prior to the drafting of Comey's exoneration letter of Clinton, included DOJ officials George Toscas and Associate Deputy Attorney General David Margolis. Attending from the FBI were McCabe; the assistant director for the cyber division, Jim Trainor; Comey's chief of staff, James Rybicki; and Anderson.

The second meeting included Toscas, Yates, Assistant Attorney General John Carlin, and DOJ official Matt Axelrod, along with Anderson, McCabe, and Rybicki. Anderson testified that Trainor, who left the FBI in late October 2016, was gone from the FBI at the time of the second meeting, placing this subsequent meet-

ing sometime after October 2016.

Anderson later noted that the allegations against Lynch remained unverified.

'Slightly More Than 10'

In addition to being included in the opening of the Clinton email investigation, Anderson also was part of a very small group that was aware of the Trump-Russia investigation prior to its official opening:

MS. KIM: "So you said that you first became aware of what I'll refer to as the Russia collusion investigation in the July 2016 timeframe. Is that correct?"

MS. ANDERSON: "Correct." Anderson said that she, Strzok, Lisa Page, McCabe, Comey, and Baker were all aware of the investigation prior to the 2016 election. Add to that list Bill Priestap, Jonathan Moffa, Moyer, Pientka, Ohr, and Rybicki and you have a list of 12 individuals, which fits fairly well with Anderson's testimony:

MS. KIM: "To your knowledge, approximately how many FBI officials were aware of the existence of the Russia collusion investigation before the 2016 election?"

MS. ANDERSON: "I don't know the precise number, but it was very small."

MS. KIM: "I apologize for asking you to estimate. Would it be more—would it be more or fewer individuals than 10?"

MS. ANDERSON: "Investigative personnel or any personnel in the FBI?"

MS. KIM: "I will use any investigative—any investigative personnel and officials at the FBI."

MS. ANDERSON: "It was probably slightly more than 10."

The Role of Lisa Page

Lisa Page's unusual position as special counsel has been highlighted during several testimonies, including those of Baker and Priestap. Anderson disclosed that, technically, Page reported directly to her, but "the supervision was less clear. She reported directly to Andy McCabe as a result of the detail arrangement that we had entered into."

Page wasn't supposed to actually provide legal advice to McCabe, but rather bring legal issues raised by McCabe to the appropriate parties within the FBI's Office of General Counsel. But as Anderson noted, "We didn't have any written rules on it and it was a position that was of relatively recent creation."

This wasn't the first time that Page had served in a support capacity to McCabe:

MS. ANDERSON: "She was—it depends—so she was—she actually served in a detail capacity to support him when he was Executive Assistant Director overseeing the National Security Branch. And I believe that was the first time such a position had been created. And she was the first Special Counsel, to my knowledge, who came from within the FBI Office of General Counsel who supported the Deputy Director. Mark Giuliano, for example, had had other lawyers supporting him, but, as I understand, they had been detailed from outside of the FBI from DOJ."

There had been some debate within the FBI as to whether Page would hold the title of special assistant or the more coveted title of special counsel. Anderson was shown an email that appeared to be between two attorneys who reported to her. The emails appeared to be in regard to Page's pending title discussions.

The first attorney noted, "I think his special assistant is the best option... special is the best option, he's number 2." The responding attorney agreed, stating: "Yeah, pretty demoralized by the whole thing. Not sure if Trisha will be there or not. Kind of hoping not. I can be more frank if she's not."

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The U.S. Capitol on Jan. 30, 2018. Former FBI lawyer Trisha Anderson gave a closed-door testimony before congressional investigators on Aug. 31, 2018.

Study Finds School Choice Works

MATTHEW VADUM

School choice advocates are promoting a new study by the liberal Urban Institute that finds private K-12 schools in Florida produce significantly better outcomes for students than public schools, leading to a greater chance of private school students attending and graduating from college.

The study, which looked at the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship program, showed it generates “absolutely incredible results for low-income children, mostly of color,” said Tommy Schultz, national communications director for the American Federation for Children, America’s largest school choice advocacy organization.

“This study confirms it: School choice works,” Schultz told The Epoch Times in an interview.

“When you’re empowering families with the freedom to choose the best educational options for their children, they’re going to find the best education for each of their children that matches their individual

learning styles.”

The FTC scholarship program serves 100,000 students with an average family income of \$24,000 per year, and 68 percent of the students are black or Latino, according to Schultz’s group. It’s also cost-effective. Scholarship funding represents just 55 percent of the dollar amount of per-pupil spending in the state of Florida.

The study, by Urban Institute analysts Matthew M. Chingos, Tomas Monarrez, and Daniel Kuehn, examined the FTC scholarship program, which gives private school scholarships to as many as 100,000 low-income students each year.

Florida’s program is the largest of its kind in the United States. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has expanded the Sunshine State’s program, which essentially has been replicated in many other states, as a model for the nation.

“We find that FTC participants are more likely than similar nonparticipants to enroll in both two-year and four-year colleges, including both public and private

nonprofit four-year colleges,” the authors wrote.

Students who attend private schools with financial assistance through the FTC scholarship program are as much as 99 percent more likely to enroll in four-year colleges and as much as 56 percent more likely to complete bachelor’s degrees than their public-school counterparts, according to the study.

Compared to their peers in public schools, students “who entered FTC in elementary or middle school were 6 percentage points more likely to enroll in college, a 12 percent increase. Students who entered the program in high school were 10 percentage points more likely to enroll, a 19 percent increase,” the study states.

The education establishment and national teachers’ unions generally oppose school choice and school voucher programs. Favoring school choice makes it much more difficult for Democratic politicians to advance their careers, because taking that stand alienates the party’s left-wing base.

But there is widespread hypocrisy about school choice of the Democratic side of the aisle, Schultz said.

“We find it funny that when you look at the last Democratic administration, the top leaders of the Democratic Party—President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi—and what they all had in common was they all went to private K-12 schools and yet they oppose giving those options to all American families.”

He adds, “It’s hypocritical when lawmakers benefit from school choice and they want to deny that choice to others.”

The study comes as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R), a champion of school choice, pushes to expand school choice through a newly proposed “equal opportunity” voucher program aimed to eliminate the waiting list—now at 14,000 students—for the scholarships.

DeSantis said Feb. 15 that Florida’s legislature should approve legislation this spring that would create a new program to serve as a “supplement” to the tax credit program, the Orlando Sentinel reports. “We’ll be able to wake up in May and say, ‘Wow, we’re taking big, bold action here in Florida on behalf of our schoolkids.’”

Giving scholarships to those on the waiting list would cost \$90 million to \$100 million, he said.

DeSantis has focused on education policy since he was sworn in as governor Jan. 8.

On Jan. 31, he ordered the state education commissioner to develop recommendations on how to remove the vestiges of the politically unpopular Common Core standards that remain in the state’s taxpayer-funded school system. Among those remnants is a system of standardized testing that has received broad, bipartisan criticism from state lawmakers and teachers.

Florida Stop Common Core Coalition Executive Director Karen Eifrem expressed skepticism about some of the data in the study, and said there is a danger that school choice programs will allow Common Core standards to find their way into private schools.

There is “the threat of the future imposition of ‘accountability’ requirements and other regulations on private schools of the state standardized testing regime, as in Indiana and Louisiana, which would mean the imposition of Common Core standards and their aligned tests. This would result in a choice of venue but not a choice of curriculum.”



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at Florida International University in Miami on Feb. 18, 2019.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Trump Calls on European Allies to Take Back CAPTURED ISIS TERRORISTS

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

President Donald Trump called on European nations on Feb. 16 to repatriate and prosecute hundreds of the ISIS terrorist group’s fighters who have been captured by the United States and its allies in Syria.

Trump warned that the terrorists may end up being released as U.S. forces exit from the region.

“The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany, and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial. The Caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them,” Trump wrote on Twitter.

“The U.S. does not want to watch as these ISIS fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go,” the president continued. “We do so much, and spend so much—Time for others to step up and do the job that they are so capable of doing. We are pulling back after 100% Caliphate victory!”

Trump ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria upon the defeat of ISIS in the region. On Feb. 16, U.S.-backed forces were on the verge of capturing the last tiny enclave held by the terrorist group along the Euphrates River.

Jiyya Furat, the commander of the U.S.-backed forces, said Feb. 16 that ISIS was pinned



President Donald Trump in the Rose Garden at the White House on Feb. 15, 2019.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

its peak, the caliphate ruled more than 2 million people.

Thousands of people, including many citizens of European nations, traveled to Syria to join ISIS during the conflict; hundreds have been captured and are held in Kurdish-run prisons. Once the United States pulls out of the region, the Kurds may not have the resources to safeguard the prisoners, prompting calls to return the prisoners to their respective nations.

Kurdish officials have said that the prisoners’ family members may exceed 4,000.

Bringing ISIS fighters back to their nations of origin is complicated. According to Shiraz Maher, director of The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, there are “real problems with the admissibility of battlefield evidence” in Western courts that may hamper prosecutions.

“So, what happens then? These fighters are either repatriated and then freed; no one wants that. Or they’re tried on lesser charges with shorter tariffs and are out of jail in a relatively short period. Again, this is not ideal,” Maher wrote on Twitter.

Meanwhile, local authorities have to solve the question of where to house the prisoners. Placing them with the general population may radicalize other prisoners, while setting up special facilities may come at great expense.

Reuters contributed to this report.

Legal Actions to Stop NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION BEGIN

MATTHEW VADUM

Four left-leaning environmentalist groups have filed federal lawsuits against the Trump administration, in hopes of blocking the president’s national emergency declaration that seeks to redirect \$6.7 billion in already allocated funds to build a wall on the nation’s largely undefended border with Mexico.

The legal actions came as a violent protest broke out against the declaration not far from the border in Texas, as a group of states are contemplating filing their own lawsuits, and as opponents on Capitol Hill prepare lawsuits and ready a legislative effort to have Congress reverse the declaration.

Dozens of radical demonstrators took over and vandalized the National Border Patrol Museum near El Paso, Texas, on Feb. 16, the Washington Examiner reported.

Museum director David Ham said about 50 unruly protesters entered the museum, defaced exhibits, and refused to leave. “Say it loud, say it clear, Border Patrol kills!” members of the group shouted.

Director of the Office of Management and Budget Mick Mulvaney said the \$6.7 billion in wall funding consists of \$600 million from



President Donald Trump at a Make America Great Again rally in El Paso, Texas, on Feb. 11, 2019.

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

the Treasury Department, \$2.5 billion from the counterdrug activity fund under the Department of Defense, and \$3.6 billion from the military construction budget.

President Donald Trump invoked the National Emergencies Act on Feb. 15 as Congress gave final approval to the 1,169-page, \$333 billion omnibus spending bill that funds the government through the federal fiscal year-end of Sept. 30.

The fiscal measure, which Trump signed into law after saying he was “not thrilled” with it, contains \$1.375 billion for 55 miles of border barriers in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, which is separate from the \$6.7 billion generated by the emergency declaration. The \$1.375 billion is less than the \$5.7 billion the president sought for a border wall. The \$5.7 billion request itself is a fraction of the \$25 billion Trump originally said he wanted.

There is no guarantee those 55 miles will actually be built. The legislative language stipulates that “prior to use of any funds made available by this Act for the construction of physical

barriers,” the Department of Homeland Security “shall confer and seek to reach agreement regarding the design and alignment of physical barriers within that city.” Local officials in the liberal border counties in the Rio Grande Valley are known to be hostile to building a wall.

The legal actions come as California and about a dozen other states are reportedly preparing to sue the federal government to stop the wall, the president’s signature campaign promise.

Public Citizen, a nonprofit founded by consumer advocate Ralph Nader, filed a lawsuit Feb. 15 seeking to invalidate the president’s proclamation issued under the National Emergencies Act, on behalf of the Frontera Audubon Society of

Weslaco, Texas, a nonprofit organization, and three Texas landowners. The nonprofit claims in the legal complaint that its “members’ ability to observe wildlife will be impaired by the construction of a border wall and the resulting destruction of critical habitat.”

Joined by the Center for Biological Diversity

Illegal border crossers are taken to a Border Patrol van after they crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico into Eagle Pass, Texas, on Feb. 16, 2019.



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

“Our message back to the White House is simple and clear: California will see you in court.”

Gavin Newsom, California governor

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection boat patrols the Rio Grande at Eagle Pass, Texas, on Feb. 16, 2019.



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

Pence Urges Unwilling Europeans to Back Iran Sanctions, Quit Iran Nuclear Deal

PETR SVAB

Vice President Mike Pence called on European nations on Feb. 16 to support U.S. sanctions on Iran and to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.

Yet major European players—prominently France, Germany, and Britain—appear unwilling to heed the call amid Europe’s financial entanglements with Iran.

After visiting the site of the Nazi Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland during his trip, Pence framed Iran’s rhetoric and actions in terms of anti-Semitism.

“When authoritarian regimes breathe out vile, anti-Semitic hatred and threats of violence, we must take them at their word,” he said in his Munich Security Conference speech. “The Iranian regime openly advocates another Holocaust and it seeks the means to achieve it.”

Backing the position of President Donald Trump, Pence called Iran “the greatest threat to peace and security in the Middle East,” pointing to its sponsorship of terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as extremists in Syria and Yemen.

Troubled Deal

Trump announced the United States’ withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered the reimposing of sanctions.

The deal was signed in 2015 by the Obama administration along with Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. It required Iran to delay its capacity to build a

nuclear weapon until 2026 in exchange for sanctions relief.

Trump had criticized the deal for asking too little of Iran, such as not addressing Iran’s ballistic missile program, its financing of terrorists, and more. Evidence has also emerged that Iran negotiated the deal in bad faith.

In April 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented what he said were Iranian documents obtained by Israeli intelligence that proved Iran’s development of nuclear weapons before the 2015 deal, while the regime claimed its nuclear program didn’t seek to build arms.

Moreover, Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran’s atomic agency, said Jan. 22 that the regime secretly bought components for its heavy water reactor near Arak, a critical component in the production of weapons-grade plutonium, even though the nuclear deal required the regime to disable it.

Iran’s belligerent behavior was supposed to fade away with the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Instead, Iran announced in 2017 an intent to boost its military spending by 150 percent in five years. In recent weeks, it has tested a cruise missile, unveiled a cruise missile-armed submarine, boasted the capability to quickly restart uranium enrichment, and twice attempted to launch satellites, which use technology similar to intercontinental ballistic missiles. Both attempts failed.

Vice President Michael Pence gives a speech during the annual Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany, on Feb. 16, 2019.



ALEXANDER BEIER/GETTY IMAGES

“The time has come for our European partners to stop undermining U.S. sanctions against this murderous revolutionary regime.”

Vice President Mike Pence, at the Munich Security Conference

EU Holding On

Pence called on European nations to abandon the Iran deal and join the United States in pressuring the Islamic regime.

“The time has come for our European partners to stop undermining U.S. sanctions against this murderous revolutionary regime. The time has come for our European partners to stand with us and with the Iranian people, our allies and friends in the region,” he said. “The time has come for our European partners to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal and join us as we bring the economic and diplomatic pressure necessary to give the Iranian people, the region, and the world the peace, security, and freedom they deserve.”

But the United Kingdom, France, and Germany continue to voice their commitment to the deal and have even set up a joint company with the aim of facilitating goods bartering between European and Iranian companies without the use of currency, thus dodging the U.S. sanctions. Yet the company is planned to initially only handle trade in food and medical supplies, which aren’t targeted by the sanctions.

Europe has been much more deeply involved in trading with Iran than the United States. After the sanctions were lifted in 2015, European trade with Iran nearly tripled, reaching \$25 billion in 2017, according to Statista.

Trade between the United States and Iran, on the other hand, ranged between \$200 million and \$300 million a year.

McCabe's Troubles Run Much Deeper Than '60 Minutes' Interview Suggests

JEFF CARLSON

Former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe's interview with Scott Pelley of CBS's "60 Minutes" aired on Feb. 15.

McCabe played a pivotal role in what has become known as Spycgate. He directed the activities of FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI lawyer Lisa Page, provided an early approval of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) application on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page, and was involved in all aspects of the Russia investigation. He was also mentioned in the now-infamous "insurance policy" text message sent by Strzok to Lisa Page.

Notably missing from the "60 Minutes" interview was any mention of these and other critical components regarding McCabe's involvement in the investigation into alleged Trump-Russia collusion. Specifically, there were no questions asked regarding the following:



SCREENSHOT VIA CBS

• McCabe's ongoing criminal investigation before a grand jury

• The role of FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI attorney Lisa Page, who was special counsel to McCabe

• The use of the so-called Steele dossier as the primary piece of evidence in the Page FISA application, despite the fact that the information was paid for by Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign

• The infamous "insurance policy" text, which references a meeting held in McCabe's office between McCabe, Strzok, and Page

• The role of Justice Department (DOJ) official Bruce Ohr, who provided information from former British spy Christopher Steele to McCabe and the FBI

• The FBI's sudden attempts at re-engagement with Steele in the days immediately following the firing of FBI Director James Comey

• The criminal leak investigation into former FBI General Counsel James Baker McCabe claimed he was fired "because I opened a case against the president of the United States."

This is patently untrue. McCabe was fired on March 16, 2018, for lying to both the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) and to the DOJ's inspector general. According to DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz, McCabe lied three times under oath—and also lied to then-FBI Director James Comey—regarding his authorization of leaks to The Wall Street Journal.

On May 9, 2017, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein wrote a memo to then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, recommending that Comey be fired. The subject of the letter was "Restoring Public Confidence in the FBI." Nowhere in the letter is the Russia investigation mentioned. Comey would be fired that day.

That same day, McCabe was being interviewed by agents from the FBI's Inspection Division (INSD) regarding media leaks that occurred in an Oct. 30, 2016, Wall Street Journal article, "FBI in Internal Feud Over Hillary Clinton Probe," by Devlin Barrett.

McCabe would lie to INSD agents regarding his participation in the leaks, as later disclosed in a report by the inspector general. He is currently the subject of a grand jury investigation.

▲
Former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe in an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes."

According to DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz, McCabe lied three times under oath, and also lied to then-FBI Director James Comey.

In the process of uncovering McCabe's deception, the IG also would discover the massive series of text messages sent between Strzok and Lisa Page. McCabe had specifically denied to the IG that he provided Page, his special counsel, permission to leak to Barrett. This was untrue, as McCabe had directly authorized Page to share information with Barrett—and Page did so thinking she had been granted legal/official authorization to do so.

Page, when confronted by the IG with McCabe's denials, produced texts refuting the deputy FBI director's claim.

The FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility made the recommendation to fire McCabe, but it was Rosenstein who fast-tracked McCabe's firing process. According to the FBI's OPR, the bureau would have been unable to reach a formal resolution before McCabe's retirement on March 18, 2018, without intervention from the deputy attorney general.

"pushing for the Justice Department to open an investigation into the president." Note that just five days earlier, on May 11, McCabe had publicly testified before Congress that there was no obstruction, stating, "There has been no effort to impede our investigation to date."

SEN. RUBIO: "Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. McCabe, can you without going into the specifics of any individual investigation, I think the American people want to know, has the dismissal of Mr. Comey in any way impeded, interrupted, stopped or negatively impacted any of the work, any investigation, or any ongoing projects at the Federal Bureau of Investigations?"

MR. MCCABE: "As you know, Senator, the work of the men and women of the FBI continues despite any changes in circumstance, any decisions. So there has been no effort to impede our investigation today. Quite simply put sir, you cannot stop the men and women of the FBI from doing the right thing, protecting the American people, and upholding the Constitution."

On the one hand, McCabe testified there was no obstruction from Trump, yet, just five days later, McCabe was attempting to convince Rosenstein to go along with his efforts to open an obstruction investigation into the president. Events suggest that McCabe's efforts were met with alarm from Rosenstein, who responded by appointing Mueller as special counsel. Rosenstein may have also informed Trump of McCabe's intentions.

At the same time that McCabe was attempting to open an obstruction investigation, Strzok and Page were texting about the lack of evidence of collusion. In a text that Strzok sent to Page, Strzok noted:

"You and I both know the odds are nothing. If I thought it was likely, I'd be there, no question. I hesitate, in part, because of my gut sense and concern there's no big there yet."

Page was asked about this text during her July 2018 testimony by Rep. John Ratcliffe (R-Texas). She initially answered, "So I think this represents that even as far as May of 2017, we still couldn't answer the question." After a brief consultation with her legal counsel, Page continued: "I think it's a reflection of us still not knowing. I guess that's as good as I can answer."

On May 17, 2017, the day after Rosenstein and Trump met privately with Robert Mueller in the Oval Office at the White House—and the day after Rosenstein's encounter with McCabe—Rosenstein appointed Mueller as special counsel.

The May 17 appointment of Mueller shifted control of the Russia investigation to Mueller from the FBI and McCabe. Rosenstein would retain ultimate authority over the special counsel investigation, and any expansion of Mueller's probe required authorization from Rosenstein.

In advance of McCabe's "60 Minutes" interview, a spokesperson for the Department of Justice released a statement that confirmed exactly this—Rosenstein's actions removed McCabe from the Russia collusion investigation:

"The Deputy Attorney General, in fact, appointed Special Counsel Mueller, and directed that Mr. McCabe be removed from any participation in that investigation."

Testimony from former FBI General Counsel James Baker has been cited as corroborating McCabe's version of events, but just like the FBI's use of an article by Yahoo News' Michael Isikoff to corroborate the Steele dossier, Baker's testimony represented nothing more than circular reporting.

REP. MEADOWS: "Were you in the meeting when deputy AG Rod Rosenstein suggested to wiretap or record the President of the United States as has been recently reported allegedly in the McCabe memos?"

MR. BAKER: "I was not at those meetings, but I heard about those meetings."

REP. MEADOWS: "And how did you hear about those meetings?"

MR. BAKER: "I heard about them, I believe, from Andy and from Lisa."

Meanwhile, it appears that McCabe decided it might be best to distance himself from his reported comments regarding discussions of the 25th Amendment.

On Feb. 15, McCabe's spokeswoman, Melissa Schwartz, issued the following statement: "Certain statements made by Mr. McCabe, in interviews associated with the release of his book, have been taken out of context and misrepresented. To clarify, at no time did Mr. McCabe participate in any extended discussions about the use of the 25th Amendment, nor is he aware of any such discussions. He was present and participated in a discussion that included a comment by Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein regarding the 25th Amendment. This anecdote was not included in 'The Threat.' Mr. McCabe has merely confirmed a discussion that was initially reported elsewhere."

Rosenstein's Appointment of Mueller

On the morning of May 16, 2017, Rosenstein allegedly suggested to McCabe that he secretly record Trump. This remark was reported in a New York Times article that was sourced from memos from the now-fired McCabe. Rosenstein immediately issued a statement denying the accusations.

The alleged comments by Rosenstein occurred at a meeting where McCabe was

President Trump: 'The Days of Socialism and Communism Are Numbered'

In landmark speech on Venezuela, Trump says 'the twilight hour of socialism has arrived' around the world

BOWEN XIAO & IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

By supporting a peaceful regime change in Venezuela, the United States has paved the way toward purging South America of socialism and creating the first fully democratic Western Hemisphere in history, President Donald Trump said in a speech in Florida on Feb. 18.

Trump, a critic of socialism and communism, told the Venezuelan community in Florida that recent changes in South and Central America suggest that the path toward democracy on the two continents is irreversible. The president pledged the support of the United States to Venezuelans who "are standing for freedom and Democracy."

"We're here to proclaim a new day is coming in Latin America," Trump said. "In Venezuela and across the Western Hemisphere socialism is dying and liberty, prosperity, and Democracy are being reborn."

The president reiterated his support for Venezuela's interim President Juan Guaidó. Trump was the first world leader to recognize Guaidó as the legitimate leader of the South American nation. Guaidó assumed the position of interim president shortly after the Venezuelan National Assembly declared socialist dictator Nicolas Maduro as "illegitimate."

Trump told the crowd that Venezuela should cease to be a puppet state of the communist regime in Cuba. Nearly 92,700 Cuban communist proxies work in Venezuela's government apparatus, according to the Congressional testimony by a retired Venezuelan military official. Senior U.S. administration officials have said that Venezuela is being propped up by the communists in Cuba. White House Director of Strategic Communications Mercedes Schlapp told Fox News on Feb. 18 that Cuba has sent more than 20,000 security force personnel to Venezuela.

"Maduro is not a Venezuelan patriot. He is a Cuban puppet. That's what he is," the president said. "For decades the socialist dictatorships of Cuba and Venezuela have propped each other up in a very corrupt bargain. Venezuela gave Cuba oil. In return, Cuba gave Venezuela a police state run directly from Havana. But this is a much different day and those days

are over."

Successful and peaceful regime change in Venezuela would spark change and promote democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua, Trump told the crowd. In 2018, the Trump administration dubbed Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua the "troika of tyranny." In November 2018, National Security advisor John Bolton said that the socialist dictatorships in the three nations are the "genesis of a sordid cradle of communism in the Western Hemisphere."

Trump's comments on Feb. 18 are the latest in an intense campaign of tightening sanctions and bold rhetoric which started early in his presidency. Although the Trump administration took steps to counter human rights abuses in Cuba and Nicaragua, the bulk of the pressure from the White House has so far fallen on Venezuela. Trump's comments suggest that Washington hopes that Caracas will be the first domino in a chain reaction akin to the fall of communism in Europe decades ago.

"The twilight hour of socialism has arrived in our hemisphere and, frankly, in many many places around the world," Trump said. "The days of socialism and communism are numbered not only in Venezuela but in Nicaragua and in Cuba as well."

During his presidential campaign, Trump did not focus on the threat of socialism and communism to the United States and the world. But, since taking office, the president has made the fight against socialism and communism a key part of his agenda. At this year's State of the Union speech, he said that "America will never become a socialist country."

Trump has also lambasted communism and socialism on the world stage. The president told the United Nations in September 2017 that "anguish and devastation and failure" followed wherever these ideologies were adopted. In November 2017, Trump told the National Assembly in South Korea that communism is to blame for the contrast between the desolation and famine in North Korea and progress and prosperity in South Korea.

Once an oil-rich nation Venezuela has been crippled by the socialist policies implemented by Maduro and his predecessor. Almost 90 percent of Venezuela's population live below the poverty line and more than half of families are unable to meet their basic food needs,

according to Mercy Corps, a humanitarian group. The U.N. estimates that by the end of 2019, 5.3 million refugees and migrants will have fled the socialist regime in Venezuela.

"Socialism has so completely ravaged this great country that even the world's largest reserves of oil are no longer enough to keep the lights on. This will never happen to us," Trump said as the crowd cheered in response.

"Socialism promises prosperity but it delivers poverty. Socialism promises unity but it delivers hatred and ... division. Socialism promises a better future but it always returns to the darkest chapters of the past," he added. "That never fails. It always happens."

Guaidó's ascendance triggered a global referendum on socialism. Maduro received recognition from current and former communist nations like China, North Korea, Cuba, and Russia. Meanwhile, more than 50 free-world nations—including the United States, Germany, and Australia—backed Guaidó.

Message to the Military

The United States is aware of the whereabouts of the wealth hidden abroad by military officials and their families, Trump said. Venezuelan military officials have a choice, he said: work toward democracy for the future of their families, or stand to lose their wealth. "If you choose this path," Trump said, warning Maduro's backers, "you will find no safe harbor, no easy exit and no way out. You will lose everything."

Two high-ranking military officials have already defected from Maduro's regime: Jose Luis Silva, Venezuela's defense attache to Washington and Gen. Francisco Yanez, a high-ranking Venezuelan air force general. Guaidó, in the meantime, has promised amnesty for military forces who defect.

The Trump administration previously said they were contemplating whether to lift sanctions on military members who side with Guaidó. One U.S. official said the United States is directly communicating with members of Venezuela's military and urging them to defect, although the official noted that such discussions were "very, very

limited."

Venezuelan military officials have continued to remain loyal to Maduro, largely because of the wealth they have gained from corruption, drug trafficking, and revenues from the petroleum trade. A U.S. admiral said at a recent Senate Armed Services Committee that Venezuela has about 2,000 generals.

"Today I ask every member of the Maduro regime. End this nightmare of poverty, hunger, and death. Let your people go. Set your country free," Trump said.

Humanitarian Aid

Maduro has continued to refuse to allow humanitarian aid into Venezuela, which has been piling up in the Colombian border city of Cúcuta. On Feb. 16, three U.S. military cargo planes landed in Cúcuta carrying 180 tons of humanitarian aid—it was the second such shipment from the United States.

"He would rather see his people starve than give them aid," Trump said.

The heavily guarded warehouse in Cúcuta is one of three points from where an attempt will be made on Feb. 23 to deliver the aid into Venezuela; Guaidó hopes that will drive a wedge between Maduro and military forces who continue to support him, despite popular discontent. The United States has pledged \$20 million to alleviate the suffering in Venezuela.

The other two locations are Roraima in northern Brazil, and the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao. When the day comes, military figures will face the choice of disobeying Maduro's orders and letting the much-needed supplies into the country, or remain loyal to him and block the aid's entry, potentially sparking a confrontation with crowds desperate for food and medicine.

Maduro claims the decline of his country is a result of U.S.-imposed sanctions and that Venezuelans "are not beggars."

His regime placed an oil tanker and shipping crates on Feb. 6 to barricade a bridge that was intended to be used to deliver the aid, sparking an international standoff about Venezuela at the border.

“
Today I ask every member of the Maduro regime. End this nightmare of poverty, hunger and death for your people. Let your people go. Set your country free.

President Donald Trump



President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump deliver remarks to the Venezuelan-American community at Florida International University Ocean Bank Convocation Center in Miami on Feb. 18, 2019.

JIM WATSON/AFP

The GREEN NEW DEAL:

OPINION

Welcome to a Command Economy



Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) during a press conference to announce Green New Deal legislation outside the Capitol on Feb. 7, 2019.

MARK HENDRICKSON



The late, great Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises posited three categories of economies: “unhampered,” the capitalist ideal of a laissez-faire, private property order; “hampered,” a fundamentally market-based economy overlaid with considerable government intervention and redistribution of wealth; and “command,” meaning that the market economy has been obliterated and government has taken over the primary means of production.

As explained to me by my late mentor, Dr. Hans Sennholz (who grew up in Nazi Germany, later earned his doctorate in economics under Mises’ guidance at NYU, and became a tireless advocate for free markets), the command economy can be fascist or socialist. The primary difference is that under fascism, businesses remain nominally private, whereas under socialism, the state formally takes ownership. Under either variant, the state controls and mandates what and how much is produced, what wages to pay, what prices to charge, what suppliers are used, and so on.

With the unveiling of her Green New Deal, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) has proposed that the United States be transformed into a command economy. Her fellow “democratic socialist” Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and a gaggle of Democratic presidential hopefuls all jumped on the bandwagon. This is a very helpful step—helpful in that it clarifies exactly how radical the Ocasio-Cortez/Sanders ideology is.

No longer should anyone be lulled into a false sense of security by Ocasio-Cortez’s use of the adjective “democratic.” No longer will Sanders be able to soft-pedal his socialism by claiming disingenuously that he wants the United States to adopt the Scandinavian model of “socialism.” That was a bogus claim from the start, since the Scandinavian countries are not socialist. Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen corrected the error in Sanders’ assertion, categorically stating: “Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy. Denmark is a market economy.”

The Nordic countries are not socialist, but they do have elaborate, expensive social welfare safety nets that require high taxes on virtually everyone, including the middle class. It’s funny how Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez avoid saying that there will need to be massive tax increases on middle-class citizens to fund a Scandinavian-style welfare state.

But Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez want Uncle Sam to exercise far more control over the U.S. economy than simply expanding welfare programs.

Seizing Control

In the Nordic countries, the principle of private ownership of business is respected, and governments do not dictate to businesses how to spend their money. By contrast, Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez, and their political cronies favor mandating a higher minimum

We should be grateful that the socialist threat has come out from hiding and made its intentions so explicit and unmistakable.

wage. (Note: There are no minimum wage laws in Scandinavia.)

Further, Sanders joined with Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) earlier this month to propose a plan that would impose various requirements, such as paying more money to their employees, in order to receive government permission to buy back their own stock. Let that sink in for a moment: The left seeks to dictate how private corporations arrange their own finances and deploy their own assets.

Proposed laws that dictate minimum wages and preconditions for share buybacks chip away at the principle of “private” business, but the Green New Deal would obliterate it. Clearly, Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders, and their gang don’t want some watered-down version; they want socialism comparable to what Venezuela has today or what the Eastern Bloc had 30 to 70 years ago. If you don’t think so, just read their wish list.

Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign website called for government control over huge sectors of the U.S. economy: “Medicare for all,” “a federal jobs guarantee,” “higher education/trade school for all,” and “housing as a human right.”

The Green New Deal goes much, much further. It calls for the elimination of fossil fuels in 10 years—that is, the closing of all gas stations, replacing them with electric-charging stations; replacing or retooling tens of millions of vehicles that travel by land, sea, or air (with the alarming acknowledgment “we aren’t sure that we’ll be able to get rid of ... airplanes [in ten years]”); replacing all power plants that use fossil fuels with wind and solar; and eliminating all jobs involved in the exploration, extraction, refining, and transportation of fossil fuels.

The plan also wants to “retrofit every building in America,” “overhaul transportation and agriculture,” “provide job training and education to all,” “guarantee a job with family-sustaining wages,” “provide high-quality health care, housing,” and “ensure universal access to healthy food.”

In short, according to the FAQ that Ocasio-Cortez posted, the Green New Deal is “the plan to build [a] new economy.” (Notice the arrogance: “the plan,” not “a plan.”) Folks, this is a call for central economic planning, Soviet-style. It would require the government to seize operational control over economic production and press tens of millions of workers into service building what the government orders rather than what consumers want—a failsafe recipe for impoverishment.



Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) at the Our Revolution Massachusetts Rally in Boston on March 31, 2017.

SCOTT EISEN/GETTY IMAGES

Saving the World

This plan to “mobilize every aspect of the American economy” is pharaonic in its epic proportions. Just as the Egyptian pharaoh organized his people to build pyramids, Ocasio-Cortez regards the American people as worker bees who should compliantly accept their government-appointed role in the new economic order and build the equivalent of hundreds of pyramids—uneconomic monuments to the green gods.

If you think comparing Ocasio-Cortez to a pharaoh is over the top, her Senate co-sponsor, Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.), actually one-upped her. No mere pharaoh, Markey assumed the mantle of a mega-messiah, not content to offer salvation to the human race, but praising the Green New Deal as “a

mission to save all of creation by engaging in massive job creation.” “All of creation”—the whole universe? Something tells me that man has been in Congress too long.

Setting aside comparisons to pharaohs and the messiah, Ocasio-Cortez is acting like a communist despot, exhibiting totalitarian tendencies. So fanatical is she in her desire to save the world from her fantasized fear of carbon dioxide, that she recently—in collaboration with Rep. Chellie Pingree of Maine—issued a thinly veiled threat to the CEOs of Google, Facebook, and Microsoft.

In the letter, Ocasio-Cortez and her colleague scolded the high-tech giants for having co-sponsored LibertyCon, a libertarian conference that included speakers from both sides of the “what to do about climate change” debate.

After acknowledging the companies’ “past commitments ... to address climate change” and “the example [they] have set promoting sustainability and evidence-based science,” Ocasio-Cortez and Pingree then stated that the companies had “compromised” their past good behavior “by [their] implicit support of the session” that included a skeptical opinion. (Note: Computer models are not evidence-based science, both because they contradict actual observational evidence and because they are predictions, not facts.)

The letter went on to warn the tech titans that it was “imperative to ensure that the climate-related views espoused at LibertyCon do not reflect the values of your companies.” Not only is this a clumsy attempt to squelch free speech, it has the totalitarian flavor of denouncing certain thoughts or beliefs as unacceptable. One can imagine future inquisitions: “Do you now or have you ever thought that carbon dioxide is not a threat to life as we know it?”

As draconian and potentially totalitarian as Ocasio-Cortez and her Green New Deal are, we should be grateful that the socialist threat has come out from hiding and made its intentions so explicit and unmistakable.

For example, the newest declared candidate for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), has already shown how shameless she can be in speaking out of both sides of her mouth. On one hand, she has said that she would vote in favor of the Green New Deal. On the other, she affirmed on Fox News, “I am a Democrat and not a socialist. ... I believe in capitalism.” Sorry, senator, you can’t have it both ways. If

you are for the Green New Deal—a socialist-central plan that would usher in a command economy in the United States—you are a socialist, period.

Thank you, Ocasio-Cortez, for helping to clarify who is a socialist and who isn’t.

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



Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort arrives for a hearing at the E. Barrett Prettyman Federal Courthouse in Washington on April 19, 2018.

OPINION

Paul Manafort: A TIME BOMB?

DIANA WEST



Early in 2018, Franklin Foer published a cover story in The Atlantic titled “The Plot Against America: Paul Manafort and the Fall of Washington.” I think he inadvertently stumbled onto something. Several points popped out that I can’t stop thinking about, especially now that Manafort is back in the special counsel’s crosshairs, and potentially faces a prison sentence that could well be a death sentence for the 69-year-old. They made me wonder then and they make me wonder now: Was the introduction of Manafort into the Trump campaign itself a “plot against America?”

The Foer article opens with a shocking sequence about Manafort’s time under medical care in 2015:

“The clinic permitted Paul Manafort one 10-minute call each day. And each day, he would use it to ring his wife from Arizona, his voice often soaked in tears. ‘Apparently he sobs daily,’ his daughter Andrea, then 29, texted a friend. During the spring of 2015, Manafort’s life had tipped into a deep trough. A few months earlier, he had intimated to his other daughter, Jessica, that suicide was a possibility. He would ‘be gone forever,’ she texted Andrea.”

On March 29, 2016, less than one year after sinking to these dark depths, Manafort joined the Trump campaign as convention floor manager. He became chairman of the campaign on May 19, 2016.

What follows are the salient points from the Foer piece in chronological order.

- In the spring of 2014, Viktor Yanukovich, Manafort’s main meal ticket for nearly a decade, was forced from the presidency of Ukraine. “Fearing for his life,” Yanukovich fled to Russia. Manafort “avoided any harm by keeping a careful distance from the inflamed city.”
- After Yanukovich was overthrown, Manafort suddenly had career problems. “Money, which had always flowed freely to Manafort and which he’d spent more freely still, soon became a problem. ... He seemed unwilling, or perhaps unable, to access his offshore accounts; his FBI investigation scrutinizing his work in Ukraine had begun not long after Yanukovich’s fall. Meanwhile, a Russian oligarch named Oleg Deripaska had been after Manafort to explain what had happened to an \$18.9 million investment in a Ukrainian company that Manafort had claimed to have made on his behalf.”
- Manafort had domestic problems, too. In November 2014, Manafort’s wife and grown daughters discovered he was conducting an extremely expensive extra-

marital affair. Despite pledges and couples counseling, he continued the affair, which came to light again six months later.

- According to daughter Andrea’s text, Manafort was by this time in “the middle of a massive emotional breakdown.” Foer wrote that Manafort entered a “clinic” in Arizona six months after the initial discovery of the affair in November 2014, which places his entry time around May 2015.
- At the “clinic,” Manafort was allotted the daily 10-minute phone call to his wife—“in tears” and possibly suicidal.

Foer didn’t tell us when Manafort left the clinic. He backed into Manafort’s departure in the context of the newly dis-

grabbing Trump’s attention, he readily supplied it. Manafort’s spell in the Arizona clinic had ended,” wrote Foer.

All of this is more than strange. First, about Thomas Barrack Jr., an American billionaire of Syrian extraction. As an Arabic-speaking lawyer in 1972, the Washington Post reported, Barrack played some squash with a set of Saudi princes and thus became “the American representative of ‘the boys.’” There was no word on whether Barrack had registered as a Saudi agent for this work for the Saudi family dictatorship. “Barrack spent many hours listening to the Arabs discuss their world, which he said gave him ‘great respect for the society and community,’” the Post continued.

It sounds as if Barrack’s “respect”



Colony Capital CEO Tom Barrack at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland on July 21, 2016.

JIM WATSON/AP/PHOTOTV IMAGES

charged patient’s reportedly desperate effort to gain access to Donald Trump.

He opened the section this way: “I really need to get to Trump, Manafort told an old friend, the real-estate magnate Tom Barrack, in the early months of 2016.”

Foer didn’t get more specific about the date of this conversation; however, the distinctive quotation, “I really need to get to,” has its provenance in a Washington Post piece based on interviews with Barrack, who dated his conversation with Manafort as shortly after the Iowa caucuses, which were Feb. 1, 2016.

“Barrack, a confidante of Trump for some 40 years, had known Manafort even longer. When Manafort asked for Barrack’s help

paid off. In 1979, he bought a California ranch

“just down a hill from Ronald Reagan’s Rancho del Cielo.” (Quelle coincidence!) The Post continued: “The Secret Service later boarded horses at Barrack’s ranch, and he occasionally went on trail rides and sat around campfires with Reagan. ‘I loved him,’ Barrack said of Reagan.”

That’s beautiful. Anyway, back to Manafort. It’s early 2016. Manafort has debts, he has a Putin-linked oligarch looking for that \$19 million he “invested,” his family life is chaos, and what does he do? He calls up Barrack after Iowa and says: “I really need to get to Trump.”

The Post story explained the Manafort-

Trump connection differently.

The story said Manafort and Barrack go back 40 years to Barrack’s Saudi princes days. They met in Beirut when Manafort “represented a firm doing business with a Saudi construction company.” Barrack has known Trump for nearly as long, and depicts himself as a huge loyalist—although he is also openly horrified about Trump’s politics, including his signature issues of immigration and the Muslim ban.

Gee, something isn’t quite adding up here ... According to the Post: “Barrack supported Trump’s campaign, and shortly after Trump lost the Iowa caucuses, he [Barrack] reconnected with his old friend Manafort, a long-time Republican consultant.”

Barrack “reconnected” with Manafort? The Atlantic had it the other way around.

In any case, it’s February 2016 and the two men are talking. At this earliest stage of the primary season, Manafort supposedly tells Barrack he wants to work as “Trump’s convention manager” now that Trump has lost the Iowa caucuses. Does that make sense? I’ll bet Deripaska’s \$19 million this is not the way that initial conversation went. Maybe it went more like this: You really need to get to Trump, and here’s how we’re gonna do it ...

According to the Post, Barrack next emailed Ivanka and Jared Kushner—whom Barrack had assisted financially with Kushner’s albatross building, 666 Fifth Avenue, naturally—to urge Trump to hire Manafort.

The Atlantic did not report this intervention by Barrack. Instead, the Trump connection was almost entirely Manafort’s doing as a matter of his professional salvation. Foer wrote: “With the arrival of Donald Trump, Manafort smelled an opportunity to regain his losses, and to return to relevance.”

Sorry to say so, but this sounds as absurd as Barrack’s claim that Manafort told him he wanted to be “convention floor manager” right after Trump lost Iowa. In the early months of 2016 and right up to election night, Trump was the political equivalent of the bubonic plague, refrigerator mold, and Hitler in the eyes of all Washington, including every member of the GOP establishment whom Manafort had ever billed or hoped to—all of whom were endlessly predicting Trump’s elimination and epic loss in a historic landslide.

Any political professional even contemplating a stint on the Trump campaign was immediately threatened with shaming, excommunication, ostracism, financial ruin, purging, even “epuration sauvage.” Thus, it seems highly unlikely that Manafort would look at Trump and see a meal ticket to big time.

According to Foer, financially flailing Manafort then offered his services to Trump “free of charge”—nine long months before Election Day—to seem like a “near-equal.”

In the Post piece, Barrack is the author of an email he sent to Ivanka and Kushner that urged the campaign to hire Manafort. In the Atlantic piece, Barrack’s role was no more than conduit of a “memo” Manafort wrote to the Trump team.

The Manafort message? According to Foer, “Barrack forwarded to Trump’s team a memo Manafort had written ... [told] Trump that he had ‘avoided the political establishment in Washington since 2005,’ and [described] himself as a lifelong enemy of Karl Rove. ...”

It seems highly unlikely that Manafort would look at Trump and see a meal ticket to big time.

Hook, line, and sinker, it would seem.

The instigating role of former Saudi “representative” Barrack in the hiring of Manafort is absent from the Atlantic piece; however, it brought to light information that might explain why Manafort was tapped for delivery to Team Trump in the first place: In his broken state of mind and career, Manafort was the perfect vehicle for someone else to crash the campaign.

To put it another way, after Manafort’s 2014 financial smash and 2015 breakdown, this once high-priced Igor to Global Crookdom was shattered goods—humanly, financially, politically, and legally. He was a walking time bomb for any of Trump’s political enemies to maneuver into the Trump camp and then wait for Manafort’s toxic life story to explode all over Trump.

If this was the case, who set the trap?

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

OPINION

Is It Too Little, Too Late From the Fed?

The Fed has capitulated to the markets, but can it avoid a recession?

VALENTIN SCHMID



After Jerome Powell became Fed chairman in 2017, this publication made the not-so-bold prediction that he would bail out financial markets when necessary, although he doesn't have a doctoral degree, and was talking and walking tough for most of his tenure.

But when markets crashed 20 percent, due to Powell's incessant raising of rates, tough talk, and reduction of the Fed balance sheet, he got cold feet, as expected, and flip-flopped with some very accommodative language.

This "talking up the market" culminated in a very meek Federal Open Markets Committee (FOMC) statement at the end of January, containing this line: "The Committee would be prepared to use its full range of tools, including altering the size and composition of its balance sheet, if future economic conditions were to warrant a more accommodative monetary policy."

But that's all it is at the moment: Just pleasant talk, no action, although the Fed is clearly positioning itself to act in the near future.

The markets did expect more rate increases in 2019, but a January boost wasn't a foregone conclusion even before Powell's sweet-talking started in early January.

The same with the reduction of the balance sheet, or Quantitative Tightening (QT). The only thing that has changed is the language. The Fed will continue to reduce its balance sheet by a maximum of \$50 billion per month, which, in reality, is closer to \$30 billion to \$40 billion, because only a limited amount of assets mature or "run off" every month.

So despite the sweet talk, nothing has changed from late December, when markets were staring into the abyss.

Discounting the Future

However, financial markets are often removed from reality and try to discount the future. So the optimism is partly justified, since the Fed has now clearly communicated it won't step further on the brakes of increasing rates, and may remove its foot from the brake of QT anytime it pleases.

Before the verbal course correction, markets had to expect more rate increases and a continuation of QT—not a pretty picture.

Now, the picture looks better because markets know that if economic or financial conditions worsen, the Fed will be there to have their back, as always.

This Time Is Different

This is nothing new. It happens all the time, from big crises such as those of Long Term Capital Management in 1998 and the 2008 crisis, to smaller incidents like the U.S. debt downgrade of 2011 and the China jitters of 2016.

However, the smaller cases are more instructive to understand the context we are operating in, and, in those cases, it's not all about the Fed.

In 2011, for example, when Europe and the euro came within an inch of collapsing, the European Central Bank (ECB) saved the day by expanding its balance sheet (i.e. printing money) by a trillion dollars with its clunky Long-Term Refinancing Operations (LTRO).

Of course, those loans should have been repaid and the balance sheet reduced, but they got re-



Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell in Washington on Jan. 30, 2019.

placed by the ECB's Quantitative Easing (QE) program a couple of years later.

In 2011, action was desperately needed as the Fed had just stopped its second round of QE worth \$600 billion by June of 2011, and the United States' sovereign debt was downgraded a notch in an unprecedented move by Standard & Poor's over the summer. Markets were very jittery at that time, although they never declined the 20 percent that would classify the period as a bear market; it was pretty close, though.

So, for most of 2011, central banks were still in expansion mode and had to save the markets by expanding even more. It worked, including the Fed's strategy to take risk out of the market by buying longer-term bonds and selling shorter maturities, the so-called Operation Twist, which began in late 2011.

took tangible action by boosting its balance sheet with QE3.

It's important to note that during those years, the global central bank and credit cycle had never even turned negative; it was just stocks that were scared of a eurozone crisis.

China Scare

The latest mini-crisis came when China had some significant problems with its economy and currency in late 2015 and early 2016. During that time, the Fed had already stopped QE and was slowly raising rates, and the ECB and the Bank of Japan (BoJ) were still in expansion mode.

To arrest this double-digit market

Now, not only haven't central banks increased their liquidity injections, all except for the BoJ have completely stopped their expansionary policies and the Fed has even tightened for almost two years.

Globally, we aren't even close to 2016, 2012, or 2011, when central banks were ready to put the foot on the gas again at a moment's notice, although the Fed is moving in that direction and the Chinese are becoming desperate again, and are launching an equivalent to QE. But they are on their own this time and the quantities involved so far are unknown.

Now central banks, especially the Fed, are promising only to brake less, not to inject another round of liquidity into the system, although that step may come in the future, but only after economic and financial conditions worsen again.

The biggest indicator of a complete deflation cycle is the inversion of the yield curve, or when short-term debt yields more than long-term debt because investors pile into long-term government debt as the safest investment in an economic downturn.

The most common measure of this "inversion" is the difference between 10-year and 2-year Treasury bonds, which are only 0.2 percent apart. Other maturity mixes, like the 1-year to 7-year, are at parity and the 2-year to 5-year is negative.

The action in government debt markets is just a symptom of what is happening in the real economy.

"We are at a point when the yield curve shift begins to impact future growth by slowing credit extensions or even throwing them into reverse ... Credit standards for commercial and industrial loans tightened in the fourth quarter ... Tighter standards and weaker demand were also in evidence in real estate and consumer loans," wrote research firm TS Lombard.

To see how long it takes for the tanker to turn around after credit deflation has set in, we merely have to go back to some of the larger crises and stock-market corrections like 2008 and 2001, which took years to reverse even after the Fed cut rates and rapidly boosted its balance sheet, mostly before the economy entered a recession and the credit system started to deflate in earnest.

And this is exactly what's different this time. While the global financial credit tanker was merely stalling in 2011, 2012, and 2016, and the central bank captains just had to put their foot on the gas and increase speed, right now they have to turn the tanker around from deflation to inflation again—but the question is how far it will go.

TS Lombard thinks there is still a chance before the 1-year to 10-year yield curve inverts, which has historically preceded recessions, with the exception of 1965. The Fed acted early in that case to prevent a recession, which is why TS Lombard thinks the Fed will completely ease off the brakes during its March meeting and taper the balance-sheet reduction.

Whether that will be enough to turn the tanker and avoid a recession remains to be seen. If not, global central banks will be forced to step on the gas hard again and add a few serial numbers to their QE programs.

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The Federal Reserve building in Washington on Dec. 12, 2018.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

In 2012, markets were down double-digits in the summer, in the wake of the Greece bailout and still lingering concerns about the eurozone.

At that time, the ECB was in expansion mode with LTRO and the Fed was leveling off its second round of QE, when then-Chairman Ben Bernanke stepped on the gas again by announcing another round of QE in September, printing \$40 billion per month.

Of course, Mario Draghi did his bit of verbal acrobatics by promising the ECB would do "whatever it takes" to save the euro.

Aside from Draghi, whose ECB was still expanding its balance sheet with various LTROs, the Fed

drop (it never made it to 20 percent bear-market territory like right now), the Fed had to delay its tightening schedule, the Chinese had to order the state banking system to expand money like there was no tomorrow, and the ECB and the BoJ kept printing.

All this is different now.