

Pelosi to Trump: You Are Impeached Forever



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi watches as President Trump delivers his second State of the Union address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, February 5, 2019.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi needed President Trump in an interview Friday night, noting that the stain of impeachment will always live on his presidency regardless of the outcome of the Senate trial.**

"You are impeached forever," Pelosi said with a smile on HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher." "No matter what the Senate does, it can never be erased."

"If I knew that the president is listening, I would want him to know that he is impeached forever, and he is impeached forever because he used the office of the president to try to influence a foreign country for his personal and political benefit. In doing so, he undermined our national security, he

was disloyal to his oath of office to protect the Constitution and he placed in jeopardy the integrity of our election," she added later. "He gave us no choice."

House Democrats voted this week to send two articles of impeachment to the Senate, which will commence its trial of Trump next week. The articles, which accuse the president of abuse of power over his dealings with Ukraine and obstruction of Congress, passed in a party-line vote last month.

Trump has maintained he did nothing wrong in his interactions with Ukraine, though several officials have testified that he acted improperly when he leveraged military aid and a White House meeting to pressure the Ukrainian president to inves-

tigate his political rivals. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) also said Thursday that the administration's freezing of nearly \$400 million in aid to Kyiv broke the law.

New evidence has emerged in the case since the articles' passage in December, including documents from an associate of Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, indicating the president's personal involvement in the efforts to pressure Ukraine. Former national security adviser John Bolton, who is believed to have intimate knowledge of the pressure campaign, has also said he would testify in front of the Senate if subpoenaed.

Pelosi, who has made similar comments about impeachment's permanence in the past, said Friday night that Democrats had enough evidence last year to conduct their impeachment hearings but that new information only bolstered their case.

"The fact is that we knew we had a solid case for impeachment of the president. The facts were clear, the Constitution required it, and we wanted to make our case and go forward, so we put forth the articles of impeachment and in fact voted them," she said.

"We knew there was plenty of other, should we say, information to come forward, but it wasn't necessary to impeach the president. It would have been further incriminating, but not necessary, and it wouldn't in any way weaken the case that had the support of my caucus and was completely understood by the American people."

Ukraine President Turns Down PM's Resignation



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, left, talks with Ukraine's Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk in Kyiv, Ukraine, Jan. 17, 2020.

KIEV (AFP) -- **Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he wanted to give his prime minister a "second chance" and refused to accept his resignation after a recording emerged of the premier questioning the head of state's grasp of economics.**

Prime Minister Oleksiy Goncharuk had offered to quit after the leaked recording revealed him saying the president had a "primitive understanding" of the economy.

"I have decided to give you and your government a second chance," Zelenskyy said during a meeting with Goncharuk in a video released by the presidency.

It marked the first major political test for Zelenskyy, a comedian with

no previous political experience, who swept to power in a landslide victory at last year's presidential election.

His "Servant of the People" party later won a large majority in parliament.

He has been embroiled in the U.S. impeachment process and faced tough talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but had thus far managed to avoid any significant domestic political problems.

The audio recording was leaked on social media on Wednesday and came from an informal December meeting between ministers and senior officials from the National Bank.

According to local media reports, the participants discussed how to explain recent economic developments

to Zelenskyy.

"Zelenskyy has a very primitive understanding of economic processes, or rather a simple understanding," Goncharuk said on the recording, adding that he himself was an economic "ignoramus".

After initially denying reports he would step down, Goncharuk announced on his official Facebook page on Friday that he had offered to resign.

"To remove any doubts about our respect for and trust in the president, I have written a resignation letter," wrote Goncharuk.

In the video released by the presidency, Zelenskyy did not mention the leaked comments but did refer to "a scandal" and "a very unpleasant situation".

He urged the prime minister to "improve the cooperation with parliament and to optimize the salaries of government officials".

The payment of large bonuses to officials has caused a scandal in recent weeks in the former Soviet republic, one of the poorest countries in Europe.

"Such wages cannot occur in Ukraine with the current state of the economy," Zelenskyy said in the video, which depicted a round-table meeting with Goncharuk in an ornate, gilded room.

Goncharuk thanked the president for his confidence, admitting a "shortcoming in the work" of the government.

Trump Called Top Military Brass 'a Bunch of Dopes'

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- **Donald Trump once called a room full of America's top generals "a bunch of dopes and babies", according to a new report.**

The 2017 meeting took place in the Pentagon's secure vault known as "the Tank" — a secure, windowless room apparently viewed within the American military apparatus as sacred — amid concerns among the military's top brass of "gaping holes in Trump's knowledge of history, especially the key alliances forged following World War II," according to an excerpt from a new book due out by two Washington Post reporters.

But, after a lengthy crash course on the rationale behind America's military presence abroad, and the importance of alliances like NATO, Trump reportedly became frustrated, and snapped at the group that included the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, general Joseph Dunford.

"You're all losers. You don't know how to win anymore," Trump said after complaining that the U.S. hadn't won the war in Afghanistan after 16 years.

Trump then continued to muse about the people in charge of America's military, and suggested that they no longer knew how to win wars.

"I wouldn't go to war with you people," Trump reportedly

said. He continued: "You're a bunch of dopes and babies."

While the meeting had been previously reported, the outburst had not. And, those newest details show a surprising level of vitriol even for a man known for his penchant for tossing aside the norms of respect and admiration normally associated with the presidency.

In attendance were Gen Dunford and several officials who have now left the federal government, including former defense secretary Jim Mattis, former National Economic Council director Gary Cohn and former secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Stephen Bannon, the former chief strategist in the White House, was also there, and described his thinking at the time to the Washington Post.

"Oh baby, this is going to be f*****g wild," Biden said he thought after Mattis gave a 20-minute briefing on the power of NATO and America's "postwar rules-based international order", as one slide was labeled. Trump has frequently bashed NATO as president, complaining that he does not believe America's foreign allies are paying enough into the system.

"If you stood up and threatened to shoot [Trump], he couldn't say 'postwar rules-based international order.' It's just not the way he thinks," Bannon said.

Macron Rushed Out of Theater Amid Protests



Striking employees demonstrate with a banner reading "Louvre museum on strike" outside the Louvre museum, Jan. 17, 2020 in Paris.

PARIS (Dispatches) -- **French police have evacuated President Emmanuel Macron from a theater in Paris after some protesters managed to enter the building, while many more were trying to enter.**

Protesters chanting "Macron, resign" gathered outside the Les Bouffes du Nord theatre on Friday evening, after people shared on social media that the president was at the venue.

They were trying to enter the venue but the president was rushed out of the building, reportedly in a black car.

On the other side of the capital, protesters blocked the entrance to the Louvre museum and forced the building to close Friday.

The museum's Leonardo da Vinci exhibit, which was marking the 500th anniversary of the Italian master's death, was also closed.

The incident occurred on the 44th day of strikes, which started in early December, against Macron's plan to overhaul the pension system that would see workers retiring later or facing reduced payouts.

This was the first time since then that the Louvre and its Leonardo exhibit were fully shut down.

The museum is visited by 30,000

people every day.

The weeks of protests and strikes have affected public transportation, disrupted schools, hospitals, court-houses and even opera houses and the Eiffel tower.

This is while unions have called for a seventh round of street rallies next Friday, when the pension plan is due to be presented to the Cabinet.

The government of President Macron has already ruled out any possibility of abandoning the plan.

The president is already faced with a major challenge to his rule from the "Yellow Vest" protesters, who have been holding weekly demonstrations for more than a year.

According to a poll, published on Thursday, almost two-thirds of French people "don't trust" Macron.

The survey, conducted by Elabe for the Les Echos newspaper and Radio Classique, indicated that 63 percent of respondents "don't trust" the president, down two points in one month.

His government intends to present the pension reform bill on Friday so that it can be debated in parliament starting in mid February, with the aim of passing a law before the summer break.

Rains Bring Threat of Flooding After Fires in Australia



Rural fire crews prepare to battle a blaze as it emerges from a pine forest outside Tumbarumba on Jan. 10, 2020.

MELBOURNE (AFP) -- **Rain and thunderstorms doused long-burning bushfires across much of eastern Australia Saturday, but they also brought a new threat of flooding in some areas.**

Major bushfires continued to rage in regions of the south and southeast of the country that have so far missed out on the rain, including in wildlife-rich forests on Kangaroo Island off the southern coast.

The fire service in New South Wales (NSW) state, the country's most populous and the hardest hit by the crisis, said 75 fires continued to burn Saturday, down from well over 100 a few days earlier.

"Rain continues to fall across a number of fire grounds," the state's rural fire service said, adding that "benign conditions" of rain and cooler temperatures were helping efforts to contain the remaining blazes.

To the north, Queensland state was hit by severe storms overnight, causing some flash flooding and road closures though no deaths or injuries were reported.

Both states have suffered from one of the longest droughts in modern

Australian history and some areas saw more rain Friday and Saturday than had fallen in more than a decade.

Fires continued to burn out of control in southern New South Wales and neighboring Victoria state, but forecasters expected significant rainfall in those areas Sunday and Monday, raising hopes that some of those blazes could be brought under control as well.

The unprecedented fires, fuelled by climate change and a years-long drought, have claimed 28 lives over the past five months.

They have scorched massive tracts of forest and bushland in eastern and southern Australia, decimated livestock on already barren farms and destroyed more than 2,000 homes.

On Kangaroo Island, known as Australia's "Galapagos" for the large number of unique animals and other wildlife endemic to the area, fires continued to rage in a big national park.

The flames have already taken a heavy toll on the island's population of koalas, birds and other endemic marsupial species.

Authorities have warned the crisis could worsen again with Australia only halfway through its summer.

News in Brief

SEOUL (Reuters) -- North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho has been replaced, Seoul-based NK News reported on Saturday. Ri's replacement has not been identified but Pyongyang is set to reveal his successor about next Thursday, the report said, citing unnamed sources. South Korea's unification ministry, which is in charge of North Korea affairs, has said that any change in Ri's status should be assessed cautiously. Born in 1956, Ri is the son of Ri Myong Je, former deputy director of the Organization and Guidance Department (OGD), a body within the ruling Workers' Party that oversees the appointment of management positions within the state, according to the South Korean unification ministry. His father was also an editor at the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the state media body that publishes Pyongyang's propaganda statements. A fluent English speaker who studied at Pyongyang's prestigious University of Foreign Languages, Ri has for years held a number of high-level posts dealing with the West.

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) -- Four Los Angeles-area schoolteachers who were doused with jet fuel dumped by a Delta Air Lines plane in the minutes before it made an emergency landing sued the airline on Friday, accusing the flight crew of negligence. The plaintiffs say the pilot of the Delta Flight 89, which took off from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on Tuesday bound for Shanghai, failed to follow proper procedures in dumping thousands of pounds of fuel over a densely populated area at relatively low altitude. A Delta spokesman declined to comment on the lawsuit, which was filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court and seeks unspecified damages. Dozens of children and teachers at Park Avenue Elementary School in suburban Cudahy were showered with jet fuel released by the plane as it circled back toward LAX minutes after reporting an engine problem following takeoff.

LONDON (AP) — The British government has announced plans for special events on the night of Jan. 31 when the country officially leaves the European Union but the country's treasury chief has admitted that some UK business sectors will suffer as a result. Sajid Javid told the Financial Times in an interview Saturday that Britain's regulations will not be aligned with the EU in the future and that those changes may hurt some businesses. Currently the EU is Britain's largest trading partner. "There will not be alignment, we will not be a rule-taker, we will not be in the single market and we will not be in the customs union — and we will do this by the end of the year," he said, referring to a deadline at the end of 2020 for conclusion of what are expected to be contentious trade talks with the then-27 member EU. Britain will officially leave the EU bloc on the night of Jan. 31, even though it will keep following EU rules for an 11-month transition period. It will be the first nation ever to leave the bloc. The British government plans to mark the occasion with a series of upbeat events.

TUNIS (MEE) -- A Tunisian MP and former presidential candidate has been urged to resign after referring to Tunisians with dual citizenship as "bastards" and "scum," and for advocating that dual nationals be ejected from parliament. Safi Said, an independent MP, made the remarks during a vote of confidence in the government of Prime Minister Habib Jemli on January 10. While they failed to register in the busy chamber, his comments quickly drew scorn on social media, with the veteran MP coming under fire from both his parliamentary peers and notable academics. Former MP Karima Souid, who holds both French and Tunisian nationality, accused Said of "promoting divide and estrangement". Sociologist Vincent Geisser described Safi Said's comments as "gross" and said that dual nationals had played a "key role" in upholding Tunisia's image abroad.

BEIJING (AFP) -- The true scale of the outbreak of a mysterious SARS-like virus in China is likely far bigger than officially reported, scientists have warned, as countries ramp up measures to prevent the disease from spreading. Fears that the virus will spread are growing ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday, when hundreds of millions of Chinese move around the country and many others host or visit extended family members living overseas. Authorities in China say two people have died and at least 45 have been infected, with the outbreak centered around a seafood market in the central city of Wuhan, a city of 11 million inhabitants that serves as a major transport hub. But a paper published Friday by scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College in London said the number of cases in the city was likely closer to 1,700. The researchers said their estimate was largely based on the fact that cases had been reported overseas — two in Thailand and one in Japan.