

Trump Attacks Fellow Republicans in Angry Speech



Former president Donald Trump speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), Feb. 28, 2021, in Orlando, Fla.

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Taking the stage for the first time since leaving office, former President Donald Trump called for GOP unity, even as he exacerbated intraparty divisions by attacking fellow Republicans and promoting lies about the election in a speech that made clear he intends to remain a dominant political force.

Speaking Sunday at the Conservative Political Action Conference, where he has been hailed as a returning hero, Trump blasted his successor, President Joe Biden, and tried to lay out a vision for the future of the GOP that revolves firmly around him, despite his loss in November.

“Do you miss me yet?” Trump

said after taking the stage to his old rally soundtrack and cheers from the supportive crowd.

Trump, in his speech, tried to downplay the civil war gripping the party over the extent to which Republicans should embrace him, even as he unfurled an enemies list, calling out by name the 10 House Republicans and seven GOP senators who voted to impeach or convict him for inciting the U.S. Capitol riot. He ended by singling out Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 House Republican, who has faced tremendous backlash in Wyoming for saying Trump should no longer play a role in the party or headline the event.

While he insisted the division was merely a spat “between a handful

of Washington, D.C., establishment political hacks and everybody else, all over the country,” Trump had a message for the incumbents who had dared to cross him: “Get rid of ‘em all.”

Speakers repeated in panel after panel his unfounded claims that he lost reelection only because of mass voter fraud, even though such claims have been rejected by judges, Republican state officials and Trump’s own administration.

Trump, too, continued to repeat what Democrats have dubbed the “big lie,” calling the election “rigged” and insisting that he won in November, even though he lost by more than 7 million votes.

“As you know, they just lost the White House,” he said of Biden, re-writing history.

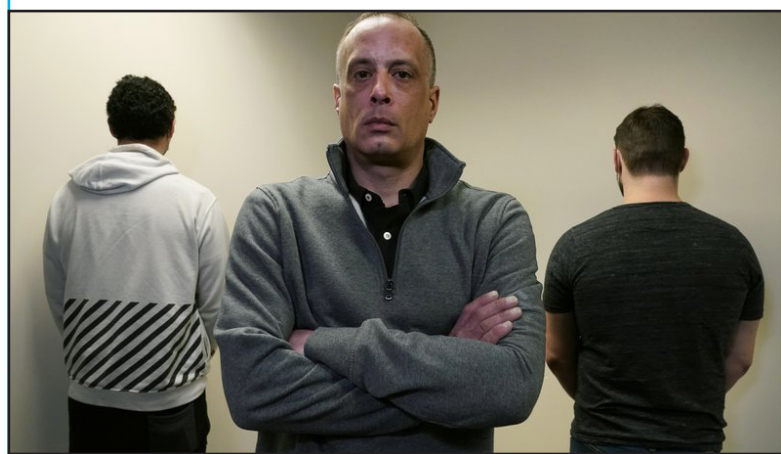
He delivered a sharp rebuke of what he framed as the new administration’s first month of failures, especially Biden’s approach to immigration and the border.

“Joe Biden has had the most disastrous first month of any president in modern history,” Trump said.

Aside from criticizing Biden, Trump used the speech to crown himself the future of the Republican Party, even as many leaders argue they must move in a new, less divisive direction after Republicans lost not just the White House, but both chambers of Congress.

Though Trump has flirted with the idea of creating a third party, he pledged Sunday to remain part of “our beloved” GOP.

Hundreds Claim Unspeakable Abuse at U.S. Youth Center



David Meehan, center, the lead plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit, poses with two other victims who did not want to be identified, at his lawyer's office, Feb. 18, 2021, in Portsmouth, N.H.

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Abuse allegations against New Hampshire’s state-run youth detention center now span six decades, with 150 staffers during that time accused of physically or sexually harming 230 children at a facility the victims’ attorney calls a “magnet for predators.”

Rus Rilee sued the state in January 2020 on behalf of three dozen adults who alleged they were abused as children at the Youth Development Center in Manchester between 1982 and 2014. He now represents 230 clients who say they were abused between 1963 and 2018, when they

were ages 7 to 18.

As the number of years, accusers and alleged perpetrators has swelled, so, too, has the sickening nature of the allegations. While details beyond the updated number of accusers and time span aren’t included in latest court documents, Rilee plans to add his clients’ accounts to the complaint and described them to The Associated Press:

Of the 150 accused staffers, more than half are accused of sexual abuse, Rilee said. Children were gang raped by counselors, beaten while being raped and forced to sexually abuse each other, he said. Some ended up

with sexually transmitted diseases; one ended up pregnant.

Staff members choked children, beat them unconscious, burned them with cigarettes and broke their bones, Rilee said. Counselors set up “fight clubs” and forced kids to compete for food. Children were locked in solitary confinement for weeks or months, sometimes shackled or strapped naked to their beds. Kept away from classrooms while their injuries healed, some can’t read or write today, he said.

“These broken, shattered children were then unleashed into society with no education, no life skills and no ability to meaningfully function,” said Rilee.

The Manchester facility, now called the Sununu Youth Services Center after former Gov. John H. Sununu, serves children ordered to a secure institutional setting by the juvenile justice system. The average population last year was just 17 residents overseen by about 90 employees, though it once housed upward of 100 youths and employed a larger staff.

“The systemic, governmental child abuse that occurred was allowed to occur because there wasn’t sufficient oversight, and the state was institutionally negligent in their hiring, training, supervision and retention policies,” Rilee said. “It’s pretty clear to me that this facility was a magnet for predators.”

Australian PM Defends Minister Despite Rape Scandal

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday stood by an unnamed Cabinet minister against calls for him to step down from office over an allegation that he raped a 16-year-old girl more than 30 years ago.

The allegation has created a cloud hanging over the 16 men in Morrison’s 22-minister Cabinet and feeds complaints of a culture within Parliament that is toxic for women.

The allegation was contained in an anonymous letter sent to the prime minister’s office and to three female lawmakers last week.

The letter contained a statement from a complainant that detailed her allegation of a rape she said occurred in New South Wales state in 1988.

The woman, who has not been publicly named, reported the allegation to police before taking her own life in June at age 49.

Sen. Sarah Hanson-Young, a minor Greens party lawmaker who received the anonymous letter, said the minister must step down pending an independent investigation by a former judge.

“It is just not right to suggest that this type of allegation could linger, hang over the heads of the entire Cabinet,” she

told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

“Sitting around that table erodes the trust, the integrity and belief that this government takes sexual assault seriously,” she added.

Marque Lawyers managing minister Michael Bradley, who represented the complainant when she took her accusation to police, said the allegation cannot be resolved through the criminal justice system because she had died. The minister should step down while some independent inquiry investigates the evidence, Bradley said.

The disclosure comes two weeks after Morrison apologized in Parliament to a former government staffer who alleged she was raped by a more senior colleague in a minister’s office two years ago.

Three other women have made sexual misconduct allegations against the same man since Higgins went public with her complaint. A government staffer who alleged he raped her last year told The Weekend Australian newspaper the attack wouldn’t have happened if the government had supported Higgins’ initial complaint.

Another woman alleged the man molested her ahead of the 2016 election, and another woman accused him of reaching under a table and touching her leg in 2017.

China Improving Nuclear Ability Amid U.S. Threat: Report



In this Oct. 1, 2019, file photo spectators wave Chinese flags as military vehicles carrying DF-41 ballistic missiles parade during a commemorative the 70th anniversary of the founding of Communist China in Beijing.

WASHINGTON (AP) — China appears to be moving faster toward a capability to launch its newer nuclear missiles from underground silos, possibly to improve its ability to respond promptly to a nuclear attack, according to an American expert who analyzed satellite images of recent construction at a missile training area.

Hans Kristensen, a longtime watcher of U.S., Russian and Chinese nuclear forces, said the imagery suggests that China is seeking to counter what it may view as a growing threat from the United States. The U.S. in recent years has pointed to China’s nuclear modernization as a key justification for investing hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming two decades to build an all-new U.S. nuclear arsenal.

There’s no indication the United States and China are headed toward armed conflict, let alone a nuclear one. But the Kristensen report comes at a time of heightened U.S.-China tensions across a broad spectrum, from trade to national security. A stronger Chinese nuclear force could factor into U.S. calculations for a military response to aggressive Chinese actions, such as in Taiwan or the South China Sea.

The Pentagon declined to comment on Kristensen’s analysis of the satel-

lite imagery, but it said last summer in its annual report on Chinese military developments that Beijing intends to increase the peacetime readiness of its nuclear forces by putting more of them in underground silos and operating on a higher level of alert in which it could launch missiles upon warning of being under attack.

More broadly, the Pentagon asserts that China is modernizing its nuclear forces as part of a wider effort to build a military by mid-century that is equal to, and in some respects superior to, the U.S. military.

China’s nuclear arsenal, estimated by the U.S. government to number in the low 200s, is dwarfed by those of the United States and Russia, which have thousands. The Pentagon predicts that the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Forces will at least double the size of its nuclear arsenal over the next 10 years, still leaving it with far fewer than the United States.

China does not publicly discuss the size or preparedness of its nuclear force beyond saying it would be used only in response to an attack. The United States, by contrast, does not rule out striking first, although President Joe Biden in the past has embraced removing that ambiguity by adopting a “no first use” policy.

Crowds Return to Streets in Myanmar After 18 Killed



Tear gas and fire extinguisher gas float around protesters as they take shelter behind shields while clashing with riot police officers during a protest against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar, March 1, 2021.

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Police in Myanmar’s biggest city fired tear gas Monday at defiant crowds who returned to the streets to protest last month’s coup, despite reports that security forces had killed at least 18 people a day earlier.

The protesters in Yangon were chased as they tried to gather at their usual meeting spot at the Hledan Center intersection. Demonstrators scattered and sought in vain to rinse the irritating gas from their eyes, but later regrouped.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar after five decades of military rule. It came Feb. 1, the same day a newly elected Parliament was supposed to take office. Ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s party would have led that government, but instead she was detained along with President Win Myint and other senior officials.

The army has leveled several charges against Suu Kyi — an apparent effort by the military to provide a legal veneer for her detention and potentially to bar her from running in the election the junta has promised to hold in one year. On Monday, Suu Kyi made a court appearance via videoconference and was charged with two more offenses, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told reporters.

Accused of inciting unrest, she was charged under a law that dates from British colonial days and has long been criticized as a vaguely defined catch-all law that inhibits freedom of expression. That charge carries a maximum sentence of two years in prison. The other charge from Monday carries a one-year sentence.

Following her detention on the day of the coup, the 75-year-old Suu Kyi was initially held at her residence in the capital of Naypyitaw, but members of her National League for Democracy party now say they don’t know where she is.

Since the takeover, a movement of protests in cities across the country has been growing — and the junta’s response has become increasingly violent.

The UN said it had “credible information” that at least 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded across Myanmar on Sunday. Counts from other sources, such as the Democratic Voice of Burma, an independent television and online news outlet, put the death toll in the 20s.

The junta has also made mass arrests, and the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that as many as 1,000 people were detained Sunday, though it has only confirmed 270 of those.

News in Brief

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court on Monday found French former President Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption and influence peddling and sentenced him to one year in prison and a two-year suspended sentence. The 66-year-old politician, who was president from 2007 to 2012, was convicted for having tried to illegally obtain information from a senior magistrate in 2014 about a legal action in which he was involved. The court said Sarkozy is entitled to be detained at home with an electronic bracelet. This is the first time in France’s modern history that a former president has been convicted of corruption. Sarkozy’s co-defendants — his lawyer and longtime friend Thierry Herzog, 65, and now-retired magistrate Gilbert Azibert, 74 — were also found guilty and given the same sentence as the politician. The court found that Sarkozy and his co-defendants sealed a “pact of corruption,” based on “consistent and serious evidence.”

KYIV (Reuters) — Ukrainian medical facilities have thrown away some unused COVID-19 vaccines after doctors failed to show up for their own appointments to be vaccinated, ruling party lawmakers said on Monday. Ukraine has just begun vaccinating its 41 million people against COVID-19 after receiving a first batch of 500,000 doses of Indian-made AstraZeneca shots last week, but faces a battle against vaccine skepticism that predates the pandemic. The government has prioritized giving shots to front-line medical workers but cited statistics showing that 47% of Ukrainians do not want the vaccine. A total of 3,141 shots were administered of Feb. 28, including just 90 shots in the past 24 hours, health ministry data showed. A significant part of the population of Ukraine, like many post-Soviet republics, is traditionally wary of vaccines, fearing side effects from poor quality drugs. Such mistrust allowed a measles outbreak to grow into an epidemic in 2019.

YEREVAN (Reuters) — A group of Armenian protesters barged into a government building in the capital chanting for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to quit, ahead of rival street rallies expected later on Monday, the RIA news agency reported. Pashinyan, in power since 2018 in the ex-Soviet republic of less than 3 million people, is facing a crisis after the army last week demanded he step down, prompting him to decry a coup attempt and sack the army’s top general. The president, however, refused to sign off on the general’s removal on Saturday, declaring it unconstitutional. Pashinyan has sent back his decree demanding the general’s dismissal to the president’s office. The country’s Security Council on Monday urged President Armen Sarkisian to approve the sacking, the Interfax news agency reported. RIA reported that Pashinyan also met Sarkisian on Monday.

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain on Monday appealed for a mystery individual infected with a highly transmissible Brazilian variant of the novel coronavirus to come forward, more than two weeks after they tested positive but failed to give proper contact details. Britain said six cases had been detected of the “P.1” variant identified in the Brazilian city of Manaus, against which current vaccines appear to be less effective. Two were in South Gloucestershire in England and three in Scotland. But a sixth individual in England, one of more than a million people tested on Feb. 12-13, had yet to be identified. “If you’ve had a test on the 12th or 13th of February, (and) haven’t had your results back, please get in touch,” vaccination minister Nadhim Zahawi told Times Radio. “We are working with the postal system to try and locate them.”

BERLIN (AP) — Germany announced that travelers from France’s northeastern Moselle region will face additional restrictions because of the high rate of variant coronavirus cases there. Germany’s disease control agency, the Robert Koch Institute, said it would add Moselle to the list of “variant of concern” areas that already includes countries such as the Czech Republic, Portugal, the United Kingdom and parts of Austria. Travelers from those areas must produce a recent negative coronavirus test before entering Germany. The Moselle region in northeastern France includes the city of Metz and borders the German states of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate. Clement Beaune, the French minister for European affairs, said France regrets the decision and is in negotiations with Germany to try to lighten the measures for 16,000 inhabitants of Moselle who work across the border.

TBILISI (Reuters) — European Council President Charles Michel on Monday called on the Georgian government and opposition to defuse tension in a political crisis that has led to street protests and the resignation of the prime minister last month. Georgian opposition supporters have taken to the streets in recent weeks to demand the release of opposition politician Nika Melia and call for fresh parliamentary elections after a contested vote last year. On Monday, a small group of protesters marched to the residence of former prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, founder of the ruling Georgian Dream party, where they chanted and blared horns to call for a new parliamentary vote, according to the Sputnik Georgia news outlet. Police last week detained Melia, chairman of the United National Movement (UNM) opposition party, after storming its offices and clashing with his supporters.