



A handout photo made available by the Russian Foreign Ministry on May 10, shows US President Donald J. Trump (right), speaking with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during a meeting at the White House in Washington, DC. Trump on May 10 called on Russia to rein in Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his key ally Iran, as Washington and Moscow sought to boost their fragile ties with high-profile White House talks. Lavrov, the highest-ranking Russian official to visit Washington since Trump came to power in January, earned a rare invitation to the Oval Office for a head-to-head with the Republican president. (AFP)

HealthCare

'Greatest threat'

GOP lawmaker gets drubbing over health

WILLINGBORO, United States, May 11, (AFP): Tirades, yells and cries of "liar" lit up a town hall meeting in New Jersey, where for five hours furious Americans tore into a Republican congressman for attempting to repeal Obamacare.

Tom MacArthur came home to his swing district to face the music Wednesday after helping to write the amendment that allowed a controversial health reform bill to pass the lower house last week.



MacArthur

But if health care was the focus, the largely hostile audience vented general outrage at President Donald Trump, taking issue with his temperament, his sacking of the FBI director and investigations into whether his campaign colluded with Russia in last year's election.

Hour after hour, the polarization of US politics was laid bare as the former insurance broker was harangued by a crowd of several hundred in the largely Democrat town of Willingboro, northeast of Philadelphia.

"Nobody with a pre-existing condition will either be declined coverage or priced out," insisted MacArthur, defending the bill. "That is a lie," shot back a woman as the crowd groaned.

"Folks I didn't come here to defend a president tonight," said the congressman at one point, pleading with hecklers to keep quiet.

Outside the venue dozens of protesters held up posters reading "Killer Tom" and "People without health care die!" near a skeleton.

Inside certified medical assistant Geoff Ginter, 47, stole the show from the front row, subjecting a red-faced MacArthur to a 10-minute monologue lashing the health bill as "immoral."

"You have been the single greatest threat to my family in the entire world," he bellowed into the microphone, jabbing his finger in MacArthur's direction to cheers and applause.

The father from Pine Beach said his wife lives in fear of her cancer returning and their two children have cardiac and thyroid conditions.

"I will not forgive, I will not forget," he yelled, explaining that he lives in fear of losing his job and not being able to afford health coverage if the bill passes.

"You are the reason I can't sleep," he added, slamming the moderate Republican for working with "an orange-haired buffoon" in the White House.

Republicans blame Obamacare for sending insurance premiums soaring while reducing options for millions. Those who passed the bill says it is a necessary reform.

But Democrats say the law helped 20 million Americans gain health coverage and saved thousands of lives by barring insurers from refusing to protect people with pre-existing conditions.

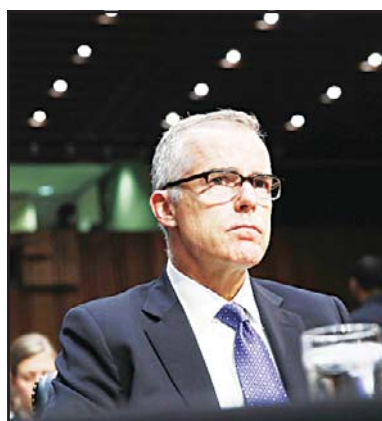
"I hear people shouting out vulgarities," hit back MacArthur after being interrupted an umpteenth time. "This is part of what's wrong in America, there's no civil discourse," he added. "You don't like what somebody says and they're an idiot?"

Several expressed incredulity that he could be responsible for the bill after his mother died of cancer when he was four years old and his daughter, who had special needs, died aged 11.

"I have a great deal of admiration for your tolerance for masochism. You've really taken a beating tonight," said one woman. As the event dragged late into the night, many people drifted away.

When the congressman ignored yes or no questions about whether the legislation considered rape a pre-existing condition, the audience broke into chants of "answer the question," clapping in unison.

Videographer Bob Finkelstein, 49, who grew up in New Jersey and lives 40 minutes away, says his medication for multiple sclerosis costs \$80,000 a year, the vast majority of which is covered by Obamacare.



Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe listens on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 11, during the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on major threats facing the US. (AP)

America

'More Russian cyberthreats': The director of national intelligence says Russia and other countries, including China, North Korea and Iran, are using cyberspace to target US and its allies, and will do so in future.

The Senate intelligence committee is holding a hearing on worldwide threats, and intelligence director **Dan Coats** says Russia is a threat to US government, military, diplomatic, business and critical infrastructure.

Coats says Iran also is making use of its high-tech capabilities. In 2013, an Iranian hacker intruded into the industrial control system of an American dam. In 2014, there was a data-deletion attack against a US-based casino.

Coats says China is targeting the US government and American businesses. He says such activity has diminished since US-China cyber commitments in 2015. (AP)

Trump to host Erdogan: US President Donald Trump will host Turkey's president next week at the White House.

The White House said in a statement Wednesday that President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** will visit on May 16. Erdogan's visit comes weeks after he won a national referendum greatly boosting the powers of his office. International observers warned that the vote was tainted.

Trump congratulated Erdogan for his referendum win, drawing harsh criticism that he was turning a blind eye to leaders who rule through autocracy.

The statement says the two leaders are expected to discuss ways to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. Turkey has been a close ally in the fight against the Islamic State group, given its proximity to Iraq and Syria. (AP)

Panel to probe voter fraud: US President Donald Trump was expected to sign an executive order on Thursday launching a commission to review alleged voter fraud and voter suppression in the US election system, three White House officials said.

Vice-President Mike Pence and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach will lead the commission, which will look at allegations of improper voting and fraudulent voter registration in states and across the nation, one official said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss details ahead of the formal announcement.

Trump has alleged, without evidence, that 3 to 5 million people voted illegally in his 2016 campaign against Democrat Hillary Clinton. He has vowed since the start of his administration to investigate voter fraud, a process that has been delayed for months.

The commission will include Republicans and Democrats and be composed of current and former state election officials

FBI

Stunned agents grapple with Comey firing

Russia probe continues: McCabe

WASHINGTON, May 11, (Agencies): The FBI's investigation into possible links between Donald Trump's campaign and alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election continues despite Trump's firing of James Comey, the director's replacement said Thursday.

"There has been no effort to impede our investigation to date," acting FBI director Andrew McCabe told a Senate panel two days after Comey was dismissed. "You cannot stop the men and women of the FBI from doing the right thing."

Meanwhile, former Republican congressman Mike Rogers is being considered as a candidate to replace FBI Director James Comey, who was fired on Tuesday, a senior White House official said.

Rogers is a former chairman of the House of Representatives intelligence committee and was an FBI agent in his home state of Michigan.

FBI agents are still reeling from Director James Comey's unceremonious dismissal, their surprise at the manner of his ouster coupled with questions about who will next lead the bureau.

Many agents working in field offices across the country learned Tuesday about their director's firing in much the same way he did: from news reports that flashed on television screens and buzzed on phones.

They privately described a day afterward spent processing the news, swapping praise about their former boss, and grappling with angst that Comey wasn't given a chance to notify employees. Many saw him as a strong and supportive leader even if some believed he at times set the bureau on the wrong path. And many did not want to see him go, especially in the midst of the bureau's investigation into whether President Donald Trump's campaign had ties to Russia's meddling in the election.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Wednesday that "countless" FBI employees had lost faith in Comey's leadership. But the president of the FBI Agents Association, Thomas O'Connor, said he was known to be responsive to their concerns, and he called the firing a "gut punch."

As part of the backup for the firing, the White House released a memo by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein that blasted Comey's handling of the probe into Hillary Clinton's emails, namely his announcement that Clinton should not be charged before reopening the investigation days before voters went to the polls. That placed FBI agents in an uncomfortable position

of having their historically apolitical work thrust into the center of a national election.

Retired FBI assistant director Ron Hosko said some agents believed Comey went too far.

"There are those voices inside, but I think he still enjoyed broad support and great respect by the workforce," Hosko said.

In New York, where Comey once headed the US attorney's office in Manhattan, agents were told stories about the former director, including how he used to call agents' cell phones to congratulate them after finishing big cases, said a current official. Most current employees spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of restrictions about interactions with the media.

Across the FBI's field offices, Comey was known for a plainspoken speaking style, peppering prepared remarks with avuncular advice, life lessons and humor. His casual demeanor — he'd regularly appear without a suit coat at freewheeling meetings

Comey shock 'dismissal' plunges Trump young presidency in turmoil

WASHINGTON, May 11, (AFP): The White House Wednesday slapped down calls for a special prosecutor to investigate allegations that Donald Trump's campaign colluded with Russia, after the US president abruptly fired his FBI director.

Trump's shock dismissal of James Comey — the man overseeing federal investigations into suspected Kremlin interference in the 2016 vote — has sparked a political firestorm in Washington and plunged his young presidency in turmoil.

Comey himself was measured about the abrupt turn of events in a letter to FBI agents and colleagues, urging them not to be concerned for him.

"I have long believed that a president can fire an FBI director for any reason, or for no reason at all. I'm not going to spend time on the decision or the way it was executed. I hope you won't either," he said.

"It is done, and I will be fine, although I will miss you and the mission deeply," he wrote.

"In times of turbulence, the American people should see the FBI as a rock of competence, honesty, and independence," he added.

Furious Democrats, however, suggested the FBI's work will now be hopelessly tainted and demanded a special prosecutor akin to those appointed during Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal or the run-up to Bill Clinton's impeachment.

"We don't think it's necessary," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders, batting back that demand.

Sanders said the White House wanted the FBI probe — and parallel congressional investigations — to continue and to wrap up their work. "No one wants this to be finished and completed more than us."

The White House says Comey's firing was motivated solely by concerns over his handling of the high-stakes probe into Hillary Clinton's emails.

A US official said the president had been "losing confidence" in his FBI chief for several months, and that after watching Comey testify before Congress as part of the Russia probe last week Trump was "strongly inclined to remove him."

The president personally defended his summary dismissal of Comey and rejected suggestions it was linked to the Russia investigation.

with reporters, dabbled with Twitter and joked often about the toll the job had taken on his imposing height — served for many agents as a welcome change from the bureau's historically buttoned-up culture.

At speaking appearances, he'd urge young agents to relish their lives outside the FBI, demanding that they take time to tend to their families — and to sleep. He'd say how he strove to be sensitive to the feelings of subordinates, aware that cross words or a bored look during a conversation could "hurt them in ways that would last."

A farewell letter from Comey that circulated among friends and colleagues said he does not plan to dwell on the decision to fire him or on "the way it was executed."

He said in the letter that though he'll be fine, he will miss the FBI and its mission "deeply." Comey said that "in times of turbulence, the American people should see the FBI as a rock of competence, honesty, and independence."

In their phone call, Trump congratulated Moon on his election victory and his country's "peaceful, democratic transition of power," a White House statement said. (AP)

and other experts, the White House official said. (AP)

Trump invites Moon: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday invited South Korea's new president to visit the White House after an election victory that could cause friction between the allies over how to deal with North Korea's nuclear threat.

Trump wants to tighten an economic vise and has raised the possibility of



Coats



Erdogan

military force as the North approaches the capability to threaten America with a nuclear-tipped missile. Moon advocates a less confrontational policy. As he took the oath of office Wednesday, Moon Jae-in said he was open to visiting Pyongyang under the right conditions to discuss its nuclear program.

In their phone call, Trump congratulated Moon on his election victory and his country's "peaceful, democratic transition of power," a White House statement said. (AP)