

World News Roundup

Politics

Monday hearing set

Report on impeachment looks at 'abuse, bribery'

WASHINGTON, Dec 8, (AP) — Previewing potential articles of impeachment, the House Democrats on Saturday issued a lengthy report drawing on history and the Founding Fathers to lay out the legal argument over the case against President Donald Trump's actions toward Ukraine.

The findings from the House Judiciary Committee do not spell out the formal charges against the president, which are being drafted ahead of votes, possibly as soon as next week. Instead, the report refutes Trump's criticism of the impeachment proceedings, arguing that the Constitution created impeachment as a "safety valve" so Americans would not have to wait for the next election to remove a president. It refers to the writings of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and others to link Trump's actions in his July phone call with Ukraine's president seeking political investigations of his rivals to the kind of behavior that would "horrify" the framers.

"Where the President uses his foreign affairs power in ways that betray the national interest for his own benefit, or harm national security for equally corrupt reasons, he is subject to impeachment by the House," the Democrats wrote. "Indeed, foreign interference in the American political system was among the gravest dangers feared by the Founders of our Nation and the Framers of our Constitution."

Democrats are working through the weekend at articles that are being drafted and committee members are preparing for a hearing Monday. Democrats say Trump abused his power in the July 25 phone call when he asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a favor and engaged in bribery by withholding nearly \$400 million in military aid that Ukraine depends on to counter Russian aggression.

Benefits

Speaker Nancy Pelosi says it's part of a troubling pattern of behavior from Trump that benefits Russia and not the US.

Trump has insisted he did nothing wrong. "Witch Hunt!" the president tweeted Saturday morning. The articles of impeachment are likely to encompass two major themes — abuse of office and obstruction — as Democrats strive to reach the Constitution's bar of "treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

In releasing his report Saturday, Chairman **Jerrod Nadler**, D-N.Y., said the president's actions are the framers' "worst nightmare."

"President Trump abused his power, betrayed our national security, and corrupted our elections, all for personal gain. The Constitution details only one remedy for this misconduct: impeachment," Nadler said in a statement. "The safety and security of our nation, our democracy, and future generations hang in the balance if we do not address this misconduct. In America, no one is above the law, not even the President."

The report released Saturday is an update of similar reports issued during the Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton impeachments and lays out the justification for articles under consideration, including abuse of power, bribery and obstruction.

It does not lay out the facts of the Ukraine case, but it hints at potential articles of impeachment and explains the thinking behind Democrats' decision to draft them. Without frequently mentioning Trump, it alludes to his requests that Ukraine investigate Democrats, a move he believed would benefit him politically, by saying a president who "perverts his role as chief diplomat to serve private rather than public ends" has unquestionably engaged in the high crimes and misdemeanors laid out in the Constitution. That is true "especially" if he invited rather than opposed foreign interference, the report says.

The report examines treason, bribery, serious abuse of power, betrayal of the national interest through foreign entanglements and corruption of office and elections. Democrats have been focused on an overall abuse of power article, with the possibility of breaking out a separate, related article on bribery. They are also expected to draft at least one article on obstruction of Congress, or obstruction of justice.

Corrupt

In laying out the grounds for impeachable offenses, the report directly refutes several of the president's claims in a section called "fallacies about impeachment," including that the inquiry is based on second-hand evidence, that a president can do what he wants to do, and that Democrats' motives are corrupt.

"The President's honesty in an impeachment inquiry, or his lack thereof, can thus shed light on the underlying issue," the report says.

In pushing ahead with the impeachment inquiry, Democrats are bringing the focus back to Russia.

Pelosi is connecting the dots — "all roads lead to Putin," she says — and making the argument that Trump's pressure campaign on Ukraine was not an isolated incident but part of a troubling bond with the Russian president reaching back to special counsel Robert Mueller's findings on the 2016 election interference.

"This isn't about Ukraine," she explained a day earlier. "It's about Russia. Who benefited by our withholding of that military assistance? Russia."

It's an attempt to explain why Americans should care that Trump pushed Ukraine to investigate rival Joe Biden while withholding the military aid that Congress had approved.

At the same time, by tracing the arc of Trump's behavior from the 2016 campaign to the present, it stitches it all together. And that helps the speaker balance her left-flank liberals, who want more charges brought against Trump, including from Mueller's report, and centrist Democrats who prefer to keep the argument more narrowly focused on Ukraine.

Pelosi and her team are trying to convey a message that impeachment is indeed about Ukraine, but also about a pattern of behavior that could stoke renewed concern about his attitude toward Russia ahead of the 2020 election.

Trump pushed back on the Democrats' message. "The people see that it's just a continuation of this three-year witch hunt," he told reporters as he left the White House on a trip to Florida.

Late Friday, White House counsel Pat Cipollone informed the Judiciary Committee that the administration would not be participating in upcoming hearings, deprecating the proceedings as "completely baseless."

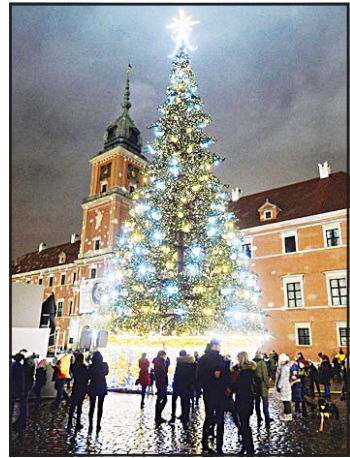
And Trump's campaign announced new rallies taking the case directly to voters — as well as a new email fundraising pitch that claims the Democrats have "gone absolutely insane."



Nadler



A fire engine stands by the site of a fire in an alleyway, tangled in electrical wire and too narrow for vehicles to access, in New Delhi, India on Dec 8. Dozens of people died on Sunday in a devastating fire at a building in a crowded grains market area in central New Delhi, police said. (AP)



People stand near a Christmas tree recently lit in preparation for the holiday season at Castle Square in Warsaw, Poland on Dec 7. (AP)

Asia

Biggest HK protest:

Vast crowds of black-clad demonstrators thronged Hong Kong on Sunday in the largest anti-government protests since local elections last month that boosted the pro-democracy movement seeking to curb controls by China.

It was the first time since August that the Civil Human Rights Front — organizer of million-strong marches earlier in the year that paralysed the Asian finance centre — had received authorities' permission for a rally.

It estimated turnout of 800,000 while police said 183,000.

Chants of "Fight for freedom! Stand with Hong Kong!" echoed as demonstrators, from students to professionals and the elderly, marched from Victoria Park in the bustling shopping district towards the financial area.

As dark fell, some protesters spray-painted anti-Beijing graffiti on a Bank of China building. Riot police stood on guard, restrained as protesters yelled "dogs" and "cockroaches."

The former British colony of 7.4 million people reverted to Chinese rule in 1997. It is governed under a "One Country, Two Systems" formula guaranteeing freedoms not allowed in mainland China, but many fear Beijing is tightening the screws.

"It's Christmas time soon but we're not in the mood to celebrate anymore," said Lawrence, a 23-year-old student.

He held a poster saying: "My 2020 wish is universal suffrage", a reference to demands for an open vote on the city leader, currently the unpopular Beijing-backed Carrie Lam.

China blames the six months of unrest on interference by foreign governments including the United States and Britain.

On Saturday, two leaders of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong were denied entry to the neighbouring Chinese city of Macau, without explanation.

Lam says she has heard the people but has not offered concessions despite a resounding win for pro-democracy parties in local elections two weeks ago. They secured almost 90% of 452 district council seats in a record turnout.

At Sunday's protest, chants of "five demands, not one less" rang out, referring to demands ranging from Lam's resignation to an amnesty for detainees. (RTRS)

N. Korea conducts test:

North Korea said Sunday it carried out a "very important test" at its long-range rocket launch site that it reportedly rebuilt after having partially dismantled it when it entered denuclearization talks with the United States last year.

The announcement comes amid dimming prospects for a resumption of negotiations, with the North warning it would seek "a new way" if it fails to get major US concessions by year's end. North Korea has said its resumption of nuclear and long-range missile tests depends on the United States.

Saturday's test at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground will have "an important effect on changing the strategic position of (North Korea) once again in the near future," an unidentified spokesman from the North's Academy of National Defense Science said in a statement, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

He said the defense academy submitted the test results to the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party.

Britain

Johnson pledges lower immigration

Transformative Brexit: PM

LONDON, Dec 8, (RTRS) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was nervous about his narrowing lead in opinion polls ahead of Thursday's election but pledged to deliver a "transformative" Brexit that will allow lower immigration.

The Dec 12 election will decide the fate of Brexit and the world's fifth-largest economy with a stark choice between Johnson's pro-market Conservatives and the socialist-led opposition Labour Party.

"Brexit is the most radical and profound change to the management of this country," Johnson told Sky, adding that he would lead the United Kingdom out of the European Union on Jan 31 if he wins a majority in the 650-seat parliament.

"Brexit is indispensable - you can't move forward without Brexit," said Johnson, the face of the leave campaign in the 2016 referendum before winning the top job in July after Prime Minister Theresa May failed to deliver Brexit on time.

Crisis

Johnson called the snap election after more than three years of political crisis over the United Kingdom's most significant geopolitical move since World War Two.

Voting takes place from 0700 and 2200 GMT on Thursday, with Johnson likely to need more than 320 seats to ensure he can remain prime minister and ratify the Brexit deal he struck with the EU in October.

Opinion polls put Johnson ahead of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, though his lead has narrowed in recent weeks and such polls largely failed to predict the 2016 referendum result or May's loss of her majority in the 2017 snap election.

Asked if he was nervous about narrowing polls, Johnson said: "Of course, we are fighting for every vote. I think that this is a critical moment for this country."

Four opinion polls published on Saturday put the lead of Johnson's

Conservative Party over the Labour Party at between eight and 15 points.

The Conservatives are certainly in pole position, but not necessarily so far ahead that they're guaranteed to win, polling expert John Curtice told the BBC.

With the United Kingdom still split over Brexit, the election has largely been dominated by rhetoric over the EU exit and an array of expensive spending promises on public services by both major parties.

Issue

Beyond Brexit, the main foreign policy issue has been Corbyn's claim that Johnson would sell off the much-cherished National Health Service (NHS) to US corporations in a post-Brexit deal with US President Donald Trump.

Johnson has repeatedly denied that claim and Trump last week said he wouldn't want the NHS if it was offered on a silver platter, but Corbyn has used leaked British-US trade documents to argue that Johnson is a threat to the NHS.

The leak of the classified documents online is tied to a previous Russian disinformation campaign, social media site Reddit said on Friday, fuelling fears that Moscow is seeking to interfere in the British election.

The Kremlin, which says the West is gripped by anti-Russian hysteria, has denied it meddles in Western democracies.

The UK government said it is looking into the matter with support from the National Cyber Security Centre, part of the GCHQ signals intelligence agency.

No major poll predicts victory for Corbyn, a socialist who wants to bring swathes of the British economy into state ownership, but Labour could yet lead a minority government given that few other parties are willing to prop up a Johnson government.

Labour proposes negotiating a new deal and then holding another EU referendum.

Subcontinent

India factory fire kills 43: A fire believed to be caused by an electrical short circuit engulfed a building in India's capital on Sunday where handbags and other items were made by workers earning as little as 2 dollars per day, killing at least 43 people.

The blaze in New Delhi's Karol Bagh neighborhood, a warren of narrow alleyways with electrical wiring strung helter-skelter, was the second major fire there this year. In February, 17 people were killed in a blaze that started in a six-story building's illegal rooftop kitchen.

Karol Bagh contains the city's largest wholesale market for household goods, known as Sadar Bazaar. The area's aging buildings are stacked with apartments, shops, storage facilities and manufacturing units.

Assistant New Delhi police commissioner **Anil Kumar Mittal** said that "the fire appears to have been caused by an electric short circuit," adding that authorities were investigating whether the factory was operating legally. Building laws and safety norms are routinely flouted in New Delhi, making fires common.

The building's owner, Rihan, who goes by one name, was detained on suspicion of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, Mittal said.

Firefighters had to fight the blaze from 100 meters (yards) away because it broke out in one of the area's many alleyways, tangled in electrical wire and too narrow for vehicles to access, authorities said.

A resident of the area, Mohammed Naushad, said he was woken by people waiting at around 4:30 a.m. He went outside to find smoke and flames shooting out of a building near Sadar Bazaar. Inside, he found the fourth floor engulfed in flames. One floor below, he saw "20 to 25 people lying on the floor."

"I don't know if they were dead or unconscious, but they were not moving," Naushad said. (AP)



Mittal

Pakistan explosion kills 1: Pakistani police say an explosion near a religious congregation in the eastern city of Lahore has killed one and wounded four others.

Officer Mohammad Ejaz says the blast is being investigated. He said it took place Saturday evening in a neighborhood where a congregation was gathered to pray near a mosque said to be run by supporters of the banned group Jamaat-ud-Dawa.

Ejaz said one of the wounded was hospitalized in critical condition.

Officer Zulfiqar Hameed said the blast was the result could have come from a burst air compressor at an air conditioner repair shop nearby.

Lahore has been the scene of several militant attacks in recent years. (AP)

US, Taliban resume talks:

US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad on Saturday held the first official talks with Afghanistan's Taliban since President Donald Trump declared a near-certain peace deal with the insurgents dead in September.

The talks will initially focus on getting a Taliban promise to reduce violence, with a permanent cease-fire being the eventual goal, said a US statement. Khalilzad is also trying to lay the groundwork for negotiations between Afghans on both sides of the protracted conflict.

Sitting with the Taliban at the negotiating table was Anas Haqqani, one of three senior Taliban freed last month in exchange for kidnapped American University of Afghanistan professors — American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks, Taliban's political office spokesman Suhail Shaheen tweeted.

Haqqani is the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's deputy and the head of the much feared Haqqani network, a US declared terrorist organization.

Tweeting that talks will resume on Sunday, Shaheen also said "we discussed matters related to the signing of the agreement," without elaborating. (AP)

"Al Hamra Hotel" celebrates two years of successes since its opening



Al Hamra Hotel Kuwait celebrated two years of successes since its inauguration in November 2017 that reflects the great success achieved by providing good hospitality services locally, regionally and globally.

It is worth mentioning that Al Hamra Hotel is in the center of the capital at Sharq area beside Al Hamra Commercial Tower, offers 96 luxurious rooms and suites that provide guests with comfort and safety along with dining in Dasman restaurant which offers international breakfast, lunch and dinner buffet. The unique Al Hamra Ballroom meant to celebrate your weddings and happy

occasions events and conferences in addition to the two meeting rooms for seminars and training courses fully equipped with all modern audio-visual equipment.

The General Manager of the hotel thanked all the management and employees for their efforts, outstanding performance and loyalty to the hotel during the past two years.

In this occasion, Al Hamra Hotel thanks all guests and business partners for their support and confidence for having their guests or events at the hotel.

Al Hamra Hotel Your first choice, your second home.



Moon

years, resulting in worldwide condemnation and UN sanctions over claims that they were disguised tests of long-range missile technology. (AP)