

World News Roundup

Politics

Dems seek witnesses

Defense resumes in impeachment week

WASHINGTON, Jan 27, (AP): US President Donald Trump's impeachment trial enters a pivotal week as his defense team resumes its case and senators face a critical vote on whether to hear witnesses or proceed directly to a vote that is widely expected to end in his acquittal. The articles of impeachment charge Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

Those decisions on witnesses may be complicated by reports that Trump said he wanted to maintain a freeze on military assistance to Ukraine until it aided political investigations into his Democratic rivals. That's from former national security adviser John Bolton in a draft of his forthcoming book. The report by The New York Times was later confirmed by The Associated Press. The revelation challenges the defense offered up by Trump and his attorneys in his impeachment trial.

The Capitol Hill maneuvering will be complemented by high-stakes efforts on both sides of the aisle to claim political advantage from the proceedings as the presidential nominating season kicks off in Iowa on Feb 3.

What to watch as the Senate impeachment trial resumes Monday at 1 pm EST:



Roberts

After a two-hour opening argument Saturday, Trump's defense team will lay out its case in depth beginning Monday. White House counsel Pat Cipollone said Trump's lawyers don't expect to take the full 24 hours allotted to them, but there will be arguments from some familiar faces.

Harvard law professor emeritus Alan Dershowitz, former independent counsel Ken Starr and former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi will speak on specific topics.

Dershowitz said Sunday he would argue that the charges against Trump are too minor to warrant the Republican president's removal from office under the Constitution. "Even if true, they did not allege impeachable offenses," Dershowitz told "Fox News Sunday."

Attention

The Trump team has also teased the notion that it would draw attention to Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of a Ukraine gas company Burisma, while the elder Biden was vice president. An extended focus on Joe Biden, one of the leading Democratic presidential contenders, could mean blowback from even some of the GOP members of the Senate.

Once Trump's team concludes, senators will have 16 hours to ask questions of both the House impeachment prosecutors and the president's legal team. Their questions must be in writing.

Chief Justice **John Roberts** will read the questions aloud. He is expected to alternate between both sides of the aisle. Many senators have been talking copious notes throughout the trial in preparation for the question-and-answer time.

Sen John Barrasso, R-Wyo, told reporters Saturday that Republicans expected to get together on Monday to start formulating a list of questions. "We will meet as a conference and decide what questions we want to pose, what the order may be of those of those questions," he said.

Under the Senate rules passed last week, senators will get another chance to vote whether to consider new witnesses and evidence after the Q&A time is elapsed. Four Republicans would have to break ranks to join Democrats in the GOP-controlled Senate to extend the trial for an undetermined amount of time.

If that happens, expect a bitter fight over which witnesses might be called and which documents might be subpoenaed. Democrats have called for testimony from Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, and his acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney. An attempt to call either probably would lead to a showdown with the White House, which claims both men have "absolute immunity" from being called to testify before the Senate, even in an impeachment trial. Still, Bolton has said he would appear if issued a subpoena by the Senate.

While Republicans have hoped for a speedy trial, Trump has called for the testimony of the Bidens and the intelligence community whistleblower whose summer complaint about Trump's July telephone call with Ukraine's leader instigated the impeachment inquiry.

Resistance

But some Republicans, including Sen Lindsey Graham, R-SC, have expressed resistance to calling those witnesses.

If the vote fails, the Senate could move swiftly to its vote on whether to remove or acquit Trump, giving the president the result he's been looking for as soon as the end of the week.

Senate rules also call for four hours of deliberations before voting. Since senators are required to sit silently during the trial, expect a closed session where they can deliberate in private.

Trump's lawyers argued Saturday that no one knows what Trump's motives were on holding up military assistance to Ukraine. A recording obtained by The Associated Press hours later suggests the president well understood that assistance was a point of leverage over Ukraine.

The recording is of 2018 meeting at the Trump Hotel in Washington that Trump had with donors, including two now-indicted associates of his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani. The audio portion includes Trump inquiring about Ukraine. "How long would they last in a fight with Russia?" He later calls for the firing of the US ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch.

The recording contradicts the president's statements that he didn't know the Giuliani associations, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman. They are key figures in the investigation who were indicted last year on campaign finance charges.

If new evidence and witnesses are allowed, the recording could take center stage in the Senate proceedings.

The trial is resuming with one week to go until the Iowa caucuses, and is again keeping four Democratic contenders – Sens Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Michael Bennet and Amy Klobuchar – in Washington instead of campaigning at a critical point in the race.

While they are trapped in Washington, Trump will venture outside the capital as he seeks both to exert political retribution on Democrats who impeached him and reward a party-switching lawmaker who backed him in the House.

Trump will hold a rally Tuesday in New Jersey to repay the favor to Rep Jeff Van Drew, who became a Republican last month after voting against the articles of impeachment as a Democrat. And Trump is set to appear in Iowa on Thursday, days before the caucuses.



Democratic presidential candidate Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt (right), embraces Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, at a campaign rally on Jan 26 in Sioux City, Iowa. (AP)

Politics

Who can topple Trump?

Dems' electability fight rages in Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa, Jan 27, (AP): The urgent fight for the Democratic presidential nomination was raging across Iowa on Sunday as the party's leading candidates and their allies fanned out across the state to deliver closing arguments centered on the defining question of the 2020 primary: Who is best positioned to defeat President Donald Trump?

Bernie Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, emerged as a central figure in the electability debate as new polls showed him gaining strength just eight days before Iowa's first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses on Feb 3. Sanders' strength sparked a growing sense of concern from his more moderate Democratic rivals, who fear that the 78-year-old Sanders is too radical to beat Trump in a one-on-one matchup this fall.

Stoking those fears, Trump's campaign on Sunday teased a general election attack against Sanders. The Vermont senator had spent much of the day before campaigning alongside New York Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and the president's team sent out an email with the title, "Socialist invasion."

"Why is radical socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez spending so much time campaigning for Bernie? Because he's the godfather of her extreme agenda and socialist vision for America," the email said.

The night before, Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, had addressed more than 1,000 Iowa voters at a raucous event in Ames.

As Ocasio-Cortez urged the crowd "not to shrink down or shy away, but to be comfortable that we are pushing for radical change," Sanders offered a pragmatic appeal challenging the notion that a moderate Democrat would have a better chance of winning in November.

"If you think it is imperative that we beat Donald Trump, take a hard look at our campaign," Sanders said, pointing to his own growing "multi-generational, multi-racial, working-class" base of support.

"I believe that our campaign, our energy, our grassroots movement, our

agenda is the approach that will speak to working people who, in many cases, have given up on politics," he said.

Before Sanders took the stage in the rural town of Perry on Sunday, leading surrogate and filmmaker Michael Moore defended democratic socialism and warned that more attacks were coming.

"You're going to hear a lot now. The knives are sharpened," Moore said.

One of the establishment favorites, Joe Biden, was appearing alongside US Rep Cindy Axne, D-Iowa, the latest in a growing list of local elected officials backing the former vice-president.

Asked whether some party leaders are growing nervous about Sanders' rise, Axne said: "Oh, my goodness I should really hope so."

The youngest candidate in the race, 38-year-old Pete Buttigieg, was also playing up warnings about Sanders in his closing arguments. With several polls showing Sanders in a strong position, Buttigieg's campaign sent an email to supporters Saturday with the subject line: "Bernie Sanders could be the nominee."

Galvanize

"We need a nominee who can galvanize our country," the email said. "The Trump presidency will end one way or another, and when it does we need a president who can rally this country around a vision for the next generation. We know that candidate is Pete."

Speaking to reporters at a subsequent event, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, stopped short of directly criticizing Sanders, but noted that "we are getting into the heart of the competition."

"I believe that we should be very mindful that the very worst risk we can take at a time like this is to recycle the same Washington-style of political warfare that that brought us to this point," Buttigieg said. "If we believe it's important to win, and I sure do, then the best thing we could do is put forward a candidate who offers something new."

Even with new rounds of state and

national polls, a deep sense of uncertainty loomed over the Iowa contest.

One major complication: Several candidates will be forced to return to Washington on Monday, compelled by the Constitution to sit as jurors in Trump's Senate impeachment trial. The proceedings make it virtually impossible for the senators – Sanders, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Michael Bennet of Colorado – to appear in Iowa during the week, although there is some sense that the trial could be over by week's end.

Warren seized a dose of momentum of her own on Saturday after picking up a coveted endorsement from The Des Moines Register. The newspaper called her "the best leader for these times" and said she "is not the radical some perceive her to be" even if "some of her ideas for 'big, structural change' go too far."

Warren ignored the political shifts during her first Sunday appearance, focusing instead on her core message of combating corruption as she faced several hundred voters at an elementary school gymnasium in Davenport.

"When you see a government that works great for those with money and is not working so great for everyone else, that is corruption pure and simple and we need to call it out for what it is," Warren charged. "That's why I'm in this fight."

Polls suggest Biden also has a substantial appeal among Democratic voters, especially African Americans. While he has been critical of Sanders in the past, he kept his focus instead on the threat of four more years of Trump in the White House.

"I don't believe we are the dark, angry nation that Donald Trump tweets about at night," he told a large crowd in Ankeny. "We are so much better than Donald Trump."

Biden scored the endorsement of the Sioux City Journal, which called him "the candidate best positioned to give Americans a competitive head-to-head matchup with President Trump" and said he would be best at attracting support from "independents and disgruntled Republicans."



House Democratic impeachment manager, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif, arrives at the Senate as work resumes in the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, at the Capitol in Washington on Jan 25. (AP)



Terry



Trudeau

North America

Terry exits Senate race: A young, progressive mayor of an Atlanta-area city on Sunday dropped out of the Democratic race to challenge Republican Sen David Perdue in a contest that could dictate the fate of the Senate in 2020.

Ted Terry told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he struggled to raise enough money to compete in the nationally watched race. Terry said he will instead run for an open DeKalb County commission seat.

Terry's exit from the race leaves three prominent Democrats vying for the chance to face Perdue, a close ally of President Donald Trump: former congressional candidate Jon Ossoff, 2018 Lt Gov candidate Sarah Riggs Amico and former Columbus mayor Teresa Tomlinson. Terry did not immediately endorse any of his rivals.

"The old saying that it takes coal to run a train, but it takes gold to run a campaign is more true in this age of politics than ever before," Terry said in a letter to supporters. "And while the thousands of you who have pitched in has made a huge difference, it just isn't enough to sustain us all the way to the May 19th primary."

Terry has been the mayor of Clarkston since 2013. The city bills itself as "the most ethnically diverse square mile in America," and is known for embracing progressive and immigrant-friendly policies.

As mayor, Terry has promoted a \$15 per hour minimum wage for city employees, decriminalization of marijuana possession and clean energy goals. (AP)

Assistance after deadly blast: Houston's mayor and others say they will work to provide assistance to residents whose homes were damaged after a massive explosion at a warehouse that killed two workers and injured 20 others.

Mayor Sylvester Turner on Saturday walked through the impacted neighborhoods in northwest Houston and spoke with residents who were cleaning up after Friday's explosion. Cleanup and repair efforts continued Sunday.

"These people's lives have been devastated by the Houston explosion. We are not going to forget about them," Turner said.

The explosion happened about 4:30 am Friday inside a building at Watson Grinding and Manufacturing, which makes valves and provides thermal-spray coatings for equipment in various industries, authorities said. Employees Frank Flores and Gerardo Castorena were killed.

In a statement released Saturday,

Castorena's family said, "It's with a heavy heart that we had to say goodbye to a loving father, son, brother, and friend yesterday morning. We do ask for privacy as we grieve during this time. Thank you

all to those for your kind words and support as we get through this difficult time."

Authorities say an additional 20 people were injured – two other warehouse workers and 18 others from neighboring homes

and businesses. The explosion's cause is being investigated. (AP)

Trudeau to welcome Guaidó: Venezuela opposition leader Juan Guaidó will visit Canada on Monday as part of an international tour aimed at bolstering support for his challenge to socialist leader Nicolás Maduro.

The office of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** said that he and senior Cabinet ministers would meet with Guaidó, whose trip defied a travel ban imposed by Venezuela's pro-Maduro Supreme Court.

"I commend Interim President Guaidó for the courage and leadership he has shown in his efforts to return democracy to Venezuela, and I offer Canada's continued support," Trudeau said in a statement.

Canada is one of more than 50 nations that recognized Guaidó – head of the South American nation's congress – as Venezuela's interim president last year on grounds that Maduro's reelection was illegitimate.

Canada also has imposed sanctions against officials of Maduro's government and has joined five other nations in referring Maduro to the International Criminal Court.

Despite the international backing for Guaidó, Maduro retains control over all practical aspects of government in Venezuela.

Guaidó earlier made stops in London, Paris, Madrid and the Davos Economic Forum. (AP)



The remains of a dock where at least 35 vessels, many of them houseboats, were destroyed by fire on Jan 27 in Scottsboro, Ala. Scottsboro Fire Chief Gene Necklaus is confirming fatalities in a massive fire at a boat dock. (AP)