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Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2018 • \$2

Kushner's clearance review intensifies

Justice Dept. told White House on Feb. 9 that more work was needed

BY CAROL D. LEONNIG, ROBERT COSTA AND JOSH DAWSEY

A top Justice Department official alerted the White House two weeks ago that significant information requiring additional investigation would further delay the security clearance process of senior adviser Jared Kushner, according to three people familiar with the discussion.

The Feb. 9 phone call from Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein to White House Counsel Donald McGahn came amid growing public scrutiny of a number of administration officials without final security clearances. Most prominent among them is Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law, who has had access to some of the nation's most sensitive material for over a year while waiting for his background investigation to be completed.

A week after the call from Rosenstein, White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly announced that staffers whose clearances have not been finalized will no longer be able to view top-secret information — meaning that Kushner stood to lose his status as early as Friday.

As president, Trump can grant Kushner a high-level security clearance, even if his background investigation continues to drag on. But Trump said Friday that he would leave that decision to Kelly.

In his phone conversation with McGahn, Rosenstein intended to give an update on the status of Kushner's background investigation. He did not specify the source of the information that officials were examining, the three people said.

Justice Department officials said Rosenstein did not provide any details to the White House about the matters that needed to be investigated relating to KUSHNER CONTINUED ON A4



Ana Veronica Lacayo cheers President Trump's speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference at National Harbor.

WHITE HOUSE DEBRIEF

Another stop on Trump's endless campaign trail

BY PHILIP RUCKER

If there was any doubt that his presidency is an unending campaign, Donald Trump erased it Friday when he pulled two pieces of paper from his suit jacket and recited the lyrics of a song.

Addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference, the president read "The Snake," a parable about a tenderhearted woman who takes in an ailing snake and gives it milk, honey and a silk blanket, only to be killed by the revived creature's poisonous bite.

Trump explained the metaphor: "You have to think of this in terms of immigration."

On the campaign trail in 2016, Trump frequently told the tale of the snake. The crowds at his rallies loved it. Other Americans were appalled and found it racist.

On Friday, Trump made "The Snake" the focal point of a



EVAN VUCCI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Trump joked with the crowd about hiding his bald spot. "I work hard at it. Doesn't look bad," he said. "Hey, we're hanging in."

75-minute extravaganza of a presidential address that was evidently designed to enthrall his most loyal supporters — and further alienate the rest of the nation.

Trump Jr. in India: President's son says trip is strictly business. A12

The campaign was back. In fact, it had never ended.

"Did anyone ever hear me do 'The Snake' during the campaign?" Trump asked the CPAC crowd, which roared back at him with applause. "I had five people outside say, 'Could you do 'The Snake?'"

"Let's do it," he told his fans. "I'll do it, all right?"

A day earlier, Vice President Pence stood on the same stage at CPAC and sounded a call for unity. "There will always be more that unites us than will ever divide the good and great people of this country," he said. "So let's try to reconnect in the days and the debates that come ahead."

His boss had a different idea, however. Trump mocked Sen. John McCain (Ariz.), a war hero and Republican elder statesman with a terminal form of brain cancer, for his health-care vote. He vowed to "fight" a

TRUMP CONTINUED ON A5

Scott backs Fla. gun changes

GOVERNOR BREAKS WITH STANCE OF NRA

Higher age limit for rifle purchases gains support

BY MICHAEL SCHERER

Florida Gov. Rick Scott joined a growing list of Republican lawmakers Friday to endorse raising the minimum age for purchasing rifles to 21 years old, marking his first major break from the policy priorities of the National Rifle Association.

The GOP leadership of the Florida House and Senate quickly stood with Scott in backing a broad package of legislative initiatives, including funding for increased school security and setting up a new process to take guns out of the hands of those deemed to pose a danger. The proposals have come in response to the deadly mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14.

Any new regulation of firearms represents a dramatic shift in position for the state's Republican leaders, who have spent decades easing the regulation of guns and giving legal protection to those who use firearms in self-defense. The split with the powerful NRA also underscores the potency of a growing movement led by teenage survivors of the attack that is demanding tighter gun restrictions.

"I'm an NRA member, a supporter of the Second Amendment, and the First Amendment, and the entire Bill of Rights for that matter. I'm also a father, and

FLORIDA CONTINUED ON A8

Fla. shooting: How a system failed to pick up on signs of trouble. A11

Boycott drive: Major companies end branding deals with NRA. A10

In each other, survivors of shootings find solace

BY KATIE ZEZIMA

Yvonne Cech and Diana Perri Haneski met 36 years ago while working at a Connecticut radio station. They married men they met at the station and moved hundreds of miles apart, but their lives appeared to continue in sync. They twice gave birth within weeks of each other. They each earned a master's degree from the same university.

Cech became a librarian at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. Haneski became a librarian at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

And now, each has survived a mass shooting at her school. Last week in Florida, Haneski used lessons she had learned from Cech's experience in 2012.

"The kinds of conversations we had after Sandy Hook were about looking at your surroundings dif-

TRAUMA CONTINUED ON A7

Prosecutors part curtain on Manafort's millions

BY MARC FISHER

As Donald Trump crisscrossed the nation promising to drain the swamp, two of his top advisers were busy illegally building a colossal fortress of riches deep inside that swamp, according to federal prosecutors.

For a decade prior and on through Trump's populist crusade, Paul Manafort and Rick Gates used offshore accounts, hidden income, falsified documents and laundered cash to maintain Manafort's lush life of multiple homes, fine art, exquisite clothes and exotic travel, the government says.

In a richly detailed expanded indictment filed Thursday, special counsel Robert S. Mueller III parted the curtain shielding how two longtime Washington influence merchants worked the system. The government contends that Manafort, who was Trump's



FBI deal: Rick Gates, left, pleaded guilty Friday to conspiracy and lying and agreed to provide information about ex-boss Paul Manafort. A4

campaign chairman for five months before being fired, used people all around him, from his buddy Gates to banks, clients and the IRS, to build a life of conspicuous consumption.

Gates, who was Manafort's deputy in their lobbying firm and on the Trump campaign, pleaded guilty Friday to conspiracy and lying to the FBI, cutting a deal with prosecutors to give them

MANAFORT CONTINUED ON A6



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

Community mourns a protector

People gather Friday at a memorial service in Lanham, Md., for Prince George's County police Cpl. Mujahid Ramziddin, who was killed Wednesday near his home while trying to safeguard a neighbor from her armed husband. Story, B1

IN SUNDAY'S POST



WILL STRAWSER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

«Each one has a name» Across the country, decades' worth of rape kits were never analyzed. Now that they're being tested, no one can agree on what to do next. Magazine

Chill factor Will "Frozen," a Broadway version of the 2013 Disney film, succeed with a British director and an altered ending? Arts & Style



ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

«Aloha, pardner» The term "Wild West" usually conjures places such as Deadwood or Cheyenne, not Hilo or Waimea, but ranching and horseback riding have a long and rich history on the Hawaiian Islands. Travel

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INSIDE

REAL ESTATE Greasing ownership skids Many lenders are loosening requirements for prospective home buyers, offering assistance programs, low down payments and softer debt-to-income rules.

THE WORLD More pain for Pyongyang The Trump administration unveils sanctions targeting North Korean shipping and trade entities, part of a bid to prevent Pyongyang from evading previous measures. A14

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