



Report: Trump's Counterterrorism Aide is "Sworn Member" of Nazi-Allied Group

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

President Donald Trump's top counterterrorism adviser, Sebastian Gorka, is facing calls to resign after the Jewish American newspaper The Forward reported Gorka is a "sworn member" of a Hungarian far-right, Nazi-allied group. The Forward reported Thursday that members of the Vitézi Rend have confirmed Gorka took a lifelong oath of loyalty to their group, which the U.S. State Department says was "under the direction of the Nazi Government of Germany" during World War II. If the report is true, it means Gorka may have lied on his U.S. immigration application, which requires people disclose ties to such organizations. Gorka has denied reports of his involvement with the Nazi-allied group, telling Tablet magazine, "I have never been a member of the Vitez Rend." We'll have more on Sebastian Gorka later in the broadcast.

TOPICS: Donald Trump

More Headlines from March 17, 2017

Tillerson Says Military Action Against North Korea is on the Table

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On his first trip to Asia, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the United States would consider taking military action against North Korea, while speaking in Seoul.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson: "Let me be very clear: The policy of strategic patience has ended. We're exploring a new range of diplomatic, security and economic measures. All options are on the table."

This morning, Tillerson also visited the Demilitarized Zone on the border between North and South Korea. This week, the U.S., Japan and South Korea carried out two days of military training exercises, sending warships to the same area where North Korea fired four missiles a week earlier. The U.S.'s elite SEAL Team 6 took part in the war games for the first time.

The war games coincide with a U.S. military build-up in the region. Over the last few weeks, the U.S. has been deploying a missile defense system known as THAAD, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, to South Korea. The U.S. has now also announced it will be deploying unmanned attack drones to South Korea.

During Tillerson's trip to Asia, he endorsed the proposed dramatic cuts to the State Department budget, despite warnings the cuts would decrease the U.S.'s ability to carry out diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts. Defense Secretary James Mattis once famously said while serving as the commander of U.S. Central Command, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition."

TOPICS: North Korea Japan South Korea

Japanese Protested U.S. Military Base in Okinawa Ahead of Tillerson's Visit

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

Tillerson's trip to the Demilitarized Zone came after he visited Japan earlier this week, where he also called for a "different approach" to North Korea, saying diplomatic efforts so far had failed. Ahead of his visit, protesters again rallied in Okinawa to protest U.S. military bases on the island.

TOPICS: Japan

Speaker Paul Ryan Loses Support for Republican Healthcare Plan

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

House Speaker Paul Ryan lost more support for the Republican healthcare plan, with top party leaders admitting Thursday they do not have enough votes to push the legislation through the full House. The Budget Committee narrowly approved the bill Thursday in a 19-17 vote. All Democrats on the committee voted against the legislation, as did three Republicans: Virginia Congressman Dave Brat, Alabama Congressman Gary Palmer and South Carolina Congressman Mark Sanford. Top Republicans and the White House have admitted they may make changes to the bill in order to pass it through the House, although Speaker Ryan is facing a divided Republican opposition, with some members of his party calling for Medicaid to be cut even faster, while others are calling for Medicaid and other protections for low-income constituents to be protected.

TOPICS: Healthcare Paul Ryan

Lawmakers, Human Rights Advocates Oppose Trump's 2018 Budget

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

President Trump's proposed budget came under fire Thursday from both Democratic and Republican lawmakers. The 2018 budget calls for an unprecedented \$54 billion increase in military spending while slashing environmental, housing, diplomatic and educational programs. It also calls for a 31 percent cut to the Environmental Protection Agency and the elimination of 3,200 jobs. If approved, the EPA's budget would become the smallest it's been in 40 years. On Thursday, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney called funding climate change programs a "waste of money."

Mick Mulvaney: "Regarding the question as to climate change, I think the president was fairly straightforward: We're not spending money on that anymore; we consider that to be a waste of your money to go out and do that. So that is a specific tie to his—to his campaign."

Trump's proposed budget would also cut spending for the State Department and USAID by 28 percent, and slash billions of dollars in funding for the United Nations at a time when the U.N. says the world is facing its biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II. On Thursday, Human Rights Watch called on Trump to continue funding human rights programs worldwide.

Louis Charbonneau: "Many conflicts have their roots in human rights violations and abuses. And so, for the U.S. to pull back with funding could spark instability and lead to an increase in abuses. Congress has the opportunity to step in—and certainly they should step in—and make sure that the U.S. does not shy away from the commitments that it's had to maintaining the international human rights system that has been in place since World War II, including the U.N."

Trump's budget also threatens numerous programs to help the poor in the United States, including the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps the poor pay for heat during the winter, and the Community Development Block Grant program, which partially funds, among other things, Meals on Wheels to feed the elderly, the poor, veterans and disabled people. We'll have more on Trump's proposed budget after headlines with Ralph Nader.

TOPICS: Donald Trump

Trump Stands by Wiretapping Story, as Lawmakers Say Claims are Baseless

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

President Trump is continuing to stand by his unsubstantiated claims President Obama tapped his phones at Trump Tower during the 2016 election, even as top legislators continue to reject the allegation. On Thursday, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Chair Richard Burr and Vice Chair Mark Warner issued a statement saying, "Based on the information available to us, we see no indications that Trump Tower was the subject of surveillance by any element of the United States government either before or after Election Day 2016." The statement came only hours after Trump told Fox News's Tucker Carlson he'd be providing evidence soon and that his allegation was based, in part, on a report he'd seen on Fox News.

President Donald Trump: "I watched your friend Bret Baier the day previous, where he was talking about certain very complex sets of things happening, and wiretapping. I said, 'Wait a minute. There's a lot of wiretapping being talked about.'"

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer also tried to defend Trump's unsubstantiated allegation during a contentious 20-minute exchange with reporters during Thursday's press briefing.

Reporter: "Are you saying that the president still stands by his allegation that President Obama ordered wiretapping or surveillance of Trump Tower, despite the fact that the Senate Intelligence Committee says they see no indication that it happened?"

Press Secretary Sean Spicer: "That's—but—but you're—"

Reporter: "Does the president still stand by the allegation?"

Press Secretary Sean Spicer: "No, first of all, he stands by it. But again, you're mischaracterizing what happened today. The Senate—"

Reporter: "No, they said they saw no indication."

Press Secretary Sean Spicer: "No, no, I know."

Reporter: "I'm reading exactly from their statement."

Press Secretary Sean Spicer: "No, no, the—I understand that. And at the same time, they acknowledge that they have not been in contact with the Department of Justice. So, but at the—again, I go back to what I said at the beginning. It's interesting—hold on."

TOPICS: Donald Trump

Trump Meets with German Chancellor Angela Merkel Today

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

President Trump is meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel today at the White House. The two are planning to hold a joint press conference—Trump's first since he claimed, without offering any evidence, that President Obama tapped his phones at Trump Tower. After the press conference, Trump will head back to Florida for his fifth trip to his Mar-a-Lago resort since taking office. The Hill reports Trump has now spent nearly a quarter of his time in office at his private resort.

TOPICS: Germany Donald Trump

Syria: U.S. Confirms Airstrike But Denies Hitting Mosque Where 40 Were Killed

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

In Syria, at least 40 people have died after an airstrike struck a mosque in the middle of evening prayer in the village of al-Jina Thursday night. The Pentagon has confirmed it carried out an airstrike Thursday night in the same area, but it denies hitting the mosque. Instead, the Pentagon claims its strike hit an al-Qaeda meeting that was being held 50 feet away from a mosque, which the U.S. military claims is still standing. Syrian activists and on-the-ground journalists reject the U.S. military's account. This is journalist Bilal Abdul Kareem.

Bilal Abdul Kareem: "When you look just behind me, this was all a part of the masjid, or the compound. Now, the U.S. government has admitted that they launched an airstrike here just last night. But they said they did it 50 feet from the actual mosque. You can look, and you can see that the mosque is right here, and all of this, which has been hit, behind me is all a part of the mosque compound."

TOPICS: Syria

Indigenous Namibian Tribes Suing Germany for Reparations for Genocide

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

In New York, a second hearing has been scheduled in the case of two indigenous Namibian tribes that are suing the German government to demand compensation for Germany's genocide of 100,000 people in now-Namibia between 1904 and 1908. The killings were carried out by German imperial troops when the region was a German colony. The killings are considered to be the 20th century's first genocide.

TOPICS: Africa Germany

Brazil: Workers Mount General Strike in São Paulo

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Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, ground to a halt Thursday as transportation workers, teachers and other public sector workers staged a 24-hour general strike to protest Brazilian President Michel Temer's proposed pension reforms, as well as widespread corruption and impunity for politicians. Brazil's attorney general is currently seeking to investigate 83 lawmakers over allegations of corruption. This is one of the protesters.

Palmira Domingues: "It angers me to see the country in ruins because of their politicians' thieving. Now we have to fix things because of this thieving they've done, their privileges that they have always had, pensions for their children that they have. And now we have to pay for this. I am not going to pay this bill. I will pay for my bill."

TOPICS: Brazil

McDonald's Tweet to Trump: "You are Disgusting Excuse of a President"

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

Back in the United States, the fast-food giant McDonald's briefly appeared to take on President Donald Trump Thursday, when the corporate account tweeted out, "@realDonaldTrump You are actually a disgusting excuse of a President and we would love to have @BarackObama back, also you have tiny hands." The tweet was swiftly deleted within 20 minutes, and McDonald's later apologized, claiming its account had been hacked. McDonald's head of global communications, Robert Gibbs, previously worked as President Obama's press secretary.

TOPICS: Donald Trump

EPA Official Faces Allegation He Tried to "Kill" Investigation into Monsanto's Roundup

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

An EPA official is facing allegations he sought to stop an investigation into Monsanto's Roundup. Official Jess Rowland was in charge of testing the cancer risks of the herbicide. But according to a court filing, Rowland reportedly told a Monsanto manager on a conference call in 2015, "If I can kill I should get a medal," in reference to an investigation into the chemicals in Roundup. A federal judge says Rowland appeared to have a "highly suspicious" relationship with Monsanto. Rowland also oversaw a committee that found there was not enough evidence to conclude glyphosate, one of the key chemicals in Roundup, causes cancer.

TOPICS: Monsanto

Orlando: Attorney General Will Not Seek Death Penalty in Murder Cases

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

In Florida, the top prosecutor for metropolitan Orlando has announced she will not seek the death penalty in any first-degree murder cases.

Aramis Ayala: "After careful review and consideration of the new statute, under my administration, I will not be seeking death penalty in cases handled in my office."

State Attorney Aramis Ayala's announcement Thursday sparked outrage because she was set to prosecute the case of Markeith Loyd, who is accused of killing his pregnant ex-girlfriend and an Orlando police officer in January. Following her announcement, Florida Governor Rick Scott first called on Ayala to recuse herself from the case, and then, when she refused, he removed her from the case and reassigned it to another prosecutor. Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, a judge has vacated the murder conviction of a man who has spent 32 years in jail for a crime he always maintained he did not commit.

TOPICS: Death Penalty Florida

Fmr. L.A. County Sheriff Lee Baca Guilty of Obstructing FBI Probe into Abuse in Jail

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

The former sheriff of Los Angeles County has been found guilty on charges of obstructing an FBI investigation into the abuse of prisoners in L.A. County jails, including the beating of prisoners who were handcuffed. Lee Baca ran the L.A. County Sheriff's Department for 15 years and was one of the most powerful sheriffs in the United States. He now faces up to 20 years in federal prison on charges related to his attempts to thwart the FBI's investigation—and then cover up his efforts.

TOPICS: Police

Muhammad Ali's Son Stopped at Airport for Second Time in a Month

HEADLINES MAR 17, 2017

And boxing legend Muhammad Ali's son, Muhammad Ali Jr., says he was questioned at a U.S. airport for the second time within a month—this time at the airport in Washington, D.C., where he was seeking to board a flight to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he lives. Muhammad Ali Jr., or Muhammad Ibn Ali, says he was flagged by TSA and then asked for his Social Security number, his place of birth and a U.S. passport to board the flight—even though he had already shown his U.S. driver's license. Muhammad Ibn Ali was also stopped and questioned for over two hours about his name and his religion in late February when he flew into Florida from Jamaica, where he was honoring Black History Month. This is Muhammad Ibn Ali speaking on Democracy Now! after that first stop.

Muhammad Ali Jr.: "The first question they asked me was: What's my name? The second question was: Where did I get my name from? And the third question was: What religion are you? And so, I answered, 'My name is Muhammad Ibn Ali.' And I said, 'I got my name from my mother and father. They raised me. They gave me the name Muhammad Ali from birth.' And I said, 'I'm Muslim.' Obviously, I think they didn't believe me, so they took me into another room, the room in the back, and asked me the same series of questions. And so, it really struck me as a surprise, shock and awe, because I'm an American citizen, so I don't see why he even stopped me in the first place."

Click here to see our full interview with Muhammad Ali Jr., Muhammad Ali's oldest son, and with his mother, Khalilah Camacho-Ali, who was also taken into custody.

TOPICS: Arabs and Muslims in America

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