

# Eye on the World

## May 6, 2017

This compilation of material for "Eye on the World" is presented as a service to the Churches of God. The views stated in the material are those of the writers or sources quoted by the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Church of God Big Sandy. The following articles were posted at churchofgodbigandy.com for the weekend of May 6, 2017.

**Compiled by Dave Havir**

**Luke 21:34-36**—"But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence, and drunkenness, or the anxieties of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth. But beware of slumbering; and every moment pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Weymouth New Testament).



An article by Patrick Goodenought titled " Hamas Revamps Its Image, but Still Embraces 'Armed Resistance' and Does Not Recognize Israel" was posted at cnsnews.com on May 2, 2017. Following is the article.

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In a bid to shed its image as an Islamist terrorist group, Hamas on Monday launched a new political program that draws a distinction between Jews and "Zionists" as the enemy, but stopped short of recognizing Israel or renouncing violence.

"Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honor for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah [Islamic community]," the document declares.

"Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people."

"Armed resistance" as executed by Hamas since its establishment three decades ago has taken the form of suicide bombings, shootings, stabbings and rocket attacks that have left hundreds of Israelis—and at least 15 Americans—dead.

The U.S. government designated Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's office dismissed the new document as a "smoke screen," saying Hamas was continuing to invest its resources in preparing for war and inciting the children of the Gaza Strip to want to destroy Israel.

"The day Hamas stops digging tunnels and diverts its resources to civilian infrastructure and stop educating children to hate Israelis, that would be real change."

Monday's P.R. event was itself overshadowed by the consequences of the Palestinian group's bloody record, as the venue had to be changed more than once.

Originally it was to have been held at the Hotel City Center Rotana in Doha, but on Sunday Hamas announced it had to be moved "due to circumstances beyond our control related to the old venue," and would be held instead at the InterContinental Doha—The City hotel.

The New York-based Lawfare Project then wrote to the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), warning that by hosting a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization at one of its properties it risked violating U.S. law prohibiting the provision of "material support or resources" for terrorism.

On Monday, shortly before the event was scheduled to begin, Hamas said in a statement that "due to special circumstances, the InterContinental Hotel management has issued an apology at the last minute for being unable to host the meeting."

The event eventually went ahead, several hours late, at the Sheraton Grand Doha Hotel. The Lawfare Project in a letter also warned the Sheraton, a brand of Marriott International, that by hosting Hamas, it and its employees "would be recklessly exposing themselves to criminal and civil liability under U.S. federal law."

"Marriott International's corporate headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland, is squarely within the jurisdiction of the United States," it added pointedly.

Lawfare Project director Brooke Goldstein said later Monday that the organization had not heard back directly from either IHG or Sheraton/Marriott.

She said the Lawfare Project plans to get in touch with both the Sheraton/Marriott and relevant authorities in the United States, "to enforce the law."

Marriott International did not respond to queries by press time.

Hamas was established in 1987 as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, with a charter stating that all Muslims were duty-bound to join a jihad to destroy Israel. (Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal told Monday's event in Doha that Hamas shares the Muslim Brotherhood ideology, but is a completely independent Palestinian organization.)

Criteria laid down by the so-called Mideast Quartet—the U.S., United Nations, European Union and Russia—for it to be viewed as a legitimate peace part-

ner include a renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist, and willingness to abide by existing negotiated agreements.

The new 42-article document meets none of the three requirements: It reaffirms "armed resistance," rejects the Oslo accords and related agreements, and states unequivocally that "there shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity."

It also stresses that that " Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea"—i.e., the whole of Israel as well as the disputed territories.

But then—in what it evidently views as a concession—the document says Hamas accepts as a "formula for national consensus" the possibility of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 "Green Line" borders. It makes clear that does not mean the recognition of the "Zionist entity."

Addressing the launch, Meshaal said the group would not give up an inch of what he called Palestinian land, and would strive to "liberate" all of it.

In another apparent supposed concession, Hamas in the document identifies "Zionists," not Jews, as the foe.

" Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine."

By contrast, Hamas' 1988 charter refers repeatedly to Jews as the enemy, and also cites an infamous hadith about Muslims killing Jews.

Despite the document's explicit endorsement of "armed resistance" to "liberate" what it calls all of Palestine, and its insistence that "there is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil," some media outlets (including the *Wall Street Journal*, Reuters and UPI) reported that Hamas had dropped its calls for Israel's destruction.

"Until Hamas recognizes Israel's right to exist, its words are meaningless," House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.) said in response to the document.

"I will see to it that Hamas remains designated a terrorist organization as long as it continues to launch rocket attacks against Israeli civilians, remains an Iranian proxy, and engages in other acts that threaten the U.S. and Israel."



A Reuters article by Ahmed Mohamed and Lin Noueihed titled "Islamic State Seeks to Impose Religious Rules in Egypt's North Sinai" was posted at reuters.com on May 2, 2017. Following is the article.

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One Monday in early April, Shaher Saeed was driving south of the city of Arish in Egypt's North Sinai when he came upon a group of Islamic State militants who had stopped a truck carrying cigarettes.

"I saw them forcing the driver from the vehicle and stripping the upper part of his clothing before tying him to the door of one of their cars," said Saeed, who lives in the area. "They hit him on the back more than 10 times, then burned all the cartons of cigarettes . . . They let him go after warning him not to trade cigarettes again."

Interviews with residents of North Sinai and reviews of Islamic State videos suggest the group's local affiliate, known as Sinai Province, is seeking to impose its hardline interpretation of Islam on the local populace for the first time. According to Sinai Province videos reviewed by Reuters, the group has created a morality police force, known as a Hisba, to enforce strict rules against such behaviour as smoking, men shaving their beards or women exposing their faces.

Coupled with a sharp increase in attacks on Christians inside and outside its predominant area of operations in North Sinai, the developments mark a significant change of tactics for Egypt's Islamic State affiliate. Previously, the group had mostly attacked police, soldiers and their informants.

The group's widening geographical reach and shift in focus present a challenge for President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power in 2013 vowing to eradicate Islamist extremism and restore security. Despite government crackdowns that have seen hundreds of militants and protesters killed and thousands jailed, Islamic State is still mounting deadly attacks in Egypt.

The developments reflect how Islamic State is expanding operations in the Arab world's most populous country as the extremist group faces setbacks in Syria, Iraq and Libya, say analysts. While the group has failed to capture territory in Egypt, it is trying to stoke sectarian tensions and social unrest. An examination of what's happening in North Sinai, a region rarely accessible by reporters, shows the strategy is scoring some success.

A 25-minute video posted in late March on an internet channel often used by Islamic State showed jihadists announcing the creation of a Hisba in North Sinai, modelled on religious police units operating in parts of Iraq and Syria controlled by Islamic State. The video denounced Christians and Sufi Muslims, and showed enforcers, wearing jackets identifying them as Sinai Province Hisba, burning confiscated cigarettes and drugs and destroying tombs and shrines, which they consider un-Islamic.

In the video, an unmasked young militant warns that the Hisba will punish dissenters according to its interpretation of Islam. Enforcers are shown hitting one man with plastic tubing and beheading two elderly adherents of Sufi

Islam, accusing them of sorcery and apostasy. Reuters could not verify the authenticity of the video, which has since been removed from the internet.

Egypt's military spokesman declined to comment on the incidents in North Sinai, the thinly populated but strategic peninsula between the Suez Canal, Israel and Gaza where a legacy of government neglect has created fertile ground for radicalisation among disenfranchised locals. A security source downplayed concerns that the militants were capable of spreading the kind of sectarian violence that has torn apart Iraq.

"They are trying to have an impact, and we are not saying we have completely eradicated them, but they are weak," he said.

The latest shift in militants' tactics began in December, when an Islamic State suicide bomber killed 28 people at the main Coptic Christian cathedral in the heart of the capital Cairo. In February, Sinai Province declared in another video its intent to wipe out Egypt's Christians, who account for about 10 per cent of the 92 million population.

Christians have long faced sporadic attacks in Egypt, usually sparked by disputes over land, church-building or inter-religious love affairs. But the murder of seven Christians in North Sinai in the three weeks from Jan. 30 was different, more systematic and more insidious, officials and rights groups said at the time. About 175 families fled the area. Some of them told Reuters that hit lists of local Christians had been circulated online and pushed under doors.

Last month, Islamic State militants killed at least 45 people in two church bombings on Palm Sunday, prompting Sisi to declare a state of emergency.

Mokhtar Awad, research fellow in the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, said the new campaign against Christians was an effort to tear at the fabric of society and state when other means had failed. "A confluence of factors has seen this escalation happen now," he said. "They hope that this is the first step to basically unravel the country."

As well as launching attacks in major cities like Cairo, Alexandria and Tanta, where the church bombings took place, militants are ranging further afield inside North Sinai. Where fighting once centred around the cities of Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid, near the Gaza border, militants have carried out more attacks in and around Arish, the provincial capital about 52 km (32 miles) further west.

Since 2014, when homegrown Sinai militant group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledged allegiance to Islamic State, Egypt has resorted to ever more destructive means to root out the jihadists. It has smashed a network of tunnels used to smuggle weapons in from Gaza; razed hundreds of homes to create a no-man's land; and mounted numerous air strikes. Those policies have prevented militants seizing territory, but at a high cost for locals.

In the stretch of highway that separates Sheikh Zuweid from Rafah lie about 14 villages. Eleven of them, say locals, are now abandoned. A Reuters reporter

drove through three of the villages in October and saw empty streets, destroyed homes and orchards felled by the military to deprive militants of cover.

In the village of El Zahair, about half the residents had gone. Those who remained said they had little alternative.

"We live by planting the land near our house with tomatoes, beans, whatever and eating them. If I went to Arish, I have no money to rent a flat; and if I managed to find a flat, how would I find the money to eat?" said Suleiman Abu Hameed. "The security forces have besieged the terrorists but they have besieged us, too."

In the village of Moqataa near Sheikh Zuweid, mounds of rubble dotted the streets where houses once stood. Even buildings unscathed by the near-four-year-old war between Egypt's army and Sinai Province were abandoned.

Karam al-Zubeydi, a former resident of Moqataa, works at the Arish post office earning 1,200 Egyptian pounds (\$65.97) a month and has no immediate plans to return.

"At any moment, an air strike could kill me and my children" there, he said. The military had destroyed his olive trees, Zubeydi said. "So I planted tomatoes, but then I couldn't get fuel for the engine that draws water from my well, so I couldn't live there."

Zubeydi's children used to go school in Sheikh Zuweid, but it became too dangerous and time-consuming to send them, he said, because of the army and police checkpoints on the road. Many people who remain in the villages now educate their children at home, Zubeydi added.

On some stretches of road between Sheikh Zuweid and Arish, a coastal city that once drew visitors to its beaches, army and police checkpoints are so close together that one can be seen from another.

To prevent car bombings and shootings, security forces place concrete barriers in zigzag formations or set up defence lines reinforced with sandbags. Some checkpoints force cars to take short detours off the main road. Such measures, however, have not stopped Islamic State fighters from setting up their own impromptu roadblocks, where they check IDs, tell women to cover up and carry out public punishments, locals say.

One female teacher said she was on her way from Arish to the school where she works in Rafah in late February when three masked Islamic State fighters stopped her bus. Two got on and advised the women to veil their faces and travel with chaperones, she told Reuters.

A few days later it happened again, she said. This time, the advice to wear the niqab, or face veil, came with a threat of punishment by lashings or acid attacks for those who refused. The teacher said she did not comply.

"The situation is difficult. People are scared," the teacher said. She declined to give her full name for fear of retaliation by Islamic State fighters, who have beheaded locals they accuse of going against their austere interpretation of Islam or of collaborating with Israel or Egyptian security forces. She was one of two female teachers who told Reuters that Islamic State fighters had boarded their buses.

Ibrahim al-Tadawy, the top Education Ministry official in North Sinai, said teachers were travelling as normal in ministry-organised buses from Arish to schools in Rafah. "North Sinai is secure and stable and the educational process is taking place as usual," he told Reuters by telephone.

Despite the tight security, residents of southern Rafah said Islamic State fighters had confiscated satellite dishes, and residents of Arish said a shop which sold videos and DVDs had been attacked. Reuters was unable to track down the owner of the shop, now closed.

The military spokesman declined to comment. The security source said the militants were unable to impose themselves on society.

"This is all nonsense," the source said. "They come out for two minutes and film two cars and say, 'We set up a checkpoint.' This was all for the media, for people like you to write things that bear no relation to the reality on the ground."

While the army has had some success in purging jihadists from the border areas, militants have resurfaced elsewhere, according to police and residents based in Arish. They say the militants have moved into the city and are now all around them, hiding among the civilian population.

"The places they were living no longer exist or now have a large security presence. Now they have started to come out of the streets in the city to attack us and then disappear among the people," said Badr Ali, a policeman at an Arish checkpoint. "The problem is that the people, if they spot the gunmen, are too scared to even point to them."

Mona Barhoum, a local rights activist from Rafah, said that while Islamic State's affiliated militants don't control the region, "they are present, they pop up like a jack-in-the-box, they kill or kidnap someone and go back into hiding."



An editorial by Walter Williams titled "Trade Ignorance and Demagoguery" was posted at [jewishworldreview.com](http://jewishworldreview.com) on May 3, 2017. Following is the article.

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When we discuss international trade and balance of payments, there are two types of accounts. There is the current account, which includes goods and services imported and exported and receives the most political attention.

In 2016, the American people imported \$479 billion worth of goods and services from Chinese producers, and we sold \$170 billion worth of goods and services to Chinese customers. That made for a \$309 billion current account deficit. In other words, we purchase more goods and services from Chinese producers than Chinese consumers purchase from American producers.

How much of a problem is it when there is a deficit, or a negative imbalance, on current accounts?

Let's look at it.

I buy more from my grocer than he buys from me. Our Department of Defense buys more from General Dynamics than General Dynamics buys from our Department of Defense. With just a bit of thought, one could come up with thousands of examples in which one party buys more from another than that party buys from it—creating deficits in current accounts. But a current account deficit is always offset by a surplus somewhere else.

That somewhere else is known as the capital, or financial, account.

This account consists of direct foreign investment, such as the purchase or construction of machinery, buildings or whole manufacturing plants. The capital account also consists of portfolio investment, such as purchases of stocks and bonds.

In our capital account, the U.S. has a huge surplus with China. That means money is flowing into our country from China.

In other words, Chinese people are investing more money into the U.S.—in the forms of home and factory purchases, stocks, and bonds—than Americans are investing in China. Of necessity, the deficit that we have with China on our current account, ignoring timing issues, must equal the surplus we have with China on our capital account.

It turns out that foreigners own \$30 trillion worth of U.S. assets, such as stocks, Treasury bonds, manufacturing plants and real estate. One of the reasons that foreigners hold so much U.S. capital is that our country is one of the world's most attractive places to invest. Secondly, our capital markets, unlike our goods markets, are open to foreigners.

Foreigners can buy and sell any U.S. asset in any quantity, except in cases in which national security is an issue. One of the troubling aspects of foreign confidence in America is that foreigners invest so much in U.S. Treasury bonds.

That in turn gives the U.S. Congress greater latitude to engage in profligate spending. Japan owns \$1.1 trillion worth of U.S. Treasury bonds, and China owns \$1 trillion.

What about President Donald Trump's call to reduce our current account trade deficit?

By the way, we know that we're being deceived when a politician talks only about the current account deficit, without a word about the capital account surplus. If foreigners sell us fewer goods, they will earn fewer dollars.

With fewer dollars, they will be able to make fewer investments in America. But that's fine with politicians. The beneficiaries of trade restrictions are visible. Tariffs on tires, clothing and electronics will mean more profits and jobs and more votes for politicians.

The victims of trade restrictions, such as people in the real estate market and other areas where foreigners are investing, are less visible. Last year, Chinese citizens alone purchased record amounts of residential and commercial real estate, bringing their five-year real estate investment total to more than \$110 billion (<http://tinyurl.com/z3nd4fn>).

Let's put trade deficits into historical perspective. If trade deficits were something for a president to fret about, every U.S. president from 1790 to today ought to have been fretting.

For most of our history, we have had current account deficits (<http://tinyurl.com/jczqrhu>). I should say every president except Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose administrations ushered in the Great Depression. Nine out of the 10 years of the economic downturn of the 1930s, our nation had a current account trade surplus.

Should we reproduce the economic policies of that era and re-create the "wonderful" trade surplus?



An editorial by Ann Coulter titled "Swamp People 47; Trump 0" was posted at townhall.com on May 3, 2017. Following is the article.

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If this is the budget deal we get when Republicans control the House, the Senate and the presidency, there's no point in ever voting for a Republican again.

Not only is there no funding for a wall, but—thanks to the deft negotiating skills of House Speaker Paul Ryan—the bill actually prohibits money from being spent on a wall.

At a CYA press conference on Tuesday, Trump's ridiculously chipper budget director, Mick Mulvaney, described the bill's prohibition on building a wall as a *major* win. (At least Mulvaney said it in English, unlike his all-Spanish 2014 townhall.)

True, there will be no wall. But the Democrats graciously agreed to allow the administration to fix broken parts of any existing fences on up to 40 miles of our 3,000-mile border.

The other big wins, according to Mulvaney, are:

1) more defense spending, which is fantastic news, because I was worried Boeing and Lockheed Martin CEOs were falling behind Mark Zuckerberg with their gluttonous salaries; and

2) school choice, an obsession of Washington wonks that is hated out in America, where parents move to high-tax towns for the express purpose of avoiding schools full of disaffected urban youth, and the disaffected urban youth don't want to spend two hours on a bus every day.

But Mulvaney assures us that this monstrosity of a spending bill has set things up beautifully for the next budget negotiation in October.

That has become the GOP's official motto: "Next time!"

We can never win this time. Instead, Republicans' idea is always to surrender this time, in hopes that their gentle manliness will be rewarded by their mortal enemies next time. Then, next time comes, and Republicans again surrender in hopes of currying favor with the Democrats and the media for the next time.

Mulvaney's most disturbing comment was to say that what upset Trump the most was the Democrats' "spiking the football" on this deal.

Apparently, Trump's fine with no wall—and everything else in a bill straight out of George Soros' dream journal—if only the Democrats hadn't been so rude as to tell the public about it. When your main complaint is that the other side is gloating too much, maybe you're not that great a negotiator.

Yeah, sure, it's only 100 days in, it's an artificial deadline, the media is dying to say Trump has failed and so on.

Except: Planning for the wall should have begun on Nov. 9, and a spade should have been put into the earth to begin building it the day after Trump's inauguration. Now, it's 100 days later, and we still don't have the whisper of a prospect of a wall.

Moreover, this isn't one random bill funding Planned Parenthood (which this bill does). This is the budget deal. There won't be another one like it until next October.

That's a spectacular failure. Democrats have got to be pinching themselves, thinking, Am I dreaming this?

It's theoretically possible that Trump could still build a wall, but he's just massively lengthened the odds of ever prevailing. Sure, you can let the other team build a 20-point lead in first half and still come back to beat them, but it's a lot easier if you don't go into halftime 20 points down.

Trump entered the presidency with the only kind of power that matters. He didn't owe Wall Street a thing. He didn't owe anyone—not donors, lobbyists nor any political party. What he had was the people, passionately on his side.

But as soon as he got into office, Trump started giving away his miraculous, unprecedented power. Hey, Wall Street! Even though you didn't give me any money, is it too late to be your friend?

No amount of abandoning his supporters will get Trump anywhere with Wall Street, Hollywood or the media. Their ferocity will simply shift to ridicule.

Admittedly, Trump has the enormous handicap of having to work through congressional Republicans, who are feckless cowards. If Speaker Ryan and Senate Leader Mitch McConnell had been around for Reagan's firing of the air traffic controllers, they would have been hysterically screaming, No! You can't do that—the planes will crash!

This isn't new information. We knew Washington Republicans were useless. That's why we elected such a comically improbable president as Donald J. Trump.

The deal was that we were getting the Hollywood version of a New York businessman: an uncouth, incurious rube—who would be ruthless in getting whatever he wanted.

In addition to being the only candidate for president in either party taking America's side on trade, immigration, jobs and crime, what set Trump apart was his promise that we would finally win.

Remember? There would be so much winning, we were going to get "sick and tired of winning," and beg him, "Please, please, we can't win anymore . . . It's too much. It's not fair to everybody else."

We're not winning. We're losing, and we're losing on the central promise of Trump's campaign.

How would Trump, the businessman, react if an underling charged with developing a new golf course could never break ground?

What if the subordinate's progress reports sounded like this: I have given 21 speeches to various chambers of commerce and neighborhood groups, assuring them that there's going to be a golf course. Everywhere I go, I say, "Don't worry about it. It's going to be built!" I have started a commission to study developing a golf course. I have put up a sign saying, "Golf course coming!" And I have caved, and caved, and caved—so now our opponents know what good guys we are.

Trump would fire that employee so fast your head would spin.

We want the ruthless businessman we were promised.



An article by Matt Vespa titled "Rush Limbaugh to VP Pence: What's the Point in Voting Republican If They Keep Voting for Democratic Spending Bills?" was posted at townhall.com on May 4, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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Yesterday, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh had Vice President Mike Pence on his show, where he asked a very pointed question about the latest

spending bill: why even vote Republican if this is what we're going to get from our representatives in Congress.

The government will remain open until September thanks to a \$1 trillion spending bill that cuts nothing. Planned Parenthood and Obamacare programs are funded. The border wall really isn't mentioned either. No wonder why this is being hailed as a Democratic win. It just proves that Democrats still have a lot of pull up on the Hill.

Following are excerpts from Reuters.

- The U.S. Congress, bitterly divided for years along party lines, may be mapping a bipartisan path forward that skirts around President Donald Trump when he refuses to engage constructively with lawmakers, Democrats and some lobbyists said on Monday.
- The path was discernible in a nearly \$1.2 trillion federal spending deal carved out over the weekend to avert a government shutdown. It had Democratic fingerprints all over it, even though Republicans control Congress and the White House.
- White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said Trump will sign the 2017 budget bill when he receives it from Congress on Thursday or Friday. Trump, in an interview with Bloomberg on Monday, said he was "very happy" with the deal announced late on Sunday.
- Democrats claimed victory on issue after issue in the agreement, which will keep the lights on in Washington through the end of the federal fiscal year on Sept. 30, provided it holds up and wins final approval as expected.
- Trump scored a partial win, getting a commitment for up to \$15 billion in additional funding for a military buildup. That was about half of what he originally asked for.
- The spending deal preserved funding for healthcare provider Planned Parenthood, which has drawn Republican ire because it performs abortions; for the Obamacare healthcare law; and for an array of environmental and other domestic programs Trump wanted to slash.

The bill is also 1,665 pages longer than the \$1 trillion Obama stimulus bill that was passed in 2009. House Democrats helped carry the GOP bill to passage, with 178 voting for the measure. They were joined by 131 Republicans, though 103 of them voted against it, along with 15 Democrats.

So, what did the vice president have to say?

Well, it was to tout the increase in military spending. Rush aptly noted that a \$21 billion increase in military funding is a small price to pay as a Democrat when you get the refugee resettlement program, EPA programs, sanctuary cities, and Planned Parenthood fully funded.



An article by Peter Roff titled "Trump is Winning the 100 Days" was posted at usnews.com on April 25, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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The tradition of taking stock of presidential accomplishments after the first 100 days of a new administration goes back to Franklin Roosevelt, who invited the assessment as part of his effort to combat what has become known as The Great Depression.

The public demanded action and Roosevelt gave it to them, concerns about the constitutionality of his actions be damned. That was for later. His actions were as important symbolically as they were from the standpoint of policy. His predecessor, a multi-millionaire civil engineer who had never held elective office and had a reputation for being the world's great solver of even greater problems, was unable to do anything to stop the rising unemployment, closure of banks and growing panic commonly associated with the depression's early years.

FDR took up the task vigorously—and the public believed he had matters well in hand despite—as economic reporter Amity Shales points out in her well-reviewed 2008 book "The Forgotten Man"—the massive government interventions in the economy that originated with him did little to actually avert the collapse. It took America's entry in World War II to do that.

Nevertheless, the benchmark stuck. Every president since has seen his first 100 days in office scrutinized with an intensity and efficiency usually not seen in the American media. It gives the cheerleaders a chance to trumpet the successes while the detractors use it as an opportunity to pronounce the new chief executive a failure.

With that in mind, some senior White House officials and administration surrogates are suggesting it would be unfair to hold Trump to the same 100 day standard as his predecessors.

There's some validity in this, as almost everyone expected to be evaluating the performance of a certain other person right now, so everyone on the left and on the right and in the media has been scrambling to put things in perspective and explain why the wrong person won.

Look back to 2008. Rush Limbaugh took a lot of heat from the progressive establishment—which includes just about all the major newspapers, many elected officials, a bunch of television talking heads and most of the television news networks—because he said he wanted Barack Obama "to fail."

As anyone who bothered to listen would have heard the nation's most influential radio commentator say the feeling had nothing to do with Obama personally. It was just as a conservative he could not stand by and cheer while

the new president tried to implement a radically progressive agenda that was wrong for America.

After 2016 the same people who rode to Obama's defense eight years previously are now cheering for Trump to fail because they don't like him. It's not a question of policy; whether they will admit it or not, it is intensely personal.

Trump's first 100 days reviews were largely sketched out on day one of his presidency with only the details to be filled in later. The Kennedy-Clinton-Obama liberal clique that populates so much of the influencing class is determined to drive Trump down into an oblivion they believe he richly deserves no matter what it does to the country.

Speaking of the country, however, they appear to be with the new president—and in ways one might not expect given the almost universally negative coverage he has received since coming into office. As my estimable colleague Kenneth Walsh wrote elsewhere here this week, "The latest poll conducted by ABC News and *The Washington Post* finds that, as he approaches his 100th day in office Saturday—a traditional milestone for assessing new presidents—96 percent of those who supported him in last November's election say they would do it again today. His approval rating among those who voted for him is 94 percent. This is a positive development for Trump just when he needs it most."

So we know, going into day 100, Trump's base is holding.

The *Post's* analysis of its own poll says quite clearly the Democrats are almost as out of touch with American people as they believe Trump may be.

■ "The 28 percent who say the party is in touch with concerns of most Americans is down from 48 percent in 2014 and the biggest drop is among self-identified Democrats, from 83 percent saying they are in touch to just 52 percent today."

The other key point, which the *Post* buries at the end of its own story, is its own numbers show the surprise outcome from November 2016 would likely be repeated today.

■ "The survey finds little evidence voters would render a different verdict from last November, when Trump won key states needed to secure victory in the Electoral College despite Clinton winning more votes nationwide."

To put some data behind it, 46 percent of the just over 1,000 random U.S. adults participating in the survey said they voted for Clinton, while 43 percent voted for Trump. "Asked how they would vote if the election were held today, 43 say they would support Trump and 40 percent say Clinton."

If that's an accurate reflection of the national mood, Trump—who certainly looks like he's delivering on his promise to be a different kind of president and to "drain the swamp"—is winning his first 100 days even if the swamp is fighting back harder than most people thought possible.



An article by Annalisa Merelli, Max De Haldevang and Sarah Slobin titled "Trump Made 28 Promises for His First 100 Days; We Made Him a Scorecard" was posted at qz.com on April 29, 2017. Following are excerpts of the article.

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The build-up to US president Donald Trump's 100th day in office has been, as is his custom, conflicted.

Worried about negative publicity, Trump has recently tried to downplay the 100-day mark as an "artificial barrier." Which it arguably is—but he set it himself, declaring a bold set of 28 promises to fulfil in 100 days in his "Contract with the American Voter."

Over the past week the White House has been working overtime in an effort to get something substantive accomplished before the milestone. A hasty wish list of tax cuts—which almost certainly won't be passed in its current form—was sent to Congress, a last-ditch effort at repealing Obamacare came and went, and the administration released an error-strewn press release lauding "100 Days of Historic Accomplishments."

As we did after 50 days, Quartz has gone through his original contract—a mixture of easy wins, direct guidelines, and weighty legislative ideas—and graded Trump on how well he's doing, using a scale of his favorite catchphrases:

- Tremendous! = Complete success
- Nice! = Good result
- Politics! = Something done/compromise made
- Failing!= Little done/minimal success
- Sad! = Nothing Done/Disappointing result
- Total disaster! = Things are worse than before

Overall verdict: The new administration got off to a flying start, with a series of executive orders that frustrated opponents and set in motion a decent number of his easier campaign promises. That trend has slowed dramatically, however, as a series of scandals concerning the campaign's alleged contacts with Russia and White House infighting dominated the news. Meanwhile, the inexperience of Trump, his cabinet, and his staff has bogged down decision-making and execution.

Of the 10 pieces of incredibly ambitious legislation Trump promised to deliver, the only one he really attempted was a replacement for Obamacare. And the storied dealmaker couldn't even persuade his own party to vote for that.

Trump has achieved some success repealing a slew of Obama executive orders and generally chopping away at the size of government, while he earned foreign-policy plaudits for bombing a Syrian air base and pushing China to harden its stance towards North Korea.

But, when measuring what Trump has done versus what he promised for the first 100 days, one word from his vocabulary fits best: Sad!

## Trump 100 days scorecard

### Section 1—executive order priorities

Section one includes a set of 18 measures, most of which can be done through executive orders or public statements.

■ **Promise 1:** Constitutional amendment for term limits on members of Congress.

Rating: Sad! This would have been almost impossible to pass, but Trump didn't bother trying. Nor did he publicly back Republican senator Ted Cruz's proposed amendment on the matter.

■ **Promise 2:** Freeze hiring of federal employees—with exceptions for military, public safety, and health—to "reduce the federal workforce through attrition."

Rating: Sad! Trump put this into action with a 90-day freeze on his first full day in office (paywall). However, he lifted the freeze 10 days early. More importantly, to have any real effect, a hiring freeze would have to last much, much longer: Between Jan. 1 and March 1 (the latest date we have data for), the federal workforce fell by around 1,000 people out of 2.82 million. That's 0.04%.

■ **Promise 3:** For every new federal regulation, an existing one must be eliminated.

Rating: Tremendous! Done and Done. Trump issued an executive order demanding exactly this; and then another one calling for agencies to cull as many costly regulations as possible. He's facing a lawsuit from groups who say it hurts workers and the environment, but he's already gone beyond what he promised.

■ **Promise 4:** Five-year ban on White House and Congressional officials becoming lobbyists after government service.

Rating: Sad! Trump has made improvements to some of Obama's ethics rules, but he's weakened other important ones, such as a rule that forced lobbyists to wait two years before getting a White House job. Former officials can also still lobby agencies they haven't worked for and Trump's done nothing to stop former Congressional officials becoming lobbyists.

■ **Promise 5:** Ban White House officials from lobbying on behalf of a foreign government for life.

Rating: Politics! We gave Trump a "Nice!" rating on this after 50 days, because his five-year lobbying ban also stops employees from lobbying for other

governments. He's since gone down a grade, however, because top campaign staffers, like ex-campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, are actively seeking work for foreign governments. Trump has not opposed that publicly and still speaks regularly to Lewandowski.

■ **Promise 6:** A complete ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections.

Rating: Sad! Foreigners already can't donate to US political campaigns. Trump hasn't done anything to stop foreign citizens raising money from US citizens.

■ **Promise 7:** Announce his intention to renegotiate NAFTA or withdraw from the deal.

Rating: Total disaster! Trump did announce these intentions on the White House website. He then seemed poised to declare that the US would officially leave, but quickly backed down following a change of heart by his own party and calls from the leaders of Canada and Mexico. Leaving is now off the table for the time being (it's unclear if he even has the power to unilaterally do so).

■ **Promise 8:** Announcing withdrawal from the TPP.

Rating: Tremendous! Not a difficult promise to fulfill, but Trump kept his word and announced America's withdrawal from the deal (paywall) on his first full working day in office.

■ **Promise 9:** Direct the Treasury secretary to label China a currency manipulator.

Rating: Total disaster! As tensions with North Korea escalate, it's become abundantly clear that Trump needs China as an ally, leading to a total backtrack on his earlier rhetoric. While he's earned some strong plaudits for this turnaround, his new foreign policy strategy is the complete opposite of his campaign pledge.

■ **Promise 10:** Identify all foreign trading abuses that unfairly impact American workers and use every tool under American and international law to end those abuses immediately.

Rating: Sad! On Mar. 31, Trump signed two executive orders meant to identify foreign trade abuses within 90 days. The president has since launched into looking at steel and aluminum imports, but the only trade measure he's officially adopted imposes a 20% import tax on Canadian lumber.

■ **Promise 11:** Lift the restrictions on the production of \$50 trillion dollars' worth of American energy reserves, including shale, oil, natural gas, and clean coal.

Rating: Tremendous! Trump is still debating whether to withdraw from the Paris agreement, but he has already revoked several regulations that limit the polluting effects of energy production. He has also rescinded president Obama's climate action plan.

■ **Promise 12:** Lift the Obama-Clinton roadblocks and allow vital energy infrastructure projects, like the Keystone Pipeline, to move forward.

Rating: Politics! The administration has approved the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, but it may be some time before work begins (if it ever does).

■ **Promise 13:** Cancel billions in payments to UN climate change programs and use the money to fix America's water and environmental infrastructure.

Rating: Sad! Trump's budget, if approved, threatens dramatic cuts to international aid and UN funding. However he won't have an easy time getting these cuts approved, especially considering some members of his own party (senator John McCain, for instance) oppose them.

■ **Promise 14:** Cancel every unconstitutional executive action, memorandum and order issued by President Obama.

Rating: Tremendous! Trump didn't need to overturn any of Obama's actions to keep his promise because Obama's existing executive actions are all constitutional. And yet, he overturned a whole lot, signing a heap of laws under the congressional review act.

■ **Promise 15:** Begin the process of selecting a replacement for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia from one of the 20 judges on my list.

Rating: Tremendous! Trump didn't just select a replacement: Neil Gorsuch was successfully confirmed on April 20, in what remains arguably the most significant achievement of Trump's administration thus far.

■ **Promise 16:** Cancel all federal funding to "sanctuary cities."

Rating: Sad! Trump's executive order to stop funding to "sanctuary cities" was halted by a judge on April 25. The administration has never clearly defined exactly what a "sanctuary city" is.

■ **Promise 17:** Begin removing the more than two million criminal illegal immigrants from the country and cancel visas to foreign countries that won't take them back.

Rating: Sad! Trump has expanded the types of convictions that can lead to the removal of undocumented immigrants. However, so far that hasn't got him anywhere near his goal: repatriations are actually down 1.2% (p. 5) from last year.

■ **Promise 18:** Suspend immigration from terror-prone regions where vetting cannot safely occur. All vetting of people coming into the country will be considered "extreme vetting."

Rating: Total disaster! Courts have halted both of Trump's executive orders aimed at limiting immigration from a number of Middle Eastern countries and stopping refugee intake.

Here is a summary of these 18 items.

- Tremendous—5
- Nice—0
- Politics—2
- Failure—0
- Sad—8
- Total disaster—3

## Section 2—pieces of legislation

Section two includes 10 pieces of legislation that Mr. Trump promised to have introduced and fought for by the end of the first 100 days.

- **Promise 19:** Middle class tax relief and simplification act.

Here are six aims and promises:

1. Grow economy at 4% per year, create 25m new jobs.
2. 35% tax cut for middle class family with two children.
3. Biggest cuts for middle class.
4. Number of tax brackets reduced from seven to three; forms greatly simplified.
5. Business tax rate reduced from 35% to 15%.
6. One-time 10% repatriation offer for untaxed corporate money being held overseas.

Rating: Failing! In a last-minute dash to fulfill his promises, Trump sent the briefest of brief plans for tax cuts and reform to Congress on April 26 (pay-wall). In its current form, however, this plan will make Democrats furious and irk Republican budget hawks, giving it basically zero chance of passing.

- **Promise 20:** End the Offshoring Act.

Aims and promises: Establish tariffs to discourage companies from laying off workers in order to relocate abroad.

Rating: Sad! Trump has taken no legislative action here at all. So far, the only lip service he's paid this promise is an utterly vacuous "Buy American, Hire American" executive order.

- **Promise 21:** American Energy and Infrastructure Act.

Aims and promises: Spur \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment over 10 years.

Rating: Sad! Trump has done nothing to further this promise. Although certainly achievable, he'd still have to win over swathes of GOP budget hawks to pass such a large act.

- **Promise 22:** School Choice and Education Opportunity Act.

Here are four aims and promises.

1. Redirect education dollars to give parents the right to send their kids to the school of their choice.
2. End Common Core and bring education supervision to local communities.
3. Expand vocational and technical education.
4. Make two- and four-year college more affordable.

Rating: Failing! Trump signed an executive order that limits the federal government's involvement in education, and the president has overturned a number of Obama's education-related actions, such as one providing guidance for transgender students. Trump's budget proposal would cut the public school budget dramatically, while investing in private schools, but these measures do nothing for affordability of college (or grade school), plus no intervention has been made to expand training.

■ **Promise 23:** Repeal and replace Obamacare Act.

Rating: Total disaster!

Trump's own party couldn't get the numbers to pass the American Health Care Act (AHCA), his Obamacare replacement, and attempts to revamp it have had no success so far.

■ **Promise 24:** Affordable Childcare and Eldercare Act.

Aims and promises: Allows Americans to deduct childcare and eldercare from their taxes

Rating: Sad! Trump has incorporated a child care tax break into his budget proposal, but no concrete action has been taken so far.

■ **Promise 25:** End Illegal Immigration Act.

Here are three aims and promises.

1. Fully-funds the construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border.
2. Gets Mexico to pay for the wall.
3. Establishes harsher punishments for illegally reentering the US after deportation and overstaying visas.

Rating: Sad! So far, the wall has not been financed, Mexico has forcefully refused to pay for it, and it's very unlikely that a budget containing financing for the wall will make it through Congress.

■ **Promise 26:** Restoring Community Safety Act.

Here are two aims and promises.

1. Reduce surging crime, drugs and violence by creating a task force on violent crime.
2. Increasing funding for programs that train and assist local police.

Rating: Sad! The task force was created, but the surge in violent crime it's supposed to be addressing does not actually exist. Training programs have also not seen an increase in funding, and any attempt to cut funding to "sanctuary cities" will further limit local law enforcement resources.

■ **Promise 27:** Restoring National Security Act.

Here are four aims and promises.

1. Expands military investment; ends the defense sequester (mandatory cuts introduced in 2011 to keep federal spending capped).
2. Gives veterans the choice of public health treatment or going to a private doctor.
3. Protects infrastructure from cyber-attacks.
4. Introduces new screening measures for immigration.

Rating: Politics! There was no overarching legislation here, but notice a few facts.

1. Trump's budget proposal includes a massive \$54 billion boost in military spending, which he says will end the sequester.
2. Trump signed a law to temporarily extend the current troubled program on veterans health choices, while his Veterans Affairs secretary works on a longterm solution.
3. On cyber, Trump separately promised to have a hacking protection plan within 90 days of taking office. However, he didn't even seem to have a team in place by that date, and a promised executive action on cyber hasn't materialized.
4. Two attempts at slowing immigration have been deemed unconstitutional by federal judges.

In short: Any level of success here hangs on whether he can get his proposed military spending increases passed by Congress.

■ **Promise 28:** Clean Up Corruption in Washington Act.

Aim and promise: Ethics reforms to "drain the swamp."

Rating: Total disaster! Allegations of widespread ethics violations have been a constant in Trump's short time as president. He has failed to meet basic ethics standards like publishing his tax returns or conducting White House ethics training. He has hired plenty of former lobbyists and Washington old hands, refused to release (paywall) White House visitor logs, and been accused of bringing in his own Wall Street "swamp dwellers."

Here is a summary of these 10 items.

- Tremendous—0
- Nice—0
- Politics—1
- Failure—2
- Sad—5
- Total disaster—2



An article by Justin Holcomb titled "Here's the List of Republicans Who Voted 'No' on Healthcare Bill" was posted at townhall.com on May 4, 2017. Following is the article.

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The U.S. House of Representatives voted to repeal and replace Obamacare on Thursday, effectively beginning the stages of removing Barack Obama's landmark legislation from law.

The bill passed by a 217-213 margin with 20 Republicans voting against.

Along with every Democratic member, here is the list of Republicans who voted 'no' against the measure.

AZ-5, Andy Biggs

CO-6, Mike Coffman

FL-27, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

KY-4, Thomas Massie

NC-3, Walter B. Jones

NJ-2, Frank A. LoBiondo

NJ-4, Christopher H. Smith

NJ-7, Leonard Lance

NY-11, Dan Donovan

NY-24, John Katko

OH-10, Michael R. Turner

OH-14, David Joyce

PA-6, Ryan A. Costello

PA-7, Patrick Meehan

PA-8, Brian Fitzpatrick

PA-15, Charlie Dent

TX-23, Will Hurd

VA-10, Barbara Comstock

WA-3, Jaime Herrera Beutler

WA-8, Dave Reichert



An article by Leah Barkoukis titled “DWS: How Much Obama’s Paid for Speeches is None of Your Business” was posted at townhall.com on May 4, 2017. Following is the article.

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Former DNC chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz defended former President Obama over the amount of money he will rake in for an upcoming Wall Street-backed speech.

“It is none of anyone’s business what someone who is a member of the private sector decides to accept in terms of compensation, with all due respect to anyone who chooses to comment publicly on what Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, or anyone earns as a member of the private sector. It’s just, like, MYOB [mind your own business],” Wasserman Schultz said on CNN Tuesday.

Obama accepted a \$400,000 speaking fee for a health care conference in September run by Cantor Fitzgerald LP.

Those in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party—Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders—have commented on the Wall Street-backed speech, with the former saying she was “troubled” by it and the latter noting it was “unfortunate.”

Wasserman Schultz said people’s records in office is more important than the amount they’re paid for a speaking event.

“I look more at the public record of someone like Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. And their public record is pristine. They both fought back against the big banks and their practices and I have every confidence in the service they both provided,” the former DNC chair said.

Obama’s spokesman also defended the transaction.

“With regard to this or any speech involving Wall Street sponsors, I’d just point out that in 2008, Barack Obama raised more money from Wall Street

than any candidate in history—and still went on to successfully pass and implement the toughest reforms on Wall Street since FDR,” Eric Schultz said in a statement.



***Isaiah 55:6-11***—“Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”