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Date: Fri, 10 Jan 2020 17:21:51 +0000

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The Daily 202

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It's personal for the lead sponsors of the Iran war powers resolutions



Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) gives an interview at the Capitol.
(Susan Walsh/AP)

Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) gives an interview at the Capitol. (Susan Walsh/AP)



BY JAMES HOHMANN
with Mariana Alfaro

THE BIG IDEA: Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) is a former CIA analyst who served three tours in Iraq as one of the American government's foremost experts on Iranian-backed Shiite militias before being appointed as an assistant secretary of defense with a focus on the Middle East. But that's not the only experience that motivated Slotkin to draft the resolution limiting President Trump's ability to take additional military action against Iran without congressional approval, which [passed](#) the House last night on a mostly party-line vote.

The freshman congresswoman's son-in-law is an active-duty Army officer stationed at the al-Asad air base in western Iraq, which the Iranians hit with 11 ballistic missiles this week in retaliation for the drone strike that killed Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. Slotkin's husband also served 30 years in the Army, retiring as a colonel, and her stepdaughter followed in his footsteps. She was not long ago commissioned as an active-duty Army officer.

“For me, this is not a theoretical exercise,” Slotkin explained on Thursday evening. “If our loved ones are going to be sent to fight in any protracted war, the president owes the American public a conversation. ... Congress has long abdicated its responsibility as laid out in the Constitution to make the hard decisions we owe our troops.”

Such deeply personal investment in the war effort blunts hyperbolic attacks from Republican lawmakers – especially those who have never served in uniform and don't have relatives on the battlefield – that opposing the escalation of conflict in the Middle East or supporting Congress asserting its constitutional role is somehow unpatriotic.

The debate now moves to the Senate, which could vote as early as next week, where it faces a more uncertain future. At least four Republicans need to vote for the resolution to ensure passage when it comes up, as early as next week. Whatever the Senate passes, if anything, would then need to be approved by the House before going to Trump, who has promised a veto that there would not be the votes to override.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), the lead sponsor of the accompanying resolution in that chamber, isn't just a member of the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees. **Kaine's oldest son, Nat, is an active-duty Marine infantry officer who has been deployed overseas multiple times.**



-- The Republican messaging machine has gone into overdrive this week, with what has felt at times like a competition among party leaders to see who could offer up the most incendiary quote questioning the motives of Democratic lawmakers concerned about the possibility of a full-scale war against Iran without congressional approval.

"This is a meaningless vote that only sends the wrong message that the House Democrats would rather stand with the socialist base than stand against Iran," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said at his weekly news conference on Thursday.

"Whether you mean to or not, you're empowering the enemy," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, referring to lawmakers who vote for the resolution.

"They are in love with terrorists," said Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.), the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee. "We see that they mourn Soleimani more than they mourn our Gold Star families," Collins told Lou Dobbs on [Fox Business](#).

-- Democrats have decided not to just brush aside comments like this. "I left literal parts of my body in Iraq, where I was fighting terrorists," said Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), who has used a wheelchair since her Black Hawk helicopter was shot down over Iraq in 2004. "Donald Trump spent months attacking an ACTUAL Gold Star Family," she added on Twitter. "[Collins] should be ashamed of himself for perpetuating this offensive lie."

Duckworth is referring to when Trump, who received a deferment for "bone spurs" to avoid being drafted during the Vietnam War, mocked Khizr and Ghazala Khan. Their son Humayun was killed in action as an Army captain in Iraq. The Khans

spoke out against Trump at the Democratic convention in 2016, expressing concern about his proposed ban on Muslims entering the United States.

-- Collins apologized this morning. "Let me be clear: I do not believe Democrats are in love with terrorists," he [tweeted](#). "As someone who served in Iraq in 2008, I witnessed firsthand the brutal death of countless soldiers who were torn to shreds by this vicious terrorist. Soleimani was nothing less than an evil mastermind who viciously killed and wounded thousands of Americans. These images will live with me for the rest of my life, but that does not excuse my response on Wednesday evening."

-- During the Thursday evening debate on the House floor, several Democrats emphasized their credentials as they made the case for the war powers resolution. Polls suggest that Democrats have tightened their [traditional gap](#) on which party is more trusted to handle national security. They won control of the House in the 2018 midterm elections thanks, in part, to a large cohort of young military veterans in swing districts. There are 96 veterans in [this Congress](#), including 30 Democrats and 66 Republicans.

One of those freshmen who delivered the majority is Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.). He defeated a GOP incumbent in the Denver suburbs by touting his Army combat experience. "I have often heard folks say that now is not the time to discuss the use of force or the decision to send our men and women to fight," said Crow. "I heard that in 2003 when I was carrying a rifle in Baghdad. I heard it again in 2004 and 2005 when I was leading my unit through the mountains of Afghanistan. And I am hearing it again today in the halls of Congress. In the last 19 years, more than 7,000 Americans have given their lives in these conflicts, 53,000 have been wounded and we have spent over \$4 trillion dollars of taxpayer money.

"Do not believe the fearmongering," Crow concluded. "I may have laid down my rifle, but my oath to this country endures. I will fight to ensure that we are

having a discussion about when to send our men and women, our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, into harm's way."



Pelosi on Iran: 'We must avoid war'

-- Slotkin left her Pentagon job to move home to Michigan after Trump took office. Then she toppled a longtime GOP incumbent the next year in the midterms. She faces a tough reelection battle this fall in a district Trump carried comfortably in 2016. The National Republican Congressional Committee has taken to calling her "pro-Iran Slotkin" in news releases. "Sit down, Elissa," [one missive](#) from the House GOP campaign arm said this week.

Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.), the former vice president's daughter, called into a news talk radio station in Slotkin's district on Thursday morning to attack her for the "appalling" resolution, which she said "will send a message to the Iranians that the country is not united behind the president." Cheney told [WILS in Lansing, Mich.](#), that Slotkin's resolution showed "there's a big difference between what she's saying at home and what she does when she gets here to Washington."


In a speech on the House floor before the vote on resolution, Slotkin pushed back forcefully on these criticisms. "Soleimani was the lead architect of much of Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East and throughout the world," she said. "To that end, with Iran, or with any other adversary, the United States always has the inherent right and obligation to self-defense against imminent armed attacks. Always!"

Slotkin lamented that the country has been at war for nearly two decades, but Congress has only voted twice in that time to authorize the use of military force: in 2001 and 2002. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) was the lone

member of Congress to vote against the authorization for the use of military force immediately after the 9/11 attacks, which is still being cited more than 18 years later as a legal rationale for U.S. activities in the Middle East. Only 1 in 4 House members today were in Congress [back then](#).

That 2001 authorization has been cited dozens of times, by three different presidents now, to justify deploying American troops to a list of countries that includes Libya, Turkey, Georgia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, the Philippines and Cuba. The language of Slotkin's nonbinding resolution instructs Trump "to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran or any part of its government or military" unless Congress either formally declares war or there is "an imminent armed attack upon the United States."

"When it comes to the matter of longer-term war, we have a constitutional responsibility to authorize the use of military force," Slotkin reasoned. "The framers of our Constitution rightly believed that the power to declare war belongs in the Congress because this would ensure that the American people, through the legislators they elected, would weigh the most significant decision a government can make."

 Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) walks in the Capitol after casting his vote on the House floor. (Matt Rourke/AP)

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) walks in the Capitol after casting his vote on the House floor. (Matt Rourke/AP)

-- Slotkin's resolution passed 224 to 194, with the support of three Republicans plus independent Justin Amash of Michigan and the opposition of eight Democrats. The most notable vote for the resolution came from Rep. Matt Gaetz, one of Trump's most outspoken allies on Capitol Hill. "I take a back seat to no member of this body when it comes to defending the president," he

said in a floor speech shortly before the vote. "This resolution offers no criticism of the president. It doesn't criticize the president's attacks on Soleimani. As a matter of fact, this resolution doesn't even say Soleimani's name in it."

Gaetz's district includes the naval air station in Pensacola, Fla. "I represent more troops than any other member of this body," he said. "I buried one of them earlier today at Arlington, and that sergeant died a patriot and a hero. If the members of our armed services have the courage to go fight and die in these wars, as Congress we ought to have the courage to vote for them or against them. It's ludicrous to suggest that we are impairing the troops from doing their job by not doing our job articulated in the Constitution."

The other Republicans who voted for Slotkin's resolution were Rep. Francis Rooney (Fla.), who is retiring, and Rep. Tom Massie (Ky.), a libertarian-minded iconoclast.

Two of the eight Democrats who voted against it are freshmen who served in the armed forces: Reps. Elaine Luria (Va.) and Max Rose (N.Y.). And Rep. Stephanie Murphy (Fla.) was formerly a national security specialist at the Defense Department. The others who voted no are moderates from difficult-to-win districts, including Ben McAdams (Utah), Anthony Brindisi (N.Y.), Joe Cunningham (S.C.), Kendra Horn (Okla.) and Josh Gottheimer (N.J.).



Trump trashes Adam Schiff during Ohio rally



-- Trump ripped the Slotkin resolution during a rally last night in Toledo, Ohio, insisting he doesn't need to get permission from Congress to protect America. "[Soleimani] was a bloodthirsty terrorist ... and he's no longer a terrorist. He's dead, and yet now I see ... the radical-left Democrats have expressed outrage

over the termination of this horrible terrorist,” the president said. “Instead, they should be outraged by Soleimani's savage crimes and the fact that his countless victims were denied justice for so long.”

Trump singled out Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who as the leader of the House Intelligence Committee, is a member of the Gang of Eight that's entitled to briefings on the nation's biggest secrets. Schiff spearheaded the investigation that led to Trump's impeachment for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, and the congressman has clearly gotten under the president's skin. “You little pencil neck,” Trump said, referring to Schiff. Trump claimed, with no evidence whatsoever, that Schiff would have called CNN ahead of the drone strike on Soleimani to tip them off and that this would have allowed the Quds Force commander to get away. “They want us to tell them so that they can leak it to their friends in the corrupt media,” he said, referring to House Democrats.

Slotkin's resolution explicitly makes an exception for defending against “an imminent armed attack,” but Trump ignored this as he complained about Democrats trying to stop him from taking action if there's an imminent threat. “He was looking very seriously at our embassies and not just the embassy in Baghdad, but we stopped him very quickly and we stopped him cold,” the president told a crowd of nearly 8,000 supporters, referring to Soleimani. “We didn't have time to call up Nancy [Pelosi], who is not operating with a full deck.”

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

“It's not about how *bad* they are. It's about how *good* we are,” Pelosi said at her weekly news conference, referring to Iran and Soleimani. ([Felicia Sonmez](#))

 Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) heads to the Senate floor for a vote.
(Shawn Thew/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

-- In the Senate, two Republicans have committed to support Kaine's resolution: Sens. Mike Lee (Utah) and Rand Paul (Ky.). Kaine is trying to woo at least two more GOP colleagues by offering to make amendments that could get them on board. He's actively discussing draft text with Sens. Susan Collins (Maine) and Todd Young (Ind.). Kaine has already agreed to remove any references to Trump by name to make it more palatable for Republican colleagues, and he's willing to make more edits. "It doesn't mean everyone I talk to will get on board, but me sitting down with them and talking them through why I've done it this way, it gives them some level of comfort," Kaine [told Jenna Portnoy](#).

Kaine vocally pushed to get Congress to authorize the use of military force in the Middle East even when his good friend Barack Obama was president. ([Read my piece about it from 2015 here](#)). In fact, Kaine refused to modulate his position even when Hillary Clinton chose him as her running mate. His longtime emphasis on this issue undermines the GOP argument that his resolution is politically motivated.

Keep an eye on Young, who happens to be chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. I wrote [a Big Idea in May](#) about how Young's military service prompted him to focus on this issue when it looked like the United States might get drawn into a war with Venezuela.

"I understand — as a former Marine Corps intelligence officer — the real-world limitations to and the sensitivities associated with sharing certain information, even with members of Congress," Young [told Seung Min Kim](#), referring to the closed-door briefing on Wednesday that left Lee and Paul seething. "But I left there feeling as though it would've been a lot more helpful had I gotten a little peek into some of the intel that informed the operational decisions."



THE LATEST ON THE IRAN CRISIS:

-- In a phone call with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi asked the United States to send a delegation to Iraq to set up a mechanism for the “safe withdrawal of forces from Iraq.” [Sarah Dadouch reports](#): “The Iraqi prime minister has repeatedly insisted that U.S. troop withdrawal was the only path toward de-escalation. ... According to a statement, Abdul Mahdi also shared his objections regarding U.S. forces entering Iraq and American aircraft flying in Iraqi airspace without the consent of the Iraqi government.”

-- The Trump administration hit Iran with more sanctions Friday in the first concrete response to the attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq this week. ([Carol Morello](#))

-- Western officials believe an Iranian missile hit the Ukrainian plane that crashed near Tehran earlier this week in a possible unintentional firing. Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelensky is now asking Western leaders to share with him the intelligence that suggests this. [Isabelle Khurshudyan and Erin Cunningham report](#): “Iran, meanwhile, denied the assertions that the Boeing 737, carrying 176 people from Tehran to Kyiv, was shot down early Wednesday shortly after departing from Tehran. ... Ukraine has taken an active role in investigating the crash of the jet, which was carrying 11 Ukrainians, including the crew. A team of 45 experts and search-and-rescue personnel from Ukraine, including specialists who helped investigate the July 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukrainian territory, arrived in Tehran early Thursday to participate in the probe. ... Zelensky had phone conversations Thursday with heads of government from Canada, Britain, Sweden and Iran — countries that each had citizens among the passengers. **While Ukraine’s readouts of those calls said Zelensky intended to keep the leaders abreast of Ukraine’s findings and encouraged their**

countries to participate in the investigation, he has now had to publicly ask to be briefed in return. ... The Ukrainian leader is expected to speak with [Pompeo] on Friday. ...

“In Washington, U.S. officials expressed ‘high confidence’ that the Boeing 737-800 was targeted by an SA-15 surface-to-air missile, part of a Russian-made air defense system also known as a Tor system, as Iranian forces were on high alert. President Trump said the downing of the aircraft was probably a ‘mistake.’ Then in Ottawa, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said intelligence analyses indicated that a surface-to-air missile hit the plane in what could have been an ‘unintentional’ act. ... A Ukrainian official ... said that Zelensky made the public request for evidence about the crash because the United States had not yet shared with Ukraine its intelligence about the missile Thursday. ...

"The Washington Post obtained a video that allegedly shows the moment the airliner was struck in midair. The video, first published by the New York Times, purportedly shows a missile intercepting the aircraft near the city of Parand, followed by a loud boom. ... Earlier Friday, the Iranian government said in a statement that it was inviting Boeing to send a representative to help examine the 'black box' containing the flight data and cockpit voice recorders. Iranian state television aired a video of an investigator opening and showing the contents of the box."

-- The tragedy mirrors the 1988 Iran Air incident, in which a passenger plane that had originated in the Iranian capital was shot down, leaving 290 dead. [Adam Taylor reports](#): "On July 3, 1988, Iran Air Flight 655 was shot down by the U.S. military. The flight ... was flying over the Strait of Hormuz toward its destination, Dubai, when it was hit by two surface-to-air missiles. Though Pentagon officials at first denied any knowledge of the incident, it soon emerged that the plane had been targeted by the USS Vincennes, a cruiser that had been involved in a skirmish with Iranian boats in the Persian Gulf and had mistaken the

passenger jet for an Iranian warplane. President Ronald Reagan expressed sympathy for the 'terrible human tragedy' but suggested that the plane had 'failed to heed repeated warnings.' However, an investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization, a U.N. agency, found that U.S. military ships in the region did not have the equipment necessary to monitor civilian air-traffic-control frequencies."

-- **On Fox News last night, Pompeo reiterated that Soleimani planned** "a series of imminent attacks." Asked for specifics, he added: "We don't know precisely when and we don't know precisely where. But it was real."

-- **An Iranian military commander said the missiles fired at bases used by U.S. troops in Iraq were not intended to inflict casualties.** [Kareem Fahim and Sarah Dadouch report](#): "'We did not intend to kill,' said Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Revolutionary Guard's Aerospace Force, according to Iranian state media. 'We intended to hit the enemy's military machinery.' However, he repeated the government's claim that 'tens of people were killed or wounded.' U.S. and Iraqi officials said the strikes caused no casualties. ... Iran tried to counter the United States on the diplomatic front Thursday after Trump called on Britain, Germany, France, Russia and China to 'break away from the remnants' of the 2015 nuclear deal Iran struck with world powers. ... British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, speaking with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday, 'underlined the UK's continued commitment to' the nuclear deal and 'ongoing dialogue to avoid nuclear proliferation and reduce tensions,' according to a British government statement. Rouhani also called European Council President Charles Michel asking for a response to U.S. sanctions, which Rouhani described as 'economic terrorism,' the Iranian Fars News agency reported. In a statement, Michel emphasized the need for de-escalation in the region."

-- **The U.S. strike on Soleimani's convoy last week also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of an Iraqi paramilitary group, whose death could have far-reaching implications.** [From Middle East Eye](#): "Commanders of Iranian-

backed armed factions in Iraq tell MEE that with the loss of the two leaders, they are now almost paralysed and would be unable to strike the Americans with real consequence. ... Muhandis, who since the 1980s has been one of America's most wanted men over his involvement in the bombing of the US and French embassies in Kuwait, was seen by most Iraqis as Iran's most influential man in the country. ... Although formally stripped of his financial and administrative powers, Muhandis continued to enjoy great influence over most of the Hashd al-Shaabi's armed factions, with the government unable to regain control over the paramilitary umbrella group or force Muhandis to implement orders for fear of retaliation. ... While he frustrated the government, it was Muhandis' strong personality, and his blatant challenge to it and the rest of his opponents, that so attracted the leaders and fighters of the armed factions and kept them revolving around him like moths to a flame, following wherever he went."

-- The speed at which the Iran crisis unfolded shows the influence Trump's new team of national security advisers has. [From the Journal](#): "The group, including new Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley and new national security adviser Robert O'Brien, along with [Pompeo], backed the president's decision to kill the top Iranian military commander and moved swiftly to carry it out. The new team was cohesive and less inclined than its predecessors to push back against the president's wishes, according to administration officials and others consulted by the White House. They also were less likely to consult in advance with other administration, Pentagon or State Department officials, congressional leaders or foreign allies, some of these officials said."

-- Informants in Iraq and Syria helped the United States kill Soleimani. [From Reuters](#): "Soleimani arrived at the Damascus airport in a vehicle with dark-tinted glass. ... They parked near a staircase leading to a Cham Wings Airbus A320, destined for Baghdad. Neither Soleimani nor the soldiers were registered on the passenger manifesto. ... The passenger flight would be Soleimani's last. ...

Investigators have focused on how suspected informants inside the Damascus and Baghdad airports collaborated with the U.S. military to help track and pinpoint Soleimani's position. ... The suspects include two security staffers at the Baghdad airport and two Cham Wings employees. ... The National Security agency's investigators believe the four suspects, who have not been arrested, worked as part of a wider group of people feeding information to the U.S. military, the official said."

-- For Trump and Iran, Twitter trolling helped escalate tensions on the battlefield. [David Nakamura reports](#): "A day after [Trump] signaled he would not use military force to escalate a tense standoff with Iran, that nation's supreme leader responded with a message of his own: a doctored photo of Trump's face imprinted with red welts from a slap to the face. The creation on the official website of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei offered a trolling visual meme to echo his previous warning that Tehran's missile attack on two Iraqi facilities housing U.S. troops was only the first salvo in a campaign to avenge the drone killing of [Soleimani.] ... Experts called the display an example of a new era in international diplomacy in which official letters, telephone hotlines and secure video conference calls have been replaced, in some cases, by high-octane and instantaneous social media messaging."

-- Notable commentary from The Post's opinion page:

- [Jim Webb](#), former Democratic senator from Virginia and secretary of the Navy under Reagan: "When did it become acceptable to kill a top leader of a country we aren't even at war with?"
- [Andrew McCabe](#), former deputy director of the FBI: "If you think Iran is done retaliating, think again."
- [Fareed Zakaria](#): "Trump does not have a foreign policy. He has a series of impulses."

- [David Ignatius](#): “This is what a real Iran strategy would look like.”
- [Eugene Robinson](#): “The best Iran crisis explanation? Trump’s obsession with Obama.”
- [Josh Rogin](#): “Soleimani’s death offers a chance to fix U.S. policy on Syria.”
- [Max Boot](#): “By claiming Democrats support terrorism, Republicans hit a new low.”
- A hilarious satire by [Alexandra Petri](#): “Millions of Americans devastated to learn they were ardent fans of Soleimani this whole time.”



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Why Democrats say they're withholding the impeachment articles

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS THAT SHOULDN'T BE OVERSHADOWED:


-- Nancy Pelosi signaled this morning in a letter to colleagues that the House will transmit the articles of impeachment to the Senate as soon as next week.

“I have asked Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler to be prepared to bring to the Floor next week a resolution to appoint managers and transmit articles of impeachment to the Senate,” she wrote. ([Our live blog has more.](#))

-- **The Senate has conducted 15 impeachment trials in U.S. history. It has heard witnesses in every single one.** [Noah Bookbinder](#), executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, reviews the history: "Only 19 other individuals besides Trump have been impeached by the House of Representatives. The Senate completed a trial in 15 of those cases, and in every single one of them, it heard testimony from witnesses. Those cases include the only two prior instances in which a president was impeached."

-- **House Republicans are eyeing a push to condemn Pelosi for delaying the trial.** [From Politico](#): "GOP Rep. Bradley Byrne, who is running for an Alabama Senate seat, introduced a censure resolution on Thursday morning to rebuke Pelosi for hanging on to the articles of impeachment since December. Republicans have the option to force a floor vote on the measure though Democrats would surely move to table it, just as they did with a censure resolution against" Schiff.

-- **Meanwhile, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) tweeted an impeachment-related fundraising appeal that included a doctored photo of Pelosi, drawing a retweet from Trump.** [Felicia Sonmez reports](#): "The tweet marks the second time this week that a House Republican has tweeted a photo that appears to have been manipulated. On Monday, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) tweeted a fake photo of Obama with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. ... The tweet shows a close-up, red-tinted photo of Pelosi, with the lines in the House speaker's face exaggerated due to the image's unnaturally high contrast."

 Matt Golsteyn is pictured in his D.C. office with his wife Julie and their infant son Henry. (Sarah L. Voisin/The Washington Post)

Matt Golsteyn is pictured in his D.C. office with his wife Julie and their infant son Henry. (Sarah L. Voisin/The Washington Post)

-- **An Army general denied a request by an officer pardoned by Trump in an open murder case to have his Special Forces tab reinstated.** [Dan Lamothe](#)

[reports](#): “The decoration for retired Army Maj. Mathew L. Golsteyn was denied Dec. 3 by Lt. Gen. Francis M. Beaudette, the commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, the Army disclosed Thursday. Beaudette’s decision is not final, and the service said in a statement that it will next have an administrative panel consider whether it should reinstate the Special Forces tab and a Distinguished Service Cross — the U.S. military’s second-highest valor award — and expunge a letter of reprimand Golsteyn received in connection with his case. Golsteyn was awaiting trial this year in the alleged murder of a suspected Taliban bombmaker in Marja, Afghanistan, in February 2010. ... The general’s denial of Golsteyn’s reinstatement request follows Trump’s decision in November to pardon Golsteyn along with former 1st Lt. Clint Lorance, an Army officer who had been convicted of murder in Afghanistan. ... Golsteyn, reached for comment Thursday evening, said he had not heard about the decision until it was first reported by The Washington Post. A few minutes later, he and his lawyer, Phil Stackhouse, said they received notification from the Army in an emailed letter that had just arrived.”

-- The Justice Department is winding down the Hillary Clinton-related inquiry once championed by Trump. It found nothing of consequence. [Devlin Barrett and Matt Zapotosky report](#): “John Huber, the U.S. attorney in Utah, was tapped in November 2017 by then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions to look into concerns raised by Trump and his allies in Congress that the FBI had not fully pursued cases of possible corruption at the Clinton Foundation and during Clinton’s time as secretary of state, when the U.S. government decided not to block the sale of a company called Uranium One. As a part of his review, Huber examined documents and conferred with federal law enforcement officials in Little Rock who were handling a meandering probe into the Clinton Foundation. ... Current and former officials said that Huber has largely finished and found nothing worth pursuing — though the assignment has not formally ended and no official notice has been sent to the Justice Department or to lawmakers.”

-- Internal [Boeing documents](#) show employees discussing efforts to manipulate U.S. and international safety regulators. [Ian Duncan, Lori Aratani and Michael Laris report](#): “Yes, I still haven’t been forgiven by god for the covering up I did last year,” said a 2018 message. Another exchange between Boeing employees, from August 2015, closes out with this: ‘I know but this is what these regulators get when they try and get in the way. they impede progress. ...’ **In 2017, a Boeing employee wrote: ‘this airplane is designed by clowns, who in turn are supervised by monkeys.’** The documents were released by Boeing to congressional investigators probing how the company’s 737 Max jets were certified by the Federal Aviation Administration as safe before two crashes that killed 346 people. ...

“At issue in some of the messages was whether simulator training should be required for pilots flying the Max. Boeing went to great lengths to prevent such a requirement, in part because it would be costly for its customers, company documents show. ... In one November 2015 message, the 737 chief technical pilot, whose name is redacted in the documents, said failing to get computer-based training for one system ‘is a planet-killer for the MAX.’ ... In another email chain, from June 2017, the chief technical pilot forwarded to Boeing colleagues messages in which he persuaded an airline, which is not identified in the documents, not to require simulator training on the Max. ‘Looks like my jedi mind trick worked again!’ the pilot wrote. ‘These are not the droids you’re looking for.’ ... In a shift Tuesday, the company said that it is recommending that pilots undergo simulator training before they resume flying the 737 Max. The FAA, which will have the final say, said it will consider Boeing’s recommendation.” ([Read the Boeing documents for yourself here.](#))


-- The United States economy added 145,000 jobs in December as the unemployment rate remained at 3.5 percent. ([Rachel Siegel](#))

-- Video from Jeffrey Epstein’s first apparent suicide attempt was lost due to “technical errors,” according to prosecutors. [Reis Thebault reports](#): “Federal

prosecutors said in December they were unable to locate the video, which would have showed guards finding Epstein after his first apparent suicide attempt in July. Then, just a day later, they wrote in a court filing that they had found the footage and were 'in the process of obtaining a copy' from the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City, where Epstein was held. But on Thursday, prosecutors reversed themselves again, saying the video 'no longer exists' because of 'technical errors.' Jail officials initially thought they had saved footage from outside Epstein's cell, when in fact the footage they preserved was from a different part of the facility, explained Assistant U.S. Attorneys [REDACTED] and Jason Swergold in the latest filing."

-- Border crossings are starting to plateau as U.S. officials report a continued decline in immigration apprehensions. [Abigail Hauslohner reports](#): "The number of people apprehended or deemed 'inadmissible' by U.S. border authorities along the southern border fell to 40,620 last month, down 72 percent from May, when the Trump administration declared it was at the height of a border crisis. December marked the seventh straight month of decline in border crossings, but the month-to-month differences have shrunk significantly since September. Border enforcement actions last month were roughly on par with December 2017."

-- Counties, cities and states are stepping up on their climate goals as the Trump administration steps back. [Rebecca Tan reports](#): "Maryland's most populous jurisdiction is promising an ambitious package of new climate initiatives in 2020, joining other liberal counties, cities and states stepping up to address what they see as the Trump administration's resistance to protecting the planet. ... In February, Montgomery will hold a town hall on hundreds of recommendations from climate workgroups convened last year by County Executive Marc Elrich (D). And by early 2021, officials hope to unveil a comprehensive plan detailing how the county will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035."

 American sprinters Tommie Smith (center) and John Carlos (right) raise their gloved fists in a civil rights protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. (AP)

American sprinters Tommie Smith (center) and John Carlos (right) raise their gloved fists in a civil rights protest at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. (AP)

THE NEW WORLD ORDER:

-- **Gag rule alert: The International Olympic Committee warned athletes they would face sanctions, which could include the loss of medals, for participating in political protests during the Olympics in Tokyo this summer, including kneeling, political hand gestures and wearing or holding signs or armbands.** [Jacob Bogage reports](#): “The committee published a [three-page document of guidelines](#). ... ‘We needed clarity, and they wanted clarity on the rules,’ [\[said\]](#) Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe, chair of the IOC Athletes’ Commission, which helped create the new document. ... The guidelines outlaw demonstrations such as those staged by Tommie Smith and John Carlos, American sprinters who raised their gloved fists on the medal stand at the 1968 Games in Mexico City, and former NFL player Colin Kaepernick, who in 2016 began kneeling during the national anthem. Both demonstrations sought to draw attention to racial injustice and have been repeated by other athletes in recent years. ...

“Ethiopian runner Feyisa Lilesa crossed his wrists at the finish line of the men’s marathon at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro to show support for civil rights protesters in his home country. Americans Race Imboden, a fencer, and hammer-thrower Gwen Berry were placed on probation by the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee in August after demonstrating on the medal stand at the Pan American Games. Imboden knelt during the national anthem, while Berry raised a fist. Athletes who protest will face discipline ‘on a case-by-case basis as necessary,’ according to the guidelines.”

-- A billion animals have been caught in Australia's fires. Some may go extinct. [Karin Brulliard and Darryl Fears report](#): "The mouse-size dunnart is not as iconic as the koalas or platypuses that draw tourists, but it is arguably the most special mammal on Australia's Kangaroo Island. Now the Kangaroo Island dunnart's days may be numbered. Before bush fires struck, it was already endangered, so rare that even researchers who studied them had never seen one. Now they fear they never will. One-third of the 1,700-square-mile island has burned, including the entire area where these dunnarts are known to live. ... More than 1 billion mammals, birds and reptiles nationwide — some of them found nowhere else on Earth — may have been affected or killed by the fires sweeping across Australia, according to a University of Sydney estimate. The potential toll is far greater when other types of animals are included. ... Individual animals might survive, but when their habitat is gone, 'it doesn't matter,' Saunders said. 'They'll die anyway.'"

-- Disgusting: Hoaxers are using the fires to spread misinformation and profit, [Brittany Shammass reports](#).

-- The fire crisis is fueling protests calling for bolder action on climate change. [Kate Shuttleworth reports](#): "At rallies nationwide on Friday, thousands called for Prime Minister Scott Morrison to resign over what they say is his administration's passivity on an issue that has hit home to millions of Australians as a clear and present danger. The conservative leader has defended his disaster response after facing criticism from victims and firefighters for its perceived inadequacy. In Melbourne, close to 10,000 people took to the streets, spurning calls from police and the state's center-left leader, Daniel Andrews, not to risk diverting emergency resources. ... An organizer of a similar rally in Sydney, Gavin Stanbrook, said the events of recent weeks revealed a nation polarized over how to tackle the challenge. 'We are divided between coal interests and politicians on the one side and then firefighters and volunteers on the other and the rest of us who are either impacted or our friends and family are on the front line, or in cities

surrounded by smoke,' Stanbrook said. 'We need to come together and say that we will not accept it anymore.'"

-- Suspected Islamist militants killed 25 soldiers in Niger. [Danielle Paquette reports](#): "The clash unfolded in the western village of Chinegodar near the border with Mali, according to Nigerien defense officials, as fighters with ties to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda look to seize new swaths of territory. The bloodshed came about a month after gunmen ambushed a Nigerien army post in another border town, killing 71 soldiers in the deadliest strike on the nation's forces in recent memory. The Islamic State West Africa Province asserted responsibility for that massacre two days later."

-- In Israel, deadly floods have kept residents confined to their homes and offices even as they braced for potential spinoff attacks from rising tensions between the United States and Iran. [Steve Hendrix reports](#): "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday beseeched citizens to take flood warnings as seriously as they do the sirens warning of imminent rocket fire that are a feature of life in many Israeli communities. ... Netanyahu also warned the adventurous not to venture out to the desert to witness the dramatic — and potentially dangerous — spectacle of dry stream beds reanimated with roaring water. 'Watch them on television,' he advised. ... Officials said rescue resources had been redeployed nationwide in response to the flooding, which stretched from the coastal plains along the Mediterranean to the occupied West Bank down to the Dead Sea."

-- China identified a new strain of coronavirus as the source of its pneumonia outbreak. [Gerry Shih and Lena H. Sun report](#): "A group of Chinese experts this week isolated and obtained the genome sequence of the new virus, which is believed to be responsible for sickening dozens of people who visited a wild-animal market last month in Wuhan, in central China, state media reported Thursday. The outbreak ahead of the Lunar New Year travel season in China has prompted health authorities across East Asia to increase screening of travelers for signs of fever, underscoring fears about its potential spread."


-- Understatement of the year? Pope Francis said 2020 is off to a rough start, saying it “does not seem to be marked by encouraging signs.” [Chico Harlan reports](#): “While saying that maintaining hope is essential, the pope spent the next 45 minutes talking about wars and could-be wars, exploitation, sexual abuse, Internet hate speech, international indifference to humanitarian crises, and the depressing state of the world’s fight against climate change. He called heightened tensions between the United States and Iran ‘particularly troubling,’ but his remarks amounted to a laundry list of flash points, both major and obscure, from Burkina Faso to Venezuela to Australia. ‘Certainly, hope has to be realistic,’ Francis said. ‘It demands acknowledging the many troubling issues confronting our world and the challenges lurking on the horizon. It requires that problems be called by their name and the courage be found to resolve them.’”

-- Lebanon has banned ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn from traveling. [Sarah Dadouch reports](#): “Ghosn appeared at a hearing in Lebanon on Thursday, two days after Lebanon’s caretaker justice minister, Albert Serhan, said the country’s public prosecutor had received the Interpol red notice about Ghosn and would be taking the necessary steps. He was placed under house arrest. A few days after his arrival in Lebanon’s capital, Ghosn found himself in more legal trouble: A group of lawyers last Thursday lodged a legal complaint against him for visiting Israel as chairman of Renault and later Nissan. Lebanon and Israel have been in a state of war for the past six decades, and Lebanese law considers interacting with the country’s southern neighbor and sworn enemy a crime. Ali Abbas, one of the two lawyers who filed the Israel-related complaint against Ghosn, said the travel ban was a formality that usually comes after receiving Interpol notices, especially red notices, which alert police about internationally wanted fugitives but do not compel any country to arrest the fugitive.”

-- Trump wished North Korean leader Kim Jung Un a happy birthday through South Korea. ([AP](#))

-- A statue mocking Trump in Melania Trump's home country was burned down. [Lateshia Beachum reports](#): "Firefighters in Moravce, a city in central Slovenia, tried to extinguish the bonfire, but their efforts left charred planks on the ground. The arsonists responsible for the Christmas nutcracker-like statue's ashes are reportedly still at large. The nearly 26-foot tall wooden structure that had a mechanism to open Trump's red painted mouth full of pointy teeth was constructed last year in a nation divided over the U.S. president. The statue of Trump, with the president's signature blue suit and red tie, had been under torch threats since local residents threatened to set it ablaze on Halloween ... It was relocated because of the risk."

-- London's Madame Tussauds removed its wax figures of Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, from its display of Britain's royal family less than 24 hours after the couple announced they would be "stepping back" from their roles as senior royals. [Jennifer Hassan reports](#): "The figures will no longer stand alongside the rest of the royal family. They have been moved by the wax museum's staff. The likenesses of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, William and Catherine, remain on display alongside figures of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip. 'As two of our most popular and well-loved figures, they will of course remain an important feature at Madame Tussauds London as we watch to see what the next chapter holds for them,' said [Steve Davies, general manager of Madame Tussauds London]."

 Vice President Pence, along with White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump, and their children, Arabella, Joseph and Theodore Kushner, attend a Hanukkah reception in the East Room of the White House last month. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

Vice President Pence, along with White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump, and their children, Arabella, Joseph and Theodore Kushner, attend a Hanukkah reception in the East Room of the White House last month. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

2020 WATCH:

-- **Jared Kushner's global role is shrinking as his role in the president's reelection campaign grows.** [From Annie Karni and Maggie Haberman in the Times](#): "When senior administration officials gathered in the Situation Room on Tuesday for a meeting to discuss the repercussions of the killing of [Soleimani], the White House aide whose portfolio is the Middle East was notably absent from the meeting. ... [He] was sitting for a photo shoot for a planned Time magazine cover story. ... [Kushner] is positioning himself to be the overseer of something of even greater personal interest to his father-in-law: Mr. Trump's 2020 re-election campaign. ... [Kushner] sees no reason to involve himself as extensively in international issues now that the State Department is run by [Mike] Pompeo, whom he sees as far more competent than his predecessor, Rex W. Tillerson."

-- **Mike Bloomberg won't release the women who sued him from their nondisclosure agreements.** [From ABC News](#): "'You can't just walk away from it,' Bloomberg said. 'They're legal agreements, and for all I know the other side wouldn't want to get out of it.' Last month, ABC News reported on several lawsuits in which **Bloomberg was accused of making crude remarks in the 1990s and of allegedly fostering an uncomfortable environment for women to work** — allegations Bloomberg has denied. Three cases against the company remain active. ABC News has spoken with several women who expressed interest in telling their stories who were subject to confidentiality agreements, but said they feared the prospect of facing retribution from the company for speaking out."

-- **Tom Steyer appears to have qualified for the seventh Democratic debate, scheduled for next Tuesday night in Iowa, on the strength of Fox News polls that found him with double-digit support in Nevada and South Carolina.** [David Weigel reports](#): "Steyer, who has spent more than \$115 million on his campaign so far, hit 12 percent in the network's poll of Nevada ... and 15 percent in South Carolina. ... It came after Steyer poured more than \$20 million into commercials and other advertising in these states as of this week, with \$11.2 million worth of

expenditures in South Carolina and \$10.3 million in Nevada. He has also spent heavily to attract hundreds of thousands of small-dollar donations, which the DNC requires for debate access.”

-- **The Fox News Nevada poll also shows Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders vying for the lead in the state:** “Biden tops Sanders by 23-17 percent among Democratic caucusgoers, with both down one percentage point since November. [Elizabeth] Warren comes in at 12 percent, down from 18 percent — and ties with [Steyer] for third.”

-- **A new Monmouth Poll shows a four-way fight in the New Hampshire Democratic primary:** “Among registered New Hampshire Democrats and unaffiliated voters who are likely to participate in the February 2020 Democratic primary, 20% currently support [Pete] Buttigieg, 19% back Biden, 18% back Sanders, and 15% back Warren. ... Compared to Monmouth’s last New Hampshire poll in September, Buttigieg’s support has grown by 10 points (from 10%) and Sanders’ support has increased by 6 points (from 12%). Warren’s support has dropped by 12 points (from 27%) and Biden’s has decreased by 6 points (from 25%).”

-- **Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti endorsed Biden.** [From the Los Angeles Times:](#) “Garcetti will be one of Biden’s highest-profile supporters in California’s March 3 primary, but the endorsement is unlikely to have any practical effect on the highly competitive race. Dianne Feinstein, the state’s senior U.S. senator, is also supporting Biden. And Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, who had endorsed California Sen. Kamala Harris before she dropped out of the presidential race, also announced his support for Biden on Thursday.”

-- **Fun read: Philadelphians looking for love on Tinder may have come across “Daddy Bernie,” a profile set up for Sanders by a local man who just wants to inform people on the dating app about his favorite candidate.** [From the Philadelphia Inquirer:](#) “Alex Scheinberg, 26, is not a senator from Vermont. Or any

other state. He actually doesn't have a job. And he lives in his childhood home. But, Scheinberg said, that gives him more time to mix politics and pleasure in order to promote his favorite candidate in a forum that's increasingly becoming a venue for political endorsement and engagement. ... Scheinberg has his Tinder profile set to see all genders and sexual orientations, though he is straight. This way, he said, he can maximize the number of people seeing Sanders' campaign message. That's the same reason he swipes right on almost everyone, to reach as many people as possible. (For those who don't have to experience the horror show that is modern online dating, swiping right on a profile means you're interested. Swiping left, not so much.)"

SOCIAL MEDIA SPEED READ:

One of Vice President Pence's children got married at the Naval Academy over the holidays:



A former senior adviser to Obama made this observation about the passenger plane shot down in Iran:



A Republican senator from South Carolina had a flip response when confronted by a protester:



An alarming number of registered voters in our country cannot even place Iran on a map:



The White House press secretary turned down an offer to support a charity in exchange for giving a news conference. In other news, irony is dead:



A Republican senator met with a Democratic colleague to talk about climate change. Both have run unsuccessfully for president, but the Democrat's campaign is still active:



Marianne Williamson, who is also still in the presidential race, called out the lack of diversity among Trump's top advisers:



John Kerry joined Joe Biden in Iowa:



Billionaires are making themselves heard in the presidential race:



And the House majority whip, Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.), shared a touching story about his wife, who recently passed away:



VIDEOS OF THE DAY:

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Stephen Colbert joked that he was ruining Republican Sen. Mike Lee's political career by agreeing with him on his criticisms of the White House's Iran briefing: [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#)

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