

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Classified report on Russia, election hacking going to Trump

WASHINGTON — The nation's top intelligence officials are making their most detailed and persuasive case yet to President-elect Donald Trump that Russia interfered in this year's U.S. political process.

The officials — Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, CIA Director John Brennan and FBI Director James Comey — are preparing to point to multiple motives for Moscow's alleged meddling as they brief Trump on their classified report today in New York. President Barack Obama received a briefing on Thursday, and a declassified version of the report is expected to be released at some point.

Since winning the election, Trump has repeatedly questioned intelligence officials' assessments that Russia was behind the hacking of the Democratic National Committee and individual Democrats like Hillary Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta.

Trump remained dubious about the assertion even on the eve of his intelligence briefing, asking how officials could be "so sure" about the hacking if they had not examined DNC servers.

"What is going on?" he wrote on Twitter.

GOP has Trump's back as he questions US intelligence

WASHINGTON — A few years ago President Barack Obama came under conservative fire for choosing, at times, to read his daily intelligence briefings, rather than receive them in-person. Republican Rep. Paul Ryan was among those piling on.

"I have a hard time comprehending that, because the primary job of the commander in chief is to keep the country safe," Ryan said in an October 2014 interview on Fox News Channel. "And you need to get from your intelligence community, your defense community — especially when we have troops in harm's way — what's going on."

Yet now, as President-elect Donald Trump refuses daily intelligence briefings, questions U.S. spy agency conclusions about Russia interfering in the 2016 presidential election, praises Russian President Vladimir Putin and appears to side with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Ryan and other Republicans have Trump's back. Far from strongly defending the U.S. intelligence community, they're siding with the new leader of their party, even when he makes comments or takes stances that would seem anathema to the GOP.

It's a remarkable turnabout for a political party that cheered President Ronald Reagan's hard-line stance against the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union, unfailingly supports the military and joined with European allies in blistering Putin after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Asked at a press briefing Thursday whether he had full confidence in U.S. intelligence agencies, now-Speaker Ryan offered a tepid endorsement that began and ended on a note of criticism.

SeaWorld: Tilikum, orca that killed trainer, has died

ORLANDO, Fla. — Tilikum, an orca that killed a trainer at SeaWorld Orlando in 2010 and was profiled in a documentary that helped sway popular opinion against keeping killer whales in captivity at SeaWorld parks, has died.

Sea World officials said today that Tilikum died but did not give a cause of death. In a statement, the officials said Tilikum had faced serious health issues including a persistent and complicated bacterial lung infection. He was estimated to be 36 years old. A necropsy will be performed, according to the statement.

The 2010 death of SeaWorld trainer Dawn Brancheau during a performance with Tilikum after a "Dine with Shamu" show shocked the public and changed the future of orcas at SeaWorld parks.

Brancheau was interacting with Tilikum before a live audience at SeaWorld Orlando when he pulled her from a platform by her arm and held her underwater. An autopsy report said Brancheau drowned but also suffered severe trauma, including multiple fractures.

SeaWorld Entertainment officials announced in March 2016 that the tourist attraction would end its orca breeding program and theatrical shows involving killer whales.

While the breeding program continued, Tilikum was SeaWorld's most prolific male orca, siring 14 calves during his time at SeaWorld Orlando. He arrived at the park about 25 years ago.

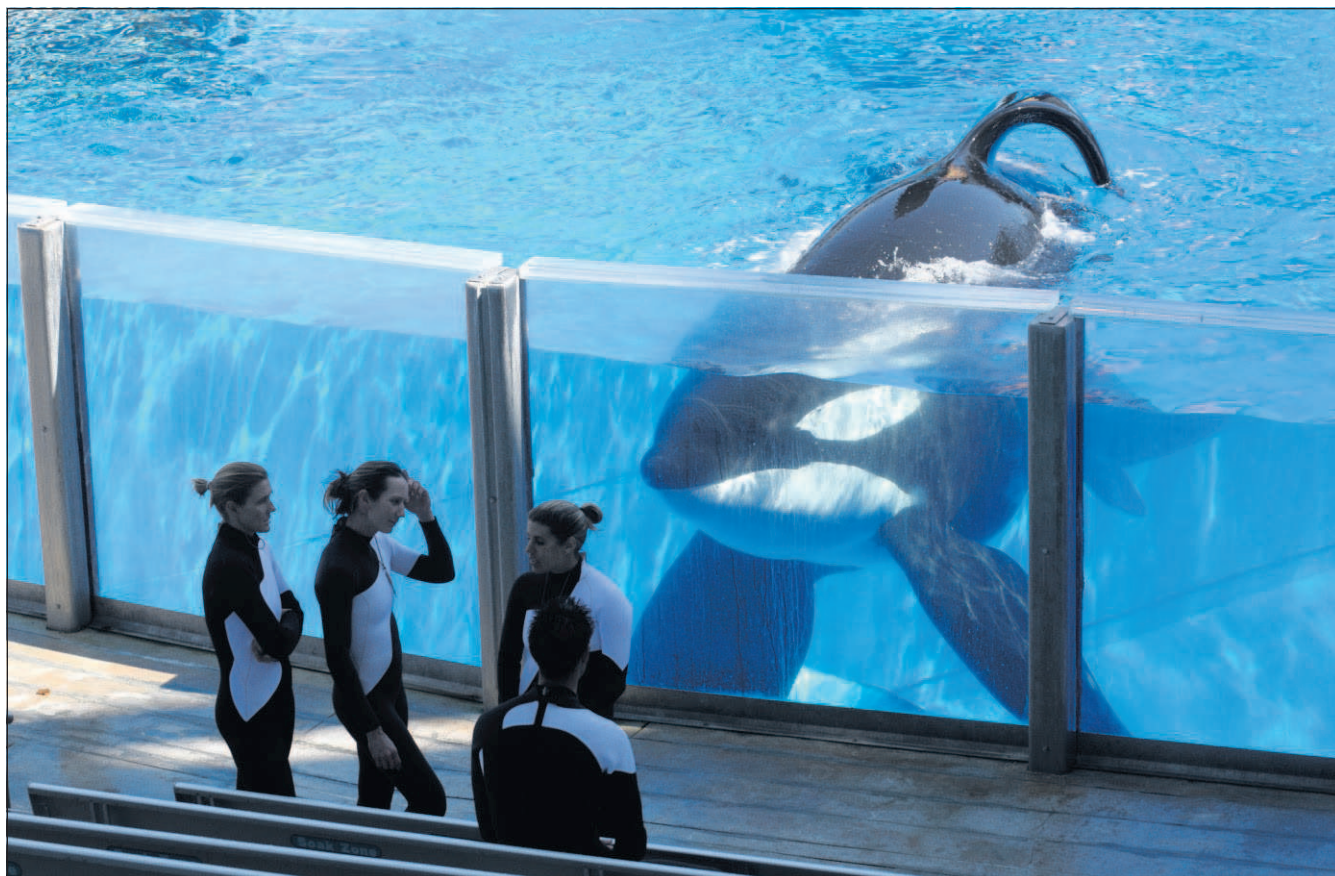
He was noticeable for his size at more than 22 feet and 11,800 pounds.

"Tilikum had, and will continue to have, a special place in the hearts of the SeaWorld family, as well as the millions of people all over the world that he inspired," SeaWorld President and CEO Joel Manby said. "My heart goes out to our team who cared for him like family."

Northwest Cable News set to go off air tonight

SEATTLE — Northwest Cable News, the Pacific Northwest's 24-hour regional news network, is set to go off air today night after 21 years of broadcasting.

The network will sign off following an hour-long retrospective



AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack
Orca whale Tilikum watches as SeaWorld Orlando trainers take a break during a training session at the theme park's Shamu Stadium in Orlando, Fla., in 2011. Tilikum, an orca that killed a trainer at SeaWorld Orlando in 2010, died today.

that begins 6 p.m. today.

Jim Rose, general manager of KING Broadcasting in Seattle, has said declining viewership and changing viewer habits were factors. KING, a division of TEGNA, oversees the regional network.

Northwest Cable News reports that Rose says 25 employees are affected by the shutdown, but more than half of those have found other jobs within the company in Seattle or elsewhere with TEGNA.

The 24-hour regional news channel debuted on cable TV systems in much of Washington, Oregon and Idaho in December 1995. It drew content from KING, Portland's KGW, Spokane's KREM and KTVB in Boise, Idaho. All are owned by TEGNA.

Police: Beating on video began after friendly encounter

CHICAGO — The two 18-year-olds had been schoolmates, police say. After meeting at McDonald's, they spent two days together, driving around visiting friends. Then a pretend fight between them escalated into a brutal beating of a mentally disabled teenager that has stirred racial tensions and outrage after being broadcast on Facebook Live.

How the white suburban teen ended up beaten by four black people, threatened with a knife and taunted with profanities against white people and President-elect Donald Trump is among the puzzles authorities are still trying to piece together after the four were charged with hate crimes on Thursday.

The alleged attackers will make their first appearance in court today, when they also face charges of kidnapping and battery for the assault, which was captured on cellphone video by one of the assailants and viewed by millions on social media.

"This should never have happened," said David Boyd, the victim's brother-in-law at a brief news conference in suburban Chicago. He said the victim was traumatized but doing as well as could be expected. Neal Strom, who is acting as a family spokesman, told The Associated Press that the victim has had "profound emotional and physical disabilities throughout his life." He did not elaborate.

The uproar over the beating has intensified the glare on Chicago after a bloody year of violent crime and protests against Mayor Rahm Emanuel and a police department that has been accused of brutality and hushing up wrongdoing. The department has also been the subject of a long civil-rights investigation by the Justice Department, which is expected to report its findings soon. It also stirred emotions still raw after a nasty presidential election campaign that split the nation.

Final jobs report for Obama presidency expected to be solid

WASHINGTON — The last major economic report card for President Barack Obama arrives today with the release of the December jobs figures. The report will cap a long record of robust hiring after the Great Recession, though one that left many people feeling left out.

When Obama took office in January 2009, the economy was hemorrhaging jobs from employers who were panicking in the face of plummeting demand and a financial crisis that froze credit. When the bleeding finally stopped in February 2010, 8.7 million jobs had vanished.

The unemployment rate peaked at a quarter-century high of 10 percent in October 2009. Just over seven years later, it has reached a nine-year low of 4.6 percent. Hiring was slow at first but soon accelerated and has been consistently solid through most of the recovery. The U.S. has gained 15.4 million jobs over 74 consecutive months — the longest streak of job gains on record.

December is sure to extend the streak, though likely at a more

modest pace than prevailed a couple of years ago: Economists have forecast that employers added 173,000 jobs in December, according to data provider FactSet. The unemployment rate is thought to have risen slightly to 4.7 percent.

Russia says it starts Syrian drawdown with aircraft carrier

MOSCOW — Russia announced today that it is withdrawing its aircraft carrier and some other Russian warships from the waters off Syria as the first step in a drawdown of its forces in the war-torn Mideast country.

According to Russian General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the Admiral Kuznetsov carrier and accompanying ships are to be the first to leave.

Gerasimov was quoted as saying by the state news agency Tass that "in accordance with the decision by the supreme commander-in-chief (President) Vladimir Putin, the Defense Ministry is starting to downsize the grouping of armed forces in Syria."

Moscow has been a key supporter of President Bashar Assad's government and forces in Syria's devastating civil war.

Gerasimov did not give further details on the force reduction, which follows an order by Putin on Dec. 29.

A 3,000-year-old city wrecked by militants, left for looters

NIMRUD, Iraq — The giant winged bulls that once stood sentry at the nearly 3,000-year-old palace at Nimrud have been hacked to pieces. The fantastical human-headed creatures were believed to guard the king from evil, but now their stone remains are piled in the dirt, victims of the Islamic State group's fervor to erase history.

The militants' fanaticism devastated one of the most important archaeological sites in the Middle East. But more than a month after the militants were driven out, Nimrud is still being ravaged, its treasures disappearing, piece by piece, imperiling any chance of eventually rebuilding it, an Associated Press team found after multiple visits last month.

With the government and military still absorbed in fighting the war against the Islamic State group in the nearby city of Mosul, the wreckage of the Assyrian Empire's ancient capital lies unprotected and vulnerable to looters.

No one is assigned to guard the sprawling site, much less catalog the fragments of ancient reliefs, chunks of cuneiform texts, pieces of statues and other rubble after IS blew up nearly every structure there. Toppled stone slabs bearing a relief from the palace wall that the AP saw on one visit were gone when journalists returned.

"When I heard about Nimrud, my heart wept before my eyes did," said Hiba Hazim Hamad, an archaeology professor in Mosul who often took her students there. "My family and neighbors came to my house to pay condolences."

Dylann Roof cold to victims, but apologized to his parents

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Before Dylann Roof was arrested for killing nine black church members, he scribbled a note to his mother, apologizing for all the repercussions his actions would cause. Weeks later, in a jailhouse journal, he wrote that he had no regrets.

The evidence, along with his manifesto, hundreds of photos and a confession to the FBI, draw a portrait of a young white man consumed by racial hatred who carefully planned the killings, picking out meek, innocent black people who likely wouldn't fight back.

Public Meeting
Columbia River System
Operations

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration invite the public to help identify issues that the agencies will analyze in the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement. The agencies will use this EIS to assess the effects and update their approach to operations of 14 federal dams and related facilities in the interior Columbia River basin.

The agencies welcome your comments, suggestions and information to help inform the scope of issues, potential effects and range of alternatives evaluated in the EIS.

Monday, January 9, 2017
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
The Loft at the Red Building
20 Basin Street
Astoria, Oregon

For more information about the Columbia River System Operations EIS, please visit this website: <http://www.crso.info>

Information is also available by calling 800-290-5033.

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