

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Dems find Trump's picks more reasonable than Trump

WASHINGTON — The lack of fireworks surrounding Senate consideration of President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet picks may reflect a belief by minority Democrats that the people chosen are more reasonable than Trump.

It could also be the residue of a surprising number of statements by Trump's Cabinet choices contradicting the billionaire businessman's oft-stated positions on issues running the gamut from Russia and NATO to nuclear weapons and Muslims.

This week's confirmation hearings produced an odd political chemistry where, for instance, one of the harshest examinations of a Trump Cabinet choice came from one of Trump's fellow Republicans, presidential campaign rival Sen. Marco Rubio.

Despite Democrats' dismay over some of Trump's selections, the first week of nomination hearings was relatively tranquil, with Democrats generally restrained in questioning even the more contentious picks. The reason, according to a few Democrats: The nominees are proving more palatable than Trump himself.

"As I meet members of the Cabinet I'm puzzled because many of them sound reasonable," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Senate Democrat. "Far more reasonable than their president."

Watchdog probe to bring new scrutiny for FBI's Comey

WASHINGTON — FBI Director James Comey, already under fierce public scrutiny for his handling of the election-year probe of Hillary Clinton, faces a new internal investigation into whether he and the Justice Department followed established protocol in the email server case.

The wide-ranging investigation from the Justice Department's inspector general will focus in part on Comey's decision to announce the findings of the FBI's probe and on two letters he sent to Congress in the days before the election that thrust the matter back to the forefront.

It's not clear how long the review will take, but there's no question the investigation will revisit intensely debated decisions the FBI made during the investigation and revive questions of whether the bureau took actions that might have influenced the outcome.

The inspector general's probe also is likely to bring unwanted new attention to Comey, whom some Democrats have partially blamed for Clinton's loss to Trump, at a time when the FBI has been trying to reassert its reputation as an independent and apolitical law enforcement agency.

Comey said he was pleased about the review, which comes in response to requests from members of Congress and the public, and added that the FBI would cooperate fully with the inspector general.

Havana hails end to special US immigration policy for Cubans

HAVANA — The Cuban government hailed President Barack Obama's decision ending automatic legal residency for any Cuban who touches U.S. soil, while ordinary citizens mourned the end of an easy pathway to a new life in the United States.

Average Cubans and opponents of the island's communist leaders said they expected pressure for reform to increase with the elimination of a mechanism that siphoned off the island's most dissatisfied citizens and turned them into sources of remittances supporting relatives who remained on the island.

The repeal of the "wet foot, dry foot" policy went into effect immediately after a Thursday afternoon announcement. It followed months of negotiations focused in part on getting Cuba to agree to take back people who had arrived in the U.S.

Cubans fearful of an imminent end to a special immigration status bestowed during the Cold War had been flocking to the United States since the Dec. 17, 2014 announcement that the U.S. and Cuba would re-establish diplomatic relations and move toward normalization. About 100,000 left for the United States after the declaration of detente, many flooding overland through South and Central America and Mexico in an exodus that irritated U.S. allies and other immigrant groups and spawned bitter complaints from the Cuban government.

"It was creating serious problems for the security of Cuba, for the security of the United States and for the security of our citizens left vulnerable to human trafficking, migratory fraud and violence as a result of the incentives created by these preferential policies," said Josefina Vidal, Cuba's top diplomat for U.S. affairs.

Syria says Israeli strikes hit near airport west of Damascus

BEIRUT — Syria accused Israel of firing rockets early on Friday that hit near a major military airport west of Damascus, triggering a fire, and warned Israel of repercussions without specifying whether it would retaliate for the attack.

The attack was the third such incident recently, according to the Syrian government.

In a statement carried on the official news agency SANA, the Syrian military said several missiles were launched just after midnight from an area near Lake Tiberias.

The rockets fell in the vicinity of the Mezzeh military airport on the western edge of the Syrian capital. The statement did not say whether there were any casualties.

Residents of Damascus reported hearing several explosions that shook the city. The Mezzeh airport compound, located on the southwestern edge of the capital, had been used to launch



AP Photo/Dave Martin

Cuban refugees float in seas, 60 miles south of Key West, Fla., in 1994. President Barack Obama announced Thursday he is ending a longstanding immigration policy that allows any Cuban who makes it to U.S. soil to stay and become a legal resident.

attacks on rebel-held areas near Damascus and has come previously under rebel fire.

Surge in targeted killings of al-Qaida operatives in Syria

BEIRUT — The convoy of vehicles was driving on a dirt road in northwestern Syria when the aerial attack by the U.S.-led coalition struck, turning the vehicles into balls of fire and the people inside into unrecognizable charred corpses.

Among the eight dead was Khattab al-Qahtani, a senior al-Qaida official from the Persian Gulf region with reported ties to Osama bin Laden, as well as a Syrian al-Qaida commander from the country's east and a militant belonging to the Turkistan Islamic Party, a faction of Chinese jihadis fighting in Syria.

The New Year's Day attack was the first in a wave of airstrikes that has targeted al-Qaida's affiliate in Syria at an unprecedented rate, killing more than 50 militants allied with the international terror group since the beginning of the year.

In the throes of a brutal civil war now in its sixth year, Syria has one of the largest and most active concentrations of al-Qaida fighters in the world. The U.S.-led coalition has been targeting the extremist group for years, hunting some of its most senior officials, including members of the so-called Khorasan group, which Washington describes as an internal branch of al-Qaida that plans attacks against Western interests.

It's not clear what is behind the recent surge in targeted killings.

Iraqi forces enter Mosul University in battling IS for city

IRBIL, Iraq — Iraqi special forces entered the Mosul University on Friday, a tactical achievement and an incremental step in battling Islamic State militants for control of the city, according to senior Iraqi officers.

The troops entered the university grounds in the morning hours and managed to secure parts of the compound, which is located in eastern half of Mosul, said two officers, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil confirmed the account and added that Iraqi forces were now fighting fierce battles with IS fighters inside the complex.

The development comes a day after Iraqi army forces north of the city linked up with troops pushing in from the city's eastern edge.

The sprawling university compound, a symbolic landmark in Iraq's second-largest city, was once used by IS militants as a base. Iraqi officials had said that the militants also used the school's chemistry labs to produce chemical weapons.

DOJ to release report on Chicago police abuses

CHICAGO — The Justice Department plans to release a major report Friday on the Chicago Police Department after a yearlong civil rights investigation, one that is expected to find a pattern and practice of violations over many years.

Officials from the DOJ in Washington, D.C., and from the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago were expected to make the report public on Friday. Based on similar reports on other cities, Chicago's is likely to run well over 100 pages.

The DOJ launched its investigation of the 12,000-officer force — one of the nation's largest — in 2015 the wake of a video showing a white officer fatally shooting black teenager Laquan

McDonald 16 times. The video prompted protests and calls for radical reforms.

An official familiar with the report has told The Associated Press the report would find Chicago police violated constitutional rights over years, but declined to offer details. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has pushed through some reforms since the investigation began, including an overhaul of a police oversight body and issuing body cameras to officers on patrol. But the report is expected to call for additional, more sweeping changes.

Lie detectors trip applicants at border agency

SAN DIEGO — David Kirk was a career Marine pilot with a top-secret security clearance and a record of flying classified missions. He was in the cockpit when President George W. Bush and Vice Presidents Dick Cheney and Joe Biden traveled around the nation's capital by helicopter.

With credentials like that, Kirk was stunned to fail a lie detector when he applied for a pilot's job with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which guards 6,000 miles of border with Mexico and Canada. After two contentious polygraph sessions that lasted a combined eight hours, Kirk said, he drove home "with my tail between my legs," wondering how things had gone so wrong.

Two out of three applicants to the CBP fail its polygraph, according to the agency — more than double the average rate of eight law enforcement agencies that provided data to The Associated Press under open-records requests.

It's a big reason approximately 2,000 jobs at the nation's largest law enforcement agency are empty, with the Border Patrol, a part of CBP, recently slipping below 20,000 agents for the first time since 2009. And it has raised questions of whether the lie detector tests are being properly administered.

CBP Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske said the failure rate is too high, but that it's largely because the agency hasn't attracted the applicants it wants. He and other law enforcement experts contend the polygraphs are generally working as intended at the agency, which has been trying to root out bribery and other corruption.

Millennials are falling behind their boomer parents

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin — Baby Boomers: your millennial children are worse off than you.

With a median household income of \$40,581, millennials earn 20 percent less than boomers did at the same stage of life, despite being better educated, according to a new analysis of Federal Reserve data by the advocacy group Young Invincibles.

The analysis being released Friday gives concrete details about a troubling generational divide that helps to explain much of the anxiety that defined the 2016 election. Millennials have half the net worth of boomers. Their home ownership rate is lower, while their student debt is drastically higher.

The generational gap is a central dilemma for the incoming presidency of Donald Trump, who essentially pledged a return to the prosperity of post-World War II America. The analysis also hints at the issues of culture and identity that divided many voters, showing that white millennials — who still earn much more than their blacks and Latino peers — have seen their incomes plummet the most relative to boomers.

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is Back!

If your baby was born between **January 1st** & **December 31st, 2016**, you can submit your newborn's picture either via email at:
CLASSIFIEDS@DAILYASTORIAN.COM
or drop by one of our offices in Astoria or Seaside and we can scan in the photo for you.

Deadline to enter is **Wednesday, January 25th at 5pm**
Entries will be printed in The Daily Astorian on January 31st.

Human babies only please!