

Rosenstein to meet Trump; job hangs in balance

By ZEKE MILLER and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will meet later this week with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, the White House said today amid indications that Rosenstein was about to lose his job.

The meeting will be Thursday, said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. That's the same day as an extraordinary Senate hearing that is to feature Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and a woman who has accused him of sexually assaulting her when they were in high school.

Any termination or resignation would have immediate implications for special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of possible collaboration between Russia and the Trump campaign before

the 2016 election. Rosenstein appointed Mueller and oversees his investigation.

Rosenstein and Trump, who is in New York for a U.N. meeting, had an extended conversation to discuss recent news stories about negative comments Rosenstein is reported to have made last year about the president, Sanders said. The deputy attorney

general was reported as having discussed possibly secretly recording the president and invoking the Constitution to have the Cabinet remove him from office.

Rosenstein expected to be fired today as he headed to the White House for a national security meeting on opioid abuse, according to a person familiar with the situation. But

he left with no action taken, and the White House statement suggested he may be in his job for at least several more days.

"At the request of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, he and President Trump had an extended conversation to discuss the recent news stories," Sanders said in a statement. "Because the President is at the United Nations General Assembly and has a full schedule with leaders from around the world, they will meet on Thursday when the President returns to Washington, D.C."

Solicitor General Noel Francisco, the highest-ranking Senate confirmed official below Rosenstein in the Justice Department, would take control of the Mueller investigation. A spokesman for Mueller declined to comment.

The reports about Rosenstein add to the turmoil roiling the administration, just six weeks before midterm elec-

tions with control of Congress at stake. In addition to dealing with the Mueller investigation, the White House is also struggling to win confirmation of its Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, in the wake of sexual misconduct allegations.

Trump had previously floated the idea firing Rosenstein in April after FBI raids of the office and home of the president's longtime personal attorney, Michael Cohen, who has since pleaded guilty to several felonies and taken part in interviews with Mueller's team.

But the latest move comes after a New York Times report of Rosenstein comments in May 2017. That report and an unsigned opinion piece by a senior official in the Republican administration played to some of the president's concerns about a secret "Deep State" trying to undermine him from within the government.

The administration offi-

cial, whom Trump has called for a federal investigation to unmask, wrote that there was a group of officials working to safeguard the country from the president's most dangerous impulses. And Trump's behavior had prompted "whispers" in the Cabinet of invoking the 25th Amendment, a move that was backed away from due to concerns it would "precipitate a constitutional crisis," the writer said.

In Rosenstein's case, he has said that the Times report was inaccurate and said it was based on "biased" anonymous sources "advancing their own personal agenda."

"Based on my personal dealings with the president, there is no basis to invoke the 25th Amendment," Rosenstein said.

The Justice Department also released a statement from a person who said Rosenstein's recording comment was meant sarcastically.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

New accusation rocks Kavanaugh nomination; Trump stands firm

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump staunchly defended his embattled Supreme Court nominee against a new allegation of sexual misconduct today, calling the accusations against Judge Brett Kavanaugh "totally political."

The president spoke a day after a second allegation emerged against Kavanaugh, a development that further imperiled his nomination to the Supreme Court, forced the White House and Senate Republicans onto the defensive and fueled calls from Democrats to postpone further action on his confirmation.

Trump, at the United Nations for his second General Assembly meeting, called the allegations unfair and unsubstantiated, made by accusers who come "out of the woodwork."

The new accusation landed late Sunday in a report from The New Yorker, just a few hours after negotiators had reached an agreement to hold an extraordinary public hearing Thursday for Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford, who accuses him of sexually assaulting her at a party when they were teenagers. Kavanaugh denies the accusation.

The second claim against Kavanaugh dates to the 1983-84 academic year, which was his first at Yale University. Deborah Ramirez recalled that Kavanaugh exposed himself at a drunken dormitory party, thrust his penis in her face, and caused her to touch it without her consent as she pushed him away.

In a statement provided by the White House, Kavanaugh said the event "did not happen" and that the allegation was "a smear, plain and simple."

Florence evacuations continue as rivers rise amid record floods

BLADENBORO, N.C. — Florence is by no means done swamping the Carolinas, where rivers remain high above flood stage and thousands of people were told to plan to leave their homes today.

About 6,000 to 8,000 people in Georgetown County, South Carolina, were alerted to be prepared to evacuate potential flood zones ahead of a "record event" of up to 10 feet of flooding, which is expected to begin Tuesday near parts of the Pee Dee and Waccamaw rivers.

Residents along the Waccamaw were bracing for water expected to peak Wednesday at 22 feet near Conway. That's twice the nor-

mal flood stage, and far higher than the previous record of 17.9 feet, according to the National Weather Service.

The Cape Fear and Neuse rivers also remain swollen, and aren't expected to return to normal levels until October.

Parts of Interstate 40 are expected to remain underwater for another week or more, and hundreds of smaller roads remain impassable, but there was some good news: Interstate 95 was reopened to all traffic Sunday night for the first time since the floods.

The storm has claimed at least 43 lives since slamming into the coast Sept. 14.

In Washington, lawmakers are considering almost \$1.7 billion in new money for disaster relief and recovery, even as they face a deadline this week to fund the government before the Oct. 1 start of the new budget year.

US, China hike tariffs as trade row intensifies

BEIJING — China and the United States imposed new tariff hikes on each other's goods today and Beijing accused Washington of bullying, giving no sign of compromise in an intensifying battle over technology that is weighing on global economic growth.

U.S. regulators went ahead with a planned 10 percent tax on a \$200 billion list of 5,745 Chinese imports including bicycles and furni-

ture. China's customs agency said it responded at noon by beginning to collect taxes of 5 or 10 percent on a \$60 billion list of 5,207 American goods, from honey to industrial chemicals.

The conflict stems from complaints Beijing steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

American officials say Chinese plans for state-led development of global competitors in robotics and other technologies violate its market-opening obligations and might erode U.S. industrial leadership.

China's leaders offered to narrow their politically sensitive, multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the United States by purchasing more natural gas and other American exports. But they have rejected pressure to change industry plans the communist leadership sees as a path to prosperity and global influence.

Today's tariff hike follows a report by The Wall Street Journal that Chinese officials pulled out of a meeting to discuss possible talks proposed by Washington. The Chinese government had given no public indication whether it would accept the invitation.

The ratings agency Fitch cut its forecasts today for next year's Chinese and global economic growth by 0.1 percentage points to 6.1 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively.

"The trade war is now a reality," said Fitch's chief economist, Brian Coulton, in a report. "The downside risks to our global growth forecasts have also increased."

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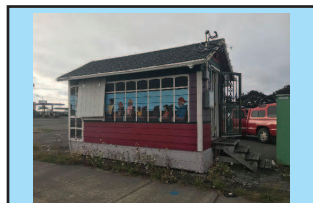
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