

Trump strains to unite GOP

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump is struggling in his efforts to unify the Republican Party behind his presidential campaign, the difficulty immediately underscored Thursday by a startling exchange of negative comments with GOP House Speaker Paul Ryan who said he was not ready to support him.

Although Trump is now the party's presumptive nominee, Ryan said Thursday, "I'm just not ready to do that at this point. I'm not there right now." Still, he added, "I hope to. And I want to," in comments on CNN's "The Lead."

Trump responded, in a statement released by his campaign, that he was "not ready to support" Ryan's agenda as the party's leader in the U.S. House. "Perhaps in the future we can work together and come to an agreement about what is best for the American people," he said.

Two days after the Indiana primary all but sealed Trump's victory as the man who will lead their election ticket in November, he is appealing to big-money donors he blasted during the primaries as he takes his first steps toward raising the massive amounts of cash he'll need for the general election campaign.

That effort was hardly

helped by the rejection — for now — by Ryan, the Wisconsin congressman who was Mitt Romney's running mate in 2012. In addition, Romney and former President George W. Bush said they do not plan to attend the party's national convention in July.

Trump is aiming to broaden his primary insurgency into a full-fledged general election campaign, reaching out to party heavyweights and trying to repair his sometimes-strained relationships with the Republican National Committee.

Upbeat still, Trump said in a brief interview with The Associated Press that his message has made the GOP "the hottest party around."

His campaign is trying to convert that energy into dollars.

On Thursday, Trump named a finance chairman, Steven Mnuchin, a private investor with ties to New York and Hollywood. Mnuchin "brings unprecedented experience and expertise" to the fundraising operation, the campaign said.

And Trump is taking pains to reassure party leaders that he wants to help Republican Senate and House candidates, some of whom are openly worried that Trump at the top of the GOP ticket will be a drag on their own campaigns.

Earlier this week, Trump's

final GOP foes, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, dropped out, clearing his path. Still, many party leaders, including Ryan, Bush and Romney, are keeping Trump at arm's length.

Their reluctance to embrace him sends an unmistakable signal to their fundraising networks, which include most of the GOP's best-connected donors.

"You might have a lot of these donors sit on the sidelines," said Spencer Zwick, who led Romney's fundraising efforts and now serves as Ryan's national finance chairman.

Trump, a billionaire who paid for most of his primary campaign by himself, acknowledges he would have to sell some of his holdings to muster the hundreds of millions of dollars for a general election bid, something he says he doesn't necessarily want to do.

He said Thursday he would be "putting up substantial money toward the general election," following the \$36 million in loans he previously made.

Yet he's also beginning to take a more traditional route for his likely battle with Hillary Clinton, a Democratic fundraising powerhouse.

Mnuchin, who has never led a major political fundraising team, faces a gargantuan task. Many major GOP

donors have never heard of him — or even know how to pronounce his name (muh-NOO-chiehn). Like his new boss Trump, Mnuchin has a record of giving both to Republicans and Democrats — including Clinton during her 2008 presidential run.

Anthony Scaramucci, a New York investor and Republican donor, said that Mnuchin, a friend with homes in New York and California, has Wall Street and Hollywood ties and "is a great team-builder." Scaramucci, who earlier raised money for failed GOP candidates Scott Walker and Jeb Bush, said he plans to be part of that team.

Trump also hopes to tap into the RNC's existing fundraising network, but faces hurdles.

This is all new to Trump. Through the end of March, he had raised \$12 million, mostly from fans who clicked the "donate" button on his website or bought wares such as the ubiquitous red ballcap emblazoned with his slogan, "Make America Great Again," campaign finance documents show.

That contrasts with Clinton, who has raised some \$187 million so far and began her general election fundraising effort back in November that can solicit huge checks for her campaign, the Democratic National Committee and state parties.



In this 2014, file photo, a man smokes an electronic cigarette in Chicago.

FDA asks for review of e-cigarettes

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government announced sweeping new rules Thursday for electronic cigarettes that will for the first time require the devices and their ingredients to be reviewed, a mandate that could offer protection for consumers and upend a multibillion dollar industry that has gone largely unregulated.

Before brands are allowed to stay in the market, regulators will check the e-cigarettes' design and the liquid nicotine they contain. The fast-growing devices have found a foothold with teenagers.

"Millions of kids are being introduced to nicotine every year, a new generation hooked on a highly addictive chemical," Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell said. "We cannot let the enormous progress we've made toward a tobacco-free generation be undermined by products that impact our health and economy in this way."

The rules issued by the Food and Drug Administration will also extend long-standing restrictions on traditional cigarettes to a host of other products, including e-cigarettes, hookah tobacco, pipe tobacco and nicotine gels. Minors would be banned from buying the products.

Battery-powered e-cigarettes turn the nicotine into an inhalable vapor. They lack the chemicals and tars of burning tobacco, but the cigarettes have not been extensively studied, and there's no scientific consensus on the risks or advantages of "vaping."

More than 15 percent of high school students report using e-cigarettes, up more than 900 percent over the last five years, according to federal figures.

Beginning in August, retailers will be prohibited from selling tobacco prod-

ucts to anyone under 18, placing them in vending machines or distributing free samples. While nearly all states already ban sales of e-cigarettes to minors, federal officials said they will be able to impose stiffer penalties and deploy more resources for enforcement.

For now, e-cigarette users may not see big changes. Companies have two years to submit their information to the FDA and another year while the agency reviews it. The review process applies to products introduced after 2007, which includes nearly all of them. Government officials said the reviews are critical to taming the "wild west" marketplace.

"With this rule, the FDA will be able to prevent misleading claims and provide consumers with information to help them better understand the risks" of tobacco, FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf said.

The action comes five years after the agency first announced its intent to regulate e-cigarettes and more than two years after it floated its initial proposal.

The rules are not uniform. For example, while the FDA intends to phase out flavored cigars, it will allow flavored e-cigarettes to remain on the market, a decision that irked anti-tobacco advocates.

The changes do "nothing to restrict the irresponsible marketing of e-cigarettes or the use of sweet e-cigarette flavors such as gummy bear and cotton candy," said Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

The vaping industry says the lengthy federal reviews would be time-consuming and costly.

The regulations "will cause a modern-day prohibition of products that are recognized worldwide as far less hazardous than cigarettes," said Gregory Conley.

Clinton aide interviewed in email investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI has interviewed Huma Abedin, a close aide to Hillary Clinton, as part of a federal investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of state, a person familiar with the probe said Thursday.

The person insisted on anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

The FBI and Justice Department have been investigating whether sensitive information that flowed through Clinton's email server was mishandled.

Abedin was one of Clinton's closest aides during her tenure as the nation's top diplomat, serving as deputy chief of staff. It was not immediately clear whether other aides have been interviewed, or when or if Clinton herself might be questioned.

"From the start, Hillary Clinton has offered to answer any questions that would help the Justice



AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File

In this April 17 photo, Huma Abedin, aide to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, attends a rally in Staten Island, New York.

Department complete its review, and we hope and expect that anyone else who is asked would do the same," Clinton campaign spokesman Brian Fallon said in a statement. "We are confident the review will conclude that nothing inappropriate took place."

It is not known how much longer the investiga-

tion will take. FBI Director James Comey has said there is no timetable for finishing the probe.

On Wednesday, a federal judge in Washington said he may order Clinton, the Democratic presidential front-runner, to testify under oath about whether she used a private server to evade public records

disclosures. The order from U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan granted a request from the conservative legal advocacy group Judicial Watch to question six current and former State Department staffers, including Abedin, about the creation and purpose of the email system. Those interviews would be part of a civil case from Judicial Watch about whether the State Department conducted an adequate search of public records in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Clinton has acknowledged during the campaign that her home-based email setup was a mistake, but insists she never sent or received any documents that were marked classified at the time.

She has dismissed the idea that she could face legal trouble over the use of the server.

BRIEFLY

Pentagon spokesman says deadly IS attack was a surprise

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Islamic State attack on Kurdish forces in northern Iraq that killed U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Charles Keating was a surprise that, if anticipated, might have turned out differently, a Pentagon spokesman said Thursday.

"Obviously, had we had the forces there, been able to see this attack coming, they would have responded differently to it," Peter Cook, the Pentagon press secretary, said. "Perhaps this could have been avoided. That's certainly something that we're looking at carefully. This particular attack was not anticipated and we were forced to respond."

Keating was a member of what the military calls a quick-reaction force that was called to the scene of the gun battle in which a small U.S. military advisory team had already become involved. The Islamic State force managed to penetrate the Kurds' lines but ultimately was pushed out of the area.

The U.S. military's main spokesman in Baghdad, Col. Steve Warren, said Wednesday that it was unclear how IS managed to assemble an attacking force of an estimated 125 fighters, plus vehicles, without being detected prior to the assault.

"You can't observe every inch of earth every

moment in the day," Warren said. "There's not enough eyeballs out there to watch it all, anyways." He said the militants were initially successful by surprising the Kurdish force but ultimately were beaten back.

Three nations move against alleged big money launderer in Panama

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Authorities have arrested a prominent Panama businessman and dismantled an empire of banking, real estate and retail businesses that the U.S. says were part of a top worldwide money-laundering organization for drug traffickers.

The coordinated operation was announced Thursday as the U.S. Treasury Department froze U.S. assets owned by 68 companies in this Central American nation and in Colombia under a drug kingpin designation.

As part of the effort, Colombian police arrested Nidal Waked the previous day at an airport in Colombia's capital, Bogota.

Waked and his father, Abdul Waked, are accused of being the co-leaders of an organization that laundered drug profits through a web of companies including a luxury mall, a bank and the duty-free zone at Panama City's international airport.

Grupo Wisa, the family's holding company, issued a terse statement saying the accusations "are false."

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