



White House strategist Stephen Bannon speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference in Oxon Hill, Md., on Thursday.

## Conservatives urged not to 'squander' presidency

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — President Donald Trump's top aides on Thursday delivered one overriding message to the thousands of conservative activists gathered for their annual conference outside of Washington: Don't blow it.

Speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference, White House chief of staff Reince Priebus pleaded for patience and unity, urging activists not to squander the Republican Party's control of both chambers of Congress and the White House. Trump adviser Steve Bannon made his case for a governing strategy based on aggressive deregulation and an "economic nationalism" in negotiating new free trade deals.

"What you've got is an incredible opportunity to use this victory," Priebus said. Some of Trump's plans for creating jobs and putting more money in people's pockets will take time, he said. "We've got to stick together and make sure we have President Trump for eight years."

Priebus' pleas acknowledged conservatives' underlying skepticism about the new president, a former Democrat who in the past has elicited boos at the conference. Trump has often suggested he doesn't prioritize the social issues many conservatives elevate, and his proposal for a massive infrastructure bill has cast doubts about his commitment to curb government spending.

But with a Republican in the White House for the first time in eight years, many activists say they feel energized and willing to give him a chance.

The decades-old CPAC, as the event is known, is now really more like "TPAC," White House counselor Kellyanne

Conway said.

She and other Trump administration speakers thanked conservatives for voting for Trump last fall. Bannon said appreciation would largely be the theme of the president's remarks Friday to the group. Vice President Mike Pence is scheduled to speak Thursday night.

Many in the audience chanted "Trump! Trump! Trump!" as Bannon, a provocateur and outsider, and Priebus, a GOP party insider, made a joint appearance on stage. The duo's chummy joint interview seemed designed to refute media reports that the two are working at cross-purposes in a factionalized White House.

Priebus presented their partnership as evidence that conservatives and Trump supporters can work together.

"The truth of the matter is Donald Trump, President Trump, brought together the party and the conservative movement," he said. "If the party and the conservative movement are together, similar to Steve and I, it can't be stopped."

In his remarks, Bannon emphasized Trump's plans to deregulate businesses — or what he described as "deconstruction of the administrative state."

"Every business leader we've had in is saying not just taxes, but it is also the regulation. I think the consistent, if you look at these Cabinet appointees, they were selected for a reason and that is the deconstruction," he said.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos urged the activists to "engage" and "be loud" in the face of politicians who stand in the way of change.

"We have a unique window of opportunity to make school choice a reality," she said.

## Dakota Access camp cleared of protesters

Associated Press

CANNON BALL, N.D. — Authorities on Thursday cleared a protest camp where opponents of the Dakota Access oil pipeline had gathered for the better part of a year, searching tents and huts and arresting dozens of holdouts who had defied a government order to leave.

It took 3 1/2 hours for about 220 officers and 18 National Guardsmen to methodically search the protesters' temporary homes. Authorities said they arrested 46 people, including a group of military veterans who had to be carried out and a man who climbed atop a building and stayed there for more than an hour before surrendering.

Native Americans who oppose the \$3.8 billion pipeline established the Oceti Sakowin camp last April on federal land near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation to draw attention to their concerns that the project will hurt the environment and sacred sites — claims Dallas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners disputes. The camp gained increased attention starting in August after its population had grown and authorities made their first arrests. At its height, the camp included thousands of people, but the numbers had dwindled during the winter and as the fight over the pipeline moved into the courts.

The Army Corps of Engineers said it needed to clear the camp ahead of spring flooding, and had ordered everyone to leave by 2 p.m. Wednesday. The agency said it was concerned about protesters' safety and about the environmental effects of tents, cars, garbage and other items in the camp being washed into nearby rivers.

Most protesters left peacefully Wednesday, when authorities closed the camp, but some stayed overnight in defiance of the government order.

Before the arrests, protester Ed Higgins 39, of Lowell, Massachusetts, said by phone from the camp that morale was high and opponents were prepared to stay as long as necessary. Protesters maintain that the camp was on land that rightfully belongs to American Indians under old treaties.

"They do not own the land. They do not have the right to be here," said Higgins, who did not answer his phone after authorities cleared the camp.

As police in full riot gear worked to arrest the stragglers, cleanup crews began razing buildings on the square-



This aerial photo provided the Morton County Sheriff Department shows the closed Dakota Access pipeline protest camp near Cannon Ball, N.D., on Feb. 23.

mile piece of property at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers.

American Indian activist Chase Iron Eyes, an outspoken supporter of the camp, said its shutdown is not the end of the fight against the pipeline.

"The battleground has shifted to the legal courts and the court of public opinion," he said, referring to lawsuits filed by tribes and an effort planned by the Lakota People's Law Project to rally lawmakers and others in Washington, D.C., to their cause.

Authorities entered the camp "cautiously and tactfully" to ensure the safety of officers and protesters, Highway Patrol Lt. Tom Iverson said. The arrests were a last resort, he said.

"We did not want this. Unfortunately, there were some bad actors that forced us into this position," he said.

Only one person resisted arrest; otherwise there were no major incidents, and there were no injuries, Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier said.

Afterward, officers showed visible relief, smiling, shaking hands and patting one another on the back.

Guardsmen and officers entered the camp from two directions shortly before midday, alongside numerous law enforcement and military vehicles and with a helicopter and airplane overhead. As they checked and cleared buildings, they marked them with a fluorescent

orange "X."

They declared the camp cleared shortly after 2 p.m., though Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier said 50 protesters crossed the frozen Cannonball River on foot to another camp on the south bank. That land also is Corps-managed but is on the Standing Rock Reservation, where North Dakota authorities don't have jurisdiction. They planned to station officers on the north shore to keep anyone from re-entering the main camp.

Before authorities moved in, Gov. Doug Burgum had said those remaining at the camp still had a chance to leave without facing charges. The state sent a bus to the site on Thursday to transport anyone to Bismarck, where officials were doling out basic necessities, along with hotel and bus vouchers.

No one took advantage of the offer Thursday, and only nine people used the center Tuesday and Wednesday. The center was closed Thursday due to the lack of use, state Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong said.

Energy Transfer Partners began work on the last big section of the oil pipeline this month after the Army gave it permission to lay pipe under a reservoir on the Missouri River. When complete, the pipeline will carry oil through the Dakotas and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois.

## Malaysia says VX nerve agent used in killing of North Korean

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — The banned chemical weapon VX nerve agent was used to kill Kim Jong Nam, the North Korean ruler's outcast half brother who was poisoned last week at the airport in Kuala Lumpur, police said Friday. The announcement raised serious questions about public safety in a building that was never decontaminated.

The substance, deadly even in minute amounts, was detected on Kim's eyes and face, Malaysia's inspector

general of police said in a written statement, citing a preliminary analysis from the country's Chemistry Department.

"Our preliminary finding of the chemical that caused the death of Kim Chol was VX nerve," said Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar. Kim Chol is the name on the passport found on the victim, but a Malaysian official previously confirmed he is North Korea leader Kim Jong Un's older half brother.

Khalid said police were

still investigating how the lethal agent entered Malaysia.

The death of Kim Jong Nam, whose daylight assassination in a crowded airport terminal seems straight out of a spy novel, has unleashed a diplomatic crisis that escalates by the day. With each new twist in the case, international speculation has grown that Pyongyang dispatched a hit squad to Malaysia to kill the exiled older sibling of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

North Korea has

denounced Malaysia's investigation as full of "holes and contradictions" and accused the authorities here of being in cahoots with Pyongyang's enemies.

According to Malaysian investigators, two women — one of them Indonesian, the other Vietnamese — coated their hands with chemicals and wiped them on Kim's face on Feb. 13 as he waited for a flight home to Macau, where he lived. He sought help from airport staff but he fell into convulsions and died on the way to the hospital.



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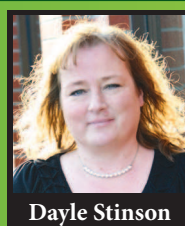
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