

Trump ousts Bannon, his influential, divisive strategist

WASHINGTON (AP) — Steve Bannon, the blunt-spoken and divisive strategist who rose from Donald Trump's conservative campaign to a top White House post, was pushed out by the president Friday, capping a turbulent seven months marked by the departure of much of Trump's original senior staff.

The former leader of conservative Breitbart News and a favorite in the farther-right portions of the Republican Party, Bannon had pushed Trump to follow through on some of his most contentious campaign promises including his travel ban for some foreigners and his decision to pull out of the Paris climate change agreement. He returned to Breitbart News as executive chairman and chaired the Friday evening editorial meeting, the news site announced.

Barely more than a half-year in, Trump now has forced out his hardline national security adviser, his chief of staff, his press secretary (whose last day will be Aug. 31) and two

communications directors — in addition to the FBI director he inherited from Barack Obama.

Bannon's departure is especially significant since he was viewed by many as Trump's connection to his base of most-committed voters and the protector of the disruptive, conservative agenda that propelled the celebrity businessman to the White House.

"It's a tough pill to swallow if Steve is gone because you have a Republican West Wing that's filled with generals and Democrats," said former campaign strategist Sam Nunberg, shortly before the news of Bannon's departure broke. "It would feel like the twilight zone."

From Breitbart, there was a dramatic one-word warning.

"#WAR," tweeted Joel B. Pollak, a senior editor at large at the news site.

Indeed, Bannon's nationalistic, outsider conservatism served as a guiding force for Trump's rise to office. He injected a dark populism into the campaign and sharp-



AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, File
In this April 29 file photo, Steve Bannon, chief White House strategist to President Donald Trump is seen in Harrisburg, Pa.

ened its attacks on Democrat Hillary Clinton, encouraging Trump's instinct to fight and counter-punch at every turn. When the release of a 2005 tape, in which Trump can be heard boasting about groping women, threatened to capsize the Republican's campaign, Bannon attempted to turn the tables by gathering a group of women who accused Bill Clinton of sexual assault and trying to ambush the Demo-

cratic nominee at a general election debate.

Without him, Trump's agenda is left in the hands of more moderate advisers, including his son-in-law, his daughter and his economic adviser whom Bannon has slammed as "globalist."

But Bannon was also accused by many of his critics of leaking to reporters in a bid for self-promotion, and egging on Trump's most damaging impulses.

Trump spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Bannon and Chief of Staff John Kelly, only recently installed himself, had agreed that Friday would be Bannon's last day.

"We are grateful for his service and wish him the best," she said in the only statement from the White House.

A combative and unorthodox Republican, Bannon was a contentious presence in a White House divided by warring staff loyalties. He repeatedly clashed with other top advisers, most notably Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. His puppet-master image also drew the ire of the president, who at times bristled at the perception that Bannon was the mastermind of his winning campaign and the force behind White House policies.

One person close to Bannon said he had offered his resignation to Trump on Aug. 7. It was to go into effect a week later, the one-year anniversary of when he officially joined Trump's presidential campaign. But the depar-

ture was delayed after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, said the person, who spoke only on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

In fact, Bannon has been on shaky ground for weeks, and his job appeared in jeopardy when Kelly announced that he'd be embarking on a personnel review of West Wing staff.

Though Bannon had adopted a lower profile in recent weeks, he again became a flashpoint following criticism from the right of national security adviser H.R. McMaster, which some blamed on him, and Trump's refusal to blame white nationalists for the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Earlier this week, The American Prospect posted an interview in which he contradicted Trump by saying there was no military solution to the threat posed by North Korea and its nuclear ambitions. Just last week, Trump pledged to answer North Korean aggression with "fire and fury."

BRIEFLY

Trump studying options for new approach to Afghan war

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is "studying and considering his options" for a new approach to Afghanistan and the broader South Asia region, the White House said Friday after the president huddled with his top national security aides at Camp David.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued a brief statement saying Trump had been briefed extensively on a new strategy to "protect America's interests" in the region. She did not specifically mention Afghanistan.

"The president is studying and considering his options and will make an announcement to the American people, to our allies and partners, and to the world at the appropriate time," she said.

The administration has struggled for months to formulate a new approach to the war. But stepping up the fight in a way that advances peace prospects may be even more difficult, in part because the Taliban has been gaining ground and shown no interest in peace negotiations.

Trump met at the presidential retreat in nearby Maryland with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, top intelligence agency officials and

other top military and diplomatic aides. Mattis said earlier this week the administration was "very close" to finalizing a new approach.

Citing Trump remarks, entire president's arts council quits

Actor Kal Penn, artist Chuck Close and the entire membership of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities have announced their resignation. A letter dated Friday, and signed by 16 of 17 committee members, cited the "false equivalence" of President Donald Trump's comments about last weekend's "Unite the Right" gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia. Trump has blamed "many sides" for the demonstrations that left an anti-racism activist dead.

The White House said Trump had already decided against renewing the advisory committee for budgetary reasons.

"Ignoring your hateful rhetoric would have made us complicit in your words and actions," the letter reads. "Supremacy, discrimination, and vitriol are not American values. Your values are not American values. We must be better than this. We are better than this. If this is not clear to you, then we call on you to resign your office, too."

Spanish plan for carnage started with botched explosion

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — A cell of at least nine extremists meticulously plotted to combine vehicles and explosives in a direct hit on tourists, and managed to carry off most of their deadly plan, killing 14 people, authorities said Friday. Police in Spain and France pressed a manhunt for any remaining members of the group, which Islamic State claimed as its own.

Only flawed bomb construction avoided a more devastating attack, authorities said after taking a closer look at a blast Wednesday evening in the town of Alcanar that was first written off as a household gas explosion. At least one person was killed and several injured in the home where police said the deadly plan took shape.

Eighteen hours later, a rented van veered into Barcelona's crowded Las Ramblas promenade, swerving along the walkway Thursday and killing 13 people.

A surveillance video from inside a museum, which captured images of the van, showed it speeding down the promenade, barely missing a person with a stroller while others scattered.

Armed with an ax, knives and false explosives belts, attackers then drove a second vehicle to

the boardwalk in the resort town of Cambrils early Friday, fatally injuring one person. Five of those attackers were shot to death, among them 17-year-old Moussa Oukabir, according to a Spanish police union official, confirming Spanish news reports.

Oukabir's name was first on a document listing four suspects sought in the attacks, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the investigation.

The Barcelona-based *La Vanguardia* newspaper, Spanish national broadcaster RTVE and other outlets cited police sources as saying he was the driver of the van in Barcelona.

The arrest order was issued throughout Spain and into France, according to the Spanish official and a French police official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the document. They did not say what became of the other three men listed, who ranged in age from 18 to 24. All had roots in Morocco; only Moussa Oukabir was born in Spain, according to the document.

California tightens rules on popular pesticide for farmers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California is tightening the strictest rules in the nation on a pesticide

that is popular with farmers over new health concerns, officials said Friday.

Farmers use chlorpyrifos to kill pests that attack a wide variety of crops like grapes, almonds and cotton grown in California, the nation's agricultural leader, as well as across the country.

State officials are taking steps to put it on a list of chemicals known to be harmful to humans and to also increase the distance from schools and homes in which farmers can apply.

The moves run contrary to a decision by Scott Pruitt, the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to end his agency's effort to ban the pesticide sold by Dow Chemical after federal scientists concluded it can interfere with the brain development of fetuses and infants.

Pruitt told Congress in June his decision was based on "meaningful data and meaningful science."

Pruitt's staff has thus far declined to provide details of what information Pruitt reviewed before making his decision.

California officials say that researchers are learning more about how the pesticide harms the developing brains of unborn babies and young children. Farmers apply it to 60 different crops, and it is most heavily used in San Joaquin Valley farming communities

LARSON: Was elected as OEA president in April

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Such inclusion may seem at odds with an association that most closely aligns with Democratic candidates and ballot measures. Larson sees the shift as following the mission of the association to do what is best for the students in public education.

As the son of school-

teachers in Montana, Larson grew up in a culture that values union ideals. His first stint as union representative came early in his career when he volunteered as a building representative for the Morrow County Education Association. He later served as president for the association for four years.

During his involvement

in OEA, he has served as bargaining chair, president of the Hermiston Association of Teachers, the National Education Association Board director, NEA PAC captain, on resolution committees for NEA and OEA, and on the OEA Executive Committee.

He was elected as OEA president in April and started his four-year term July 10.

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