

Trump congratulates Putin on election win

President promptly gets backtalk from Republicans

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump called Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday to congratulate him on his re-election, drawing bruising criticism from members of his own party, including a leading senator who scorned the election as a “sham.” Trump also said he and Putin might meet “in the not too distant future” to discuss the arms race and other matters.

What they didn’t discuss on Tuesday was noteworthy as well: Trump did not raise Russia’s meddling in the U.S. elections or its suspected involvement in the recent poisoning of a former spy in England.

“An American president does not lead the free world by congratulating dictators on winning sham elections,” said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee and has pressed the Trump administration to respond aggressively to Russia’s interference in the U.S. presidential election.

Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, a frequent Trump critic, called the president’s call “odd.” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Trump “can call whomever he chooses” but noted that calling Putin “wouldn’t have been high on my list.”

At the State Department, spokeswoman Heather Nauert said it was “no surprise” that Putin was re-elected, commenting that some people were paid to turn out to vote and opposition leaders were intimidated or jailed. She also cited a preliminary report by the Organization for Security

and Cooperation in Europe that said Russia’s election took place in an overly controlled environment that lacked an even playing field for all contenders.

Her comments were notably tougher on Russia than those coming from the White House.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders defended Trump’s call, and noted that President Barack Obama made a similar call at the time of Putin’s last electoral victory.

“We don’t get to dictate how other countries operate,” Sanders said.

The action and reaction fit a Trump White House pattern of declining to chide authoritarian regimes for undemocratic practices.

Trump himself has long been reluctant to publicly criticize Putin. He said that during their hoped-for meeting the two men would likely discuss Ukraine, Syria and North Korea, among other things.

“I suspect that we’ll probably be meeting in the not too distant future to discuss the arms race, to discuss the arms race, which is getting out of control, but we will never allow anybody to have

anything even close to what we have,” Trump said.

Russia has received global condemnation after Britain blamed Moscow for the recent nerve agent attack that sickened Sergei Skripal and his daughter. Russia has denied the accusation.

Trump’s call came at a period of heightened tensions between the two nations after the White House imposed sanctions on Russia for its interference in the 2016 U.S. election and other “malicious cyberattacks.” Sanders insisted that the administration has scolded Putin at the appropriate times.

Senators push for better security for 2018 mid-term election season

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Government efforts to protect state and local elections from Russian cyberattacks in 2016 didn’t go far enough, leaders of the Senate intelligence committee said Tuesday as the panel released recommendations to safeguard against foreign meddling in the 2018 primary season that’s already underway.

Federal warnings last time did not provide enough information or in some cases go to the right people in state and local governments, the committee’s leaders said, though they reiterated that there was no evidence votes were changed. Russian agents targeted election systems in 21 states ahead of the 2016 general election, the Homeland Security Department has said, and top U.S. intelligence officials have said they’ve seen indications Russian agents are preparing a new round of election interference this year.

The committee’s recommendations include urging states to make sure voting machines have paper audit trails and aren’t capable of being connected to the internet. Senators also are pushing for better communication among the various U.S. intelligence agencies and federal, state and local governments about cyber threats and vulnerabilities in computer systems.

The committee’s recommendations preview an election security report expected to be released in full in the coming weeks. It is the first of four reports the



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., center, joined from left by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, Vice Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., and Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., previews some of the panel's recommendations for improving the nation's election infrastructure ahead of the midterm elections.

panel plans to write in its wide-ranging investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the panel, released the recommendations ahead of a Wednesday hearing examining attempted hacks on state election systems in 2016 and the federal and state response.

The proposals, in large part, echo those made by cybersecurity experts and address concerns raised by state and local officials. Even with Republican and Democratic support, it’s unclear if the recommendations will translate into legislation. Burr said his panel doesn’t have jurisdiction over the issues, so another committee would have to write any bills in Congress.

“While our investigation is still ongoing, one conclusion is clear: The Russians were relentless in attempting to meddle in the 2016 elections, and they will continue their efforts to undermine public confidence in Western democracies and in the legitimacy of our elections,” said Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine.

Burr said the committee’s investigation revealed that the Russian cyber effort exposed “some of the key gaps” in the security of the nation’s election infrastructure. He said the committee wants to maintain state control of elections, but the federal government should be doing more to help.

“Clearly we’ve got to get some standards in place that assure every state that at the end of the day they can certify their vote totals,” he said.

Authorities encounter new threats amid new leads in Texas bombings

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Investigators pursuing a suspected serial bomber in the Texas capital faced new threats along with the promise of valuable new leads as their attention shifted Tuesday to a FedEx shipping center near San Antonio where a package exploded and the discovery of another, unexploded bomb near Austin’s airport.

Even as they pored through surveillance video footage and collected evidence hoping to get closer to tracking down whoever is behind the blasts that have killed two people and seriously wounded four others, a Tuesday night scare caused them to swiftly respond to a Goodwill store in the southern part of Austin. It turned out to be an unrelated explosion: Someone dropped off a device sometimes used in military training and it went off and injured a worker.

Police said they don’t believe it was the work of a copycat and that such military items are sometimes mistakenly donated to Goodwill instead of being properly disposed of.

“We put all the donations we get in a big cardboard box. (The worker) pulled something out in a bag, completely normal, and the device went off,” Gary Davis, president and CEO of Goodwill Texas, said as he stood outside a police barrier huddling with other employees.

“In this town, if an incendiary device goes off, everybody just scatters and panics. We’re all on edge.”

The blast reminded Shahla Mohandshaw, who grew up in Afghanistan before moving to the U.S. in 2012, of home. Mohandshaw, whose husband works at the Goodwill, was doing laundry at her apartment complex

nearby when she heard helicopters and raced toward the store.

“I was raised on these bombings. I know the feeling of how it feels and how it hurts,” she said, adding that she used to tell people “in America, there will never be these things.”

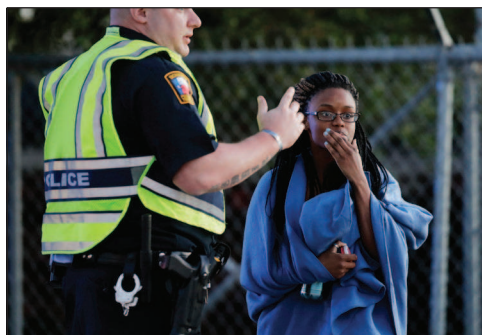
Even before the report of the Goodwill scare, it had been a busy day. A bomb inside a package exploded around 1 a.m. Tuesday as it passed along a conveyer belt at a FedEx shipping center in Schertz, northeast of San Antonio and about 60 miles southwest of Austin. One worker reported ringing in her ears and was treated at the scene.

Local and federal authorities confirmed the package center blast was related to four other ones since March 2.

Later in the morning, police sent a bomb squad to a FedEx facility outside the Austin airport to check on a suspicious package that was reported. Federal agencies and police later said that package had indeed contained an explosive that was successfully intercepted and that it, too, was tied to the other bombings.

Authorities also closed off an Austin-area FedEx store where they believe the bomb that exploded was shipped to the distribution center. They roped off a large area around the shopping center in the enclave of Sunset Valley and were collecting evidence, including surveillance camera footage.

U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, a Republican from Austin who is chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said that investigators have obtained surveillance videos that “could possibly” show a suspect, but are still poring through video.



AP Photo/Eric Gay

An employee wrapped in a blanket talks to a police officer after she was evacuated at a FedEx distribution center where a package exploded, Tuesday in Schertz, Texas.

BRIEFLY

Teen shoots girl in Maryland school, killed in confrontation

GREAT MILLS, Md. — A teenager armed with a handgun shot and critically wounded a girl inside a Maryland school on Tuesday and the shooter was killed when a school resource officer confronted him moments after the gunfire erupted. A third student was in good condition after he was shot.

The shooting at Great Mills High School, a month after 17 people were killed at a Florida high school, intensified calls for Congress to act on gun violence at schools. This weekend, students across the country plan an anti-gun violence march on the nation’s capital.

In Maryland, it wasn’t immediately clear whether the shooter took his own life or was killed by the officer’s bullet, St. Mary’s County Sheriff Tim Cameron said, though the officer was credited with preventing any more loss of life.

Authorities didn’t release a motive, but said they believe the girl and the shooter — 17-year-old Austin Rollins — previously had a relationship. It wasn’t clear how the 14-year-old boy was wounded.

The officer, who doubles as a SWAT team member, was unharmed.

Police did not identify the victims, but the family of 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey, a sophomore at Great Mills, confirmed that she had been shot.

World’s last male northern white rhino, Sudan, dies

NAIROBI, Kenya — The death of the world’s last male northern white rhino, Sudan, doesn’t end efforts to save

a subspecies of one of the world’s most recognizable animals. The focus now turns to his stored semen and that of four other dead rhinos, as well as the perfection of in vitro fertilization techniques and the critical need to keep the remaining two females alive.

Whatever happens, conservationists hope the lessons learned in the endeavor can be applied to other critically endangered species.

The 45-year-old Sudan, who won widespread affection last year with his listing as “The Most Eligible Bachelor in the World” on the Tinder dating app in a fundraising effort, was euthanized on Monday after “age-related complications,” researchers said Tuesday.

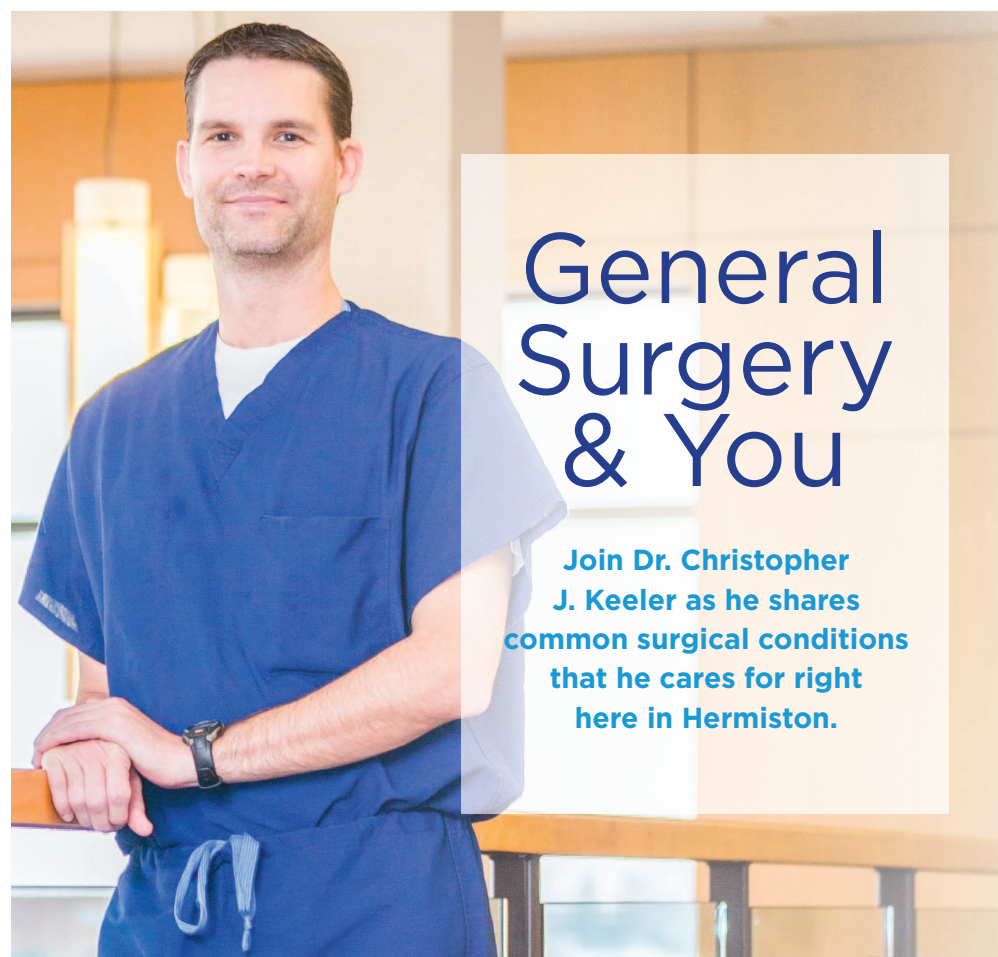
In his death, the world saw the shadow of extinction approach before their eyes. “Utter tragedy today,” British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson tweeted. “We can’t just sit back and watch more species disappear.”

Border wall, tunnel tussle hold up spending bill

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will reap a huge budget increase for the military while Democrats cement wins on infrastructure and other domestic programs that they failed to get under President Barack Obama if lawmakers can agree on a \$1.3 trillion government-wide spending bill before a deadline later this week. Battles over budget priorities in the huge bill were essentially settled Tuesday, but a scaled-back plan for Trump’s border wall and a fight over a tunnel under the Hudson River still held up a final agreement.

GoodHealth LIVE

WITH CHRISTOPHER J. KEELER, D.O.,
BOARD CERTIFIED GENERAL SURGEON



General Surgery & You

Join Dr. Christopher J. Keeler as he shares common surgical conditions that he cares for right here in Hermiston.

Wednesday, April 25

6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Good Shepherd Health Care System
Conference Center 1 and 2
610 NW 11th Street | Hermiston, OR 97838

A Healthy dessert with light refreshments will be provided

Space is Limited. Register today!
Call 541.667.3509
or Register Online at Eventbrite

Can't Make it to the Event?
Watch Live at www.facebook.com/gshcnews

