

Democrats, White House forge new North American trade deal

By ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats and the White House announced a deal Tuesday on a modified North American trade pact, handing President Donald Trump a major Capitol Hill win on the same day that impeachment charges were announced against him. Both sides hailed the deal as a win for American workers.

They said the revamped U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement was a significant improvement over the original North American Free Trade Agreement, with Democrats crowing about winning stronger provisions on enforcing the agreement while Republicans said it will help keep the economy humming along.

“There is no question of course that this trade agreement is much better than NAFTA,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said in announcing the agreement, saying the pact is “infinitely better than what was initially proposed by the administration.”

Trump said the revamped trade pact will “be great” for the United States.

“It will be the best and most important trade deal ever made by the USA. Good for everybody — Farmers, Manufacturers, Energy, Unions — tremendous support. Importantly, we will finally end our Country’s worst Trade Deal, NAFTA!” the president said in a tweet.

The deal announcement came on the same morning that Democrats outlined impeachment charges against Trump. The trade pact is Trump’s top Capitol Hill priority along with funding for his long-sought border fence.

Trump said it was no coincidence that Democrats



AP Photo/Marco Ugarte

Mexico’s Treasury Secretary Arturo Herrera, left, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada Chrystia Freeland, second left, Mexico’s President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, center, Mexico’s top trade negotiator Jesus Seade, second right, and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, hold the documents after signing an update to the North American Free Trade Agreement, at the national palace in Mexico City on Tuesday.

announced they had come to an agreement shortly after laying out the two impeachment charges they will seek against him.

“They were very embarrassed by (impeachment), and that’s why they brought up USMCA an hour after because they figure it will muffle it a little bit,” Trump told reporters at the White House before departing for a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

In Mexico City, Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland joined Mexican officials to sign the updated version of the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, or USMCA, at a ceremony in Mexico City’s centuries-old National Palace.

Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard con-

gratulated the negotiators for reaching a second set of agreements to answer U.S. concerns about labor rights in Mexico, and regional content.

“Mission accomplished!” Ebrard told the gathered officials.

Lighthizer praised the joint work of the Trump administration, Democrats, business and labor leaders to reach an agreement, calling it “nothing short of a miracle that we have all come together.”

“This is a win-win-win agreement which will provide stability for working people in all three countries for years to come,” Freeland said. “That is no small thing.”

A U.S. House vote is likely before Congress adjourns for the year and the Senate is likely to vote in January or February. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the vote on the trade deal will likely occur after an expected impeachment trial

in the Senate.

Pelosi was the key congressional force behind the deal, which updates the 25-year-old NAFTA accord that many Democrats — especially from manufacturing areas hit hard by trade-related job losses — have long lambasted.

She and Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal, D-Mass., forged a positive working relationship with Lighthizer, whom they credited with working in good faith.

“Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, we have reached an historic agreement on the USMCA. After working with Republicans, Democrats, and many other stakeholders for the past two years we have created a deal that will benefit American workers, farmers, and ranchers for years to come,” Lighthizer said. “This will be the model for American trade deals going forward.”

Afghanistan’s Karzai: U.S. cash fed corruption

By KATHY GANNON
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan’s former president argued Tuesday that Washington helped fuel corruption in his nation by spending hundreds of millions of dollars over the past two decades without accountability.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Hamid Karzai responded to findings from a trove of newly published documents that successive U.S. administrations misled the public about the war in Afghanistan.

Karzai said the documents, obtained by *The Washington Post*, confirm his long-running complaints about U.S. spending.

The documents also describe Karzai, Afghanistan’s president for 14 years, as having headed a government that “self-organized

into a kleptocracy.” Karzai has denied wrong-doing but hasn’t denied involvement of officials in his government in corruption.

Karzai became Afghanistan’s president after a 2001 U.S.-led invasion ousted the Taliban government. Thousands of pages of documents recently obtained by the *Post* portray U.S. governments lying about successes and hiding failures. After 18 years and over \$1 trillion dollars in U.S. taxpayer money spent on the war, the Taliban is now at its strongest and controls or holds sway over half the country.

Karzai said the U.S. spent hundreds of millions of dollars in its war on terror, with the money flowing to contractors and private security

firms, and that this fostered corruption.

“What could we do? It was U.S. money coming here and used by them and used for means that did not help Afghanistan,” Karzai said.

He argued that there was no accountability.

“I’m glad this report is out, and I hope this becomes an eye-opener to the American people and that the U.S. government begins to change its attitude now toward Afghanistan,” he said.

Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S. based Wilson Center has said, “I’m not sure I’d go so far as to say that the U.S. used corruption as a tool, but it has long been suspected — and these new documents make quite clear — that U.S. officials have thrown huge amounts of money at Afghanistan knowing full well that this would lead to more corruption than

development or peace.”

The Pentagon said Monday there had been “no intent” to mislead Congress or the public, and that the Defense Department gave regular updates to lawmakers on U.S. challenges in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has been trying to broker a peace deal that would pave the way for a pull-out of U.S. forces.

U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad on Saturday held the first official talks with Afghanistan’s Taliban since previous seemingly successful efforts ran aground in September.

The talks will initially focus on getting a Taliban promise to reduce violence, with a permanent cease-fire being the eventual goal, said a U.S. statement. Khalilzad is also trying to lay the groundwork for negotiations between Afghans on both sides of the protracted conflict.

BRIEFLY

U.S. to review international student vetting

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon on Tuesday ordered a broad review of vetting procedures for international students who participate in training on U.S. military installations and demanded the process be strengthened, in direct reaction to last week’s deadly shooting at a Pensacola Navy base by a Saudi aviation student.

The memo signed by Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist also suspends flight and other operational training for all Saudi Arabian students in U.S. military programs. It follows a decision by the U.S. Navy to halt flight training for more than 300 Saudi Arabian students at the Pensacola Naval Air Station and two other bases in Florida.

The FBI confirmed Tuesday that the 21-year-old Saudi Air Force officer who killed three U.S. sailors and injured eight other people at the Pensacola base on Friday legally bought the 9mm Glock pistol he used. Investigators are digging into whether 2nd Lt. Mohammed Alshamrani acted alone, amid reports he hosted a party earlier last week where he and others watched videos of mass shootings.

The incident has raised questions about how well international military students are screened before they attend training at American bases.

Norquist’s memo says the review of the vetting must be completed in 10 days, and the flight restrictions will continue throughout the review and until they are lifted by senior leaders.

6 killed in N.J. gun battle, including police officer

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Six people, including a police officer and three bystanders, were killed in a furious gun battle Tuesday that filled the streets of Jersey City with the sound of heavy fire for hours, authorities said.

The dead included the two gunmen, Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly said.

The slain officer, Det. Joseph Seals, 40, was credited by his superiors with having led the department in the number of illegal guns removed from the streets in recent years, and might have been trying to stop an incident involving such weapons when he was cut down by gunfire that erupted near a cemetery, authorities said.

The shooting then continued at a kosher supermarket about a mile away, where five more bodies

were found, Kelly said.

“It’s a really tough day for the city of Jersey City,” Mayor Steven Fulop said. Seals “was one of the best officers for getting the most guns off the streets. He was a good cop.”

Two other officers were wounded but were later released from the hospital, authorities said.

Brazil’s Bolsonaro calls activist Greta Thunberg a ‘brat’

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday called young Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg a “brat” after she expressed concern about the slayings of indigenous Brazilians in the Amazon.

Bolsonaro questioned the coverage news media have given Thunberg, 16, who on Sunday tweeted a link to a story about the murder of two indigenous people in Brazil’s Maranhao state.

“Greta said that the Indians died because they were defending the Amazon,” Bolsonaro told a group of journalists. “It’s impressive that the press is giving space to a brat like that,” he added, using the Portuguese word “pirralha.”

Following Bolsonaro’s comments, Thunberg changed the bio on her Twitter profile to say “Pirralha.”

Thunberg became a symbol for youth demanding radical change to confront climate change when she sparked global school strikes.

Nobel winner Abiy: ‘hell’ of war fueled desire for peace

STOCKHOLM — The winner of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize says his horrifying experiences as a young Ethiopian soldier informed his determination to seek the end of a long conflict with a neighboring country.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed spoke at Oslo City Hall during the ceremony in Norway’s capital where he received his Nobel on Tuesday, saying: “War is the epitome of hell for all involved. I know because I was there and back.”

Abiy won the prize, in part, for making peace with Eritrea after one of Africa’s longest-running conflicts. Abiy served in the army during the war.

“Twenty years ago, I was a radio operator attached to an Ethiopian army unit in the border town of Badame,” he recalled. “I briefly left the foxhole in the hopes of getting a good antenna reception. ... It only took but a few minutes. Yet upon my return I was horrified to discover that my entire unit had been wiped out in an artillery attack.”

— Associated Press

Bloomberg to U.N. on climate: You can count on the U.S.

By FRANK JORDANS
AND ARITZ PARRA
Associated Press

MADRID — New York billionaire and presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg led a high-powered charge against President Donald Trump’s climate policies Tuesday, assuring activists, scientists and politicians from around the world that Americans are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions “even with a climate change denier in the White House.”

Bloomberg, who launched his 2020 campaign less than three weeks ago, spoke during a trip to the U.N. global climate conference in Madrid, even as the official U.S. delegation at a booth nearby kept a low profile.

Together with former Secretary of State John Kerry and former Vice Pres-

ident Al Gore, Bloomberg constituted a sort of shadow delegation at a time when Trump is moving to pull the United States out of the 2015 Paris climate accord.

As other Democratic candidates have done, Bloomberg vowed to immediately rejoin the pact if elected president.

“The first thing you do, Day One, is you say we’re going back in,” he said. “That’s a no-brainer.”

The former New York mayor has helped support and fund a private push to get U.S. states, cities and businesses to abide by the terms of the Paris accord.

He touted a report that said non-federal actors representing more than two-thirds

of the U.S. economy are on course to cut the nation’s emissions 37% by 2030 compared with 2005 levels. If the next administration joins in, that figure could rise to 49%, bringing the U.S. roughly in line with the Paris treaty, according to the report.

“Americans are willing to continue to work, even with a climate change denier in the White House,” the 77-year-old businessman told a packed room.

The U.S. remains a party to the climate pact until Nov. 4, 2020 — the day after the U.S. presidential election.

Bloomberg, who has made climate change a central pillar of his bid for the nomination, also called for an end to U.S. subsidies and tax breaks for fossil fuels, which are one of the main sources of greenhouse gases.

Scientists say their use needs to end by the mid-

dle of the century if average temperatures on Earth are to rise no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100, the target set in the Paris agreement.

By taking aim at fossil fuel subsidies, Bloomberg is challenging both a powerful American industry and Trump, who has championed the extraction of oil, gas and coal.

According to a report by the International Monetary Fund, fossil fuel subsidies in the U.S. amounted to \$649 billion in 2015. Only China spent more tax money — \$1.4 trillion — to keep fossil fuel prices low that year.

The IMF report calculated that if prices for fossil fuels reflected their true cost, including the environmental damage they cause, consumption would drop so much that global carbon emissions would be 28% lower.

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