

Appendix A: Corpus of selected articles classified in chronological order***Trump Abandons Trans-Pacific Partnership, Obama's Signature Trade Deal*****By PETER BAKER** JAN. 23, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump upended America's traditional, bipartisan trade policy on Monday as he formally abandoned the ambitious, 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership brokered by his predecessor and declared an end to the era of multinational trade agreements that defined global economics for decades.

With the stroke of a pen on his first full weekday in office, Mr. Trump signaled that he plans to follow through on promises to take a more aggressive stance against foreign competitors as part of his "America First" approach. In doing so, he demonstrated that he would not follow old rules, effectively discarding longstanding Republican orthodoxy that expanding global trade was good for the world and America — and that the United States should help write the rules of international commerce.

Although the Trans-Pacific Partnership had not been approved by Congress, Mr. Trump's decision to withdraw not only doomed former President Barack Obama's signature trade achievement, but also carried broad geopolitical implications in a fast-growing region. The deal, which was to link a dozen nations from Canada and Chile to Australia and Japan in a complex web of trade rules, was sold as a way to permanently tie the United States to East Asia and create an economic bulwark against a rising China.

Instead, Mr. Trump said American workers would be protected against competition from low-wage countries like Vietnam and Malaysia, also parties to the deal.

But some in both parties worry that China will move to fill the economic vacuum as America looks inward, and will expand its sway over Asia and beyond.

Monday was a busy day for the new president. In addition to abandoning the trade deal, he ordered a freeze on federal government hiring, except for the military and other security agencies. He reinstituted a ban on federal funding for overseas family planning groups that assist or counsel women seeking abortions. He met with congressional, labor and business leaders. And he promised to cut up to 75 percent of federal regulations.

Mr. Trump's decision to scrap the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or T.P.P., reversed a free-trade strategy adopted by presidents of both parties dating back to the Cold War, and aligned him more with the political left. When he told a meeting of union leaders at the White House on Monday that he had just terminated the pact, they broke into applause.

“We’re going to stop the ridiculous trade deals that have taken everybody out of our country and taken companies out of our country, and it’s going to be reversed,” Mr. Trump told them, saying that from now on, the United States would sign trade deals only with individual allies. “I think you’re going to have a lot of companies come back to our country.”

Mr. Trump may also move quickly to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. He is scheduling meetings with the leaders of Canada and Mexico, the two main partners in that pact, which was negotiated by President George Bush and pushed through Congress by President Bill Clinton. While Nafta has been a major driver of American trade for nearly two decades, it has long been divisive, with critics blaming it for lost jobs and lower wages.

But free-trade advocates said that in canceling the Pacific pact, Mr. Trump lost an agreement that had already renegotiated Nafta under more modern rules governing intellectual property, internet access and agriculture, since both Mexico and Canada were signatories. He also undercut Mr. Obama’s so-called pivot to Asia and, critics said, essentially ceded the field to China, which was not part of the agreement.

“There’s no doubt that this action will be seen as a huge, huge win for China,” Michael B. Froman, the trade representative who negotiated the pact for Mr. Obama, said in an interview. “For the Trump administration, after all this talk about being tough on China, for their first action to basically hand the keys to China and say we’re withdrawing from our leadership position in this region is geostrategically damaging.”

Some Republicans agreed, but only a few would publicly challenge the president. Senator John McCain of Arizona called the decision “a serious mistake” that would hurt America. “It will send a troubling signal of American disengagement in the Asia-Pacific region at a time we can least afford it,” he said in a statement.

The Obama administration negotiated the trade pact for nearly eight years. Speaker Paul D. Ryan and other congressional Republicans worked with Mr. Obama to pass legislation granting so-called fast-track authority to negotiate it over Democratic objections. But Mr. Obama never submitted the final agreement for approval amid vocal opposition.

The agreement, the largest regional trade accord ever, brought together the United States and 11 other nations in a free-trade zone for about 40 percent of the world’s economy. It was intended to lower tariffs while establishing rules for resolving trade disputes, setting patents and protecting intellectual property.

Obama officials argued that it benefited the United States by opening markets while giving up very little in return. In particular, it finally brought the United States and Japan, the world’s largest and third-largest economies, together in a free-trade pact.

Mr. Trump’s decision was crushing for Japan, where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spent considerable political capital to get the agreement through Parliament, which ratified it Friday. Just hours before Mr. Trump dispensed with it, Mr. Abe told Parliament that Tokyo would lobby the new administration on the merits of the deal.

Japan was the last to join the pact, which would give its manufacturers tariff-free access to export markets in the United States and other Asian countries, but would bring its automakers into competition with lower-wage countries like Mexico. Mr. Abe became a strong enthusiast after making politically painful concessions on agricultural imports that the United States had sought.

China, by contrast, welcomed Mr. Trump's move, although its leaders will probably relish the moment quietly. Given Mr. Trump's harsh attacks on China and his appointment of a leading China critic, Peter Navarro, to the new post of trade council director, Beijing is bracing for a potentially combative relationship.

Victor Shih, an expert on China's political economy at the University of California, San Diego, said withdrawing from the T.P.P. would alter America's image in the region. "The U.S. will be seen as an unreliable partner both economically and perhaps even in the security arena," he said. "While some countries in Asia have no choice but to be close to the U.S., others may begin to look to China."

China has already sought to capitalize by making a push to complete an alternative pact, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which aims to unite 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India.

Australia's trade minister, Steven Ciobo, said on Monday that other members of the trade pact were exploring whether to create a "T.P.P. minus one," without the United States.

"The T.P.P. offers very material benefits for all parties that signed up for the agreement," he said in an interview. "It would be a great shame to lose those benefits. Notwithstanding President Trump's decision, there's still a lot of merits to capturing those gains."

If Mr. Trump scrambled coalitions overseas, he did so at home, too. Democrats and labor groups praised his move. James P. Hoffa, general president of the Teamsters union, said Mr. Trump had "taken the first step toward fixing 30 years of bad trade policies." Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, said it would "bury the moldering corpse" of the Pacific deal, though she expressed concern about how Nafta would be renegotiated.

Some people emerging from the union meeting with Mr. Trump, who won surprising victories in Midwestern labor strongholds, expressed enthusiasm for both his trade action and his promise to build new roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

"We just had probably the most incredible meeting of our careers," Sean McGarvey, president of North America's Building Trades Unions, said. "We will work with him and his administration to help him implement his plans on infrastructure, trade and energy policy, so we really do put America back to work."

Trump withdraws US from Trans-Pacific Partnership

By **Mark Moore** and **Daniel Halper**

January 23, 2017 | 12:44pm | Updated

WASHINGTON — President Trump wasted no time on Monday carrying out a central campaign pledge by scuttling the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, one in a number of executive orders he issued.

“We’ve been talking about this for a longtime,” Trump said as he signed the order in the Oval Office. “Great thing for the American worker.”

The trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim nations was negotiated by former President Obama and became a major issue in the 2016 presidential campaign, with even Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton renouncing a deal she had previously supported.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, who always against the deal, praised Trump, saying it’s “time to develop a trade policy that helps working families, not just multinational corporations.”

“I am glad the Trans-Pacific Partnership is dead and gone,” the Independent from Vermont said. “For the last 30 years, we have had a series of trade deals ... which have cost us millions of decent-paying jobs and caused a ‘race to the bottom’ which has lowered wages for American workers.”

But Sen. John McCain condemned the decision to ditch the agreement saying it only increases China’s influence in the region. China was not part of TPP, but has been pursuing its own trade pact with others countries in the Pacific.

“President Trump’s decision to formally withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a serious mistake that will have lasting consequences for America’s economy and our strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region,” the Republican from Arizona said.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Trump dumped the deal because the “agreement is not in the country’s best interest.”

He said Trump's decision sends a "strong signal that the Trump administration wants free and fair trade around the globe," adding that the US would pursue bilateral trade agreements with other countries that were part of the pact.

The president also signed orders freezing most federal government hiring, excluding the military, and reinstating a ban on federal money for international groups that provide abortions.

Congress never adopted the controversial trade pact.

The TPP was aimed at eliminating most tariffs and other trade barriers among the US, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Vietnam and half a dozen other countries around the Pacific.

Trump has also taken aim at NAFTA, a trade agreement that took effect in 1994 between Mexico, Canada and the US.

He has said he will begin re-negotiating that agreement when he meets with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto to get better terms for the US or will withdraw from it.

Trump withdraws from Trans-Pacific Partnership amid flurry of orders

President begins effort to dismantle Obama legacy by scrapping trade deal, and reinstates ban on providing federal funding to aid groups that perform abortions

David Smith *in Washington*

Mon 23 Jan 2017 17.46 GMT Last modified on Tue 28 Nov 2017 06.58 GMT

Donald Trump has begun his effort to dismantle Barack Obama's legacy, formally scrapping a flagship trade deal with 11 countries in the Pacific rim.

The new president also signed executive orders to ban funding for international groups that provide abortions, and placing a hiring freeze on non-military federal workers.

Trump's decision not to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) came as little surprise. During his election campaign he railed against international trade deals, blaming them for job losses and focusing anger in the industrial heartland. Obama had argued that this deal would provide an effective counterweight to China in the region.

"Everyone knows what that means, right?" Trump said at Monday's signing ceremony in the White House. "We've been talking about this for a long time. It's a great thing for the American worker."

The TPP was never ratified by the Republican-controlled Congress, but several Asian leaders had invested substantial political capital in it. Their countries represent roughly 13.5% of the global economy, according to the World Bank.

Trump's election opponent, the Democrat Hillary Clinton, had also spoken out against the TPP.

The move also intensified speculation over the future of the 23-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta). There were reports that Trump would sign an executive order on Monday to begin renegotiating terms with Canada and Mexico.

He did move to reinstate a ban on providing federal money to international non-government organizations that perform abortions or provide information about them. The policy also prohibits taxpayer funding for groups that lobby to legalize abortion or promote it as a family planning method.

Republican administrations have tended to institute such a ban while Democrats have reversed it, most recently President Obama in 2009.

Trump signed it one day after the anniversary of the supreme court's 1973 Roe v Wade decision that legalized abortion in the US. Activists fear that the precedent is now under threat.

The administration was criticized after footage appeared to show only one woman in the room as this executive order, along with the other two, were signed. Only four of Trump's cabinet picks are women.

Nancy Pelosi, Democratic minority leader in the Senate, said: "Now, foreign non-governmental organisations will be forced to give women incomplete medical information, advice and care in order to participate in US-supported programs abroad. When last in place, the global gag rule had the effect of decreasing access to family planning services around the world. Study after study shows that when women have increased access to family planning services and supplies, such as contraceptives, the incidence of abortion decreases.

"No US funds can be or have been used to perform or promote abortion services overseas since 1973. The fact is that President Trump's shameful decision to reinstate the global gag rule will cause more unintended pregnancies, more maternal complications and injuries, less information about HIV/Aids prevention and treatment and more – not fewer – abortions."

Republican congressman Michael Burgess, who chairs the House's health subcommittee, welcomed the move. "Life is a precious and sacred gift, and we must do all we can to protect it," he said. "I applaud President Trump for taking this important action and look forward to continuing to work together in advancing pro-life policies and protecting taxpayer dollars."

Earlier, Trump met a group of top business leaders including Elon Musk, the head of SpaceX, and the executives from Dell, Johnson & Johnson and Lockheed Martin. He set out plans to cut regulations for businesses in the US and slash the company tax rate from 35% "down to anywhere from 15 to 20%".

"We want to bring manufacturing back to our country," the president said. "It's one of the reasons I'm sitting here instead of somebody else sitting here."

He added: "We want to start making our products again. We don't want to bring them in; we want to make them here. That doesn't mean we don't trade because we do trade, but we want to make our products here.

"If you look at some of the original great people that ran this country, you will see that they felt very strongly about that."

He said companies that moved factories out of the US and then tried to sell their products back to America would be punished with a "very major border tax".

Since winning last November's election, Trump has singled out and threatened to impose tariffs on US companies that move production to Mexico. Trump has been accused of hypocrisy because many of his business's own products are manufactured overseas.

On Monday, he promised: “There will be advantages to companies that do indeed make their products here. It’s going to be a wave. You watch, it’s going to be a wave.”

Andrew Liveris, the chief executive of Dow Chemical, told the Associated Press that Trump had given them 30 days to come up with a plan to help stimulate the US manufacturing sector.

In his bleak inaugural address on Friday, Trump described “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation” and pledged to boost US industries over those abroad. Critics argue that some trends, such as the automation of factories, are irreversible.

As his new administration continued its breakneck speed, Trump was scheduled to speak with the Egyptian president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, on Monday.

The new president has a meeting with union leaders and workers in the afternoon, followed by a reception with members of Congress and a meeting with the House speaker, Paul Ryan. His controversial press secretary, Sean Spicer, will also hold a media briefing.

A Senate committee is set to vote on Trump’s nominee for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, the former head of ExxonMobil. Marco Rubio, a senator for Florida who had clashed with Tillerson at a committee hearing earlier this month, said on Monday: “Despite my reservations, I will support Mr Tillerson’s nomination in committee and in the full Senate,” making it likely the nomination will pass.

The White House is seeking to recover from a rocky opening weekend in which Trump was criticised for using a CIA appearance to boast about his inauguration crowds and attack the media, and Spicer presented false information at his first press briefing.

Ryan issued a statement applauding Trump’s first executive actions. “President Trump is wasting no time acting on his promises,” he said. “Already, he has laid the groundwork to protect Americans struggling under Obamacare. He has renewed President Reagan’s policy to ensure American taxpayers are not forced to subsidize abortions anywhere in the world. He has followed through on his promise to insist on better trade agreements.

“And by instituting a hiring freeze, he has taken a critical first step toward reining in Washington bureaucracy. We look forward to working with the president to build on these actions and deliver results for the people.”

Ryan was a vocal advocate of the TPP, lending the trade pact support from the highest-ranking Republican in the nation under Obama. But he later accused the administration of negotiating an agreement that lacked sufficient support from members of Congress, while explaining his decision not to bring the TPP up for a vote in the lame-duck session prior to Obama’s departure from the White House.

But some Republicans criticised Trump’s move to formally withdraw from the TPP. Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate armed services committee, described

it as a “serious mistake” with long-term consequences. “This decision will forfeit the opportunity to promote American exports, reduce trade barriers, open new markets, and protect American invention and innovation,” he said.

“It will create an opening for China to rewrite the economic rules of the road at the expense of American workers. And it will send a troubling signal of American disengagement in the Asia-Pacific region at a time we can least afford it.”

Like Trump, Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders had attacked TPP on the campaign trail, and on Monday he praised Trump’s decision, saying TPP is “dead and gone”.

“Now is the time to develop a new trade policy that helps working families, not just multinational corporations,” Sanders said in a statement. “If President Trump is serious about a new policy to help American workers then I would be delighted to work with him.

“For the past 30 years, we have had a series of trade deals ... which have cost us millions of decent-paying jobs and caused a ‘race to the bottom’ which has lowered wages for American workers,” he said.

Daniel Ikenson, director of the Herbert A Stiefel Center for Trade Policy Studies, said the US was now becoming “more protectionist than at any point since the Hoover administration”.

A DON DEAL

Donald Trump pledges much closer relationship with Britain after scrapping landmark Trans Pacific Partnership agreement

The British Prime Minister is visiting the US at the end of the week for first face to face meeting as the billionaire axes Trans-Pacific Partnership

By Zoe Nauman [US Online Reporter](#)

24th January 2017, 2:26 am

Updated: 24th January 2017, 3:57 am

DONALD Trump has pledged to build an even closer relationship with the UK as Theresa May plans to fly to the US for her first face to face visit with the new US President.

The billionaire made the announcement as he ripped up the landmark Trans-Pacific Partnership deal with other countries, which could bode well for new trade links with Britain.

The Prime Minister is set to arrive in Washington DC at the end of the week, the first visit by any world leader since Trump's inauguration on Friday.

Press secretary Sean Spicer revealed the US saw its relationship with the UK as "special" and said when asked if there was a significance she was the first visit: "I think we've always had that special relationship with Britain and that reflects in the Prime Minister's first visit here.

"He's had a great conversation with her and he looks forward to having her here, but we can always be closer."

May is hoping the meeting on Friday with Trump could lead to lifting existing tariffs and securing an ambitious trade deal between the US and UK.

On Monday the billionaire scrapped The Trans-Pacific Partnership, known as TPP, which was negotiated by former president Barack Obama.

The deal was part of a plan to boost economic relations with 11 countries, including Canada, Malaysia, Japan, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, as well as lower tariffs.

However Trump signed an order which pulled the US out of the plan.

Spicer said: "When you enter into these multinational agreements, you're basically putting every other country on par with the United States."

Meanwhile Trump has also indicated a similar trade deal which was in place with the EU is also off the table.

And chiefs in Brussels are said to be very frustrated with the president's different attitude towards the EU and the UK.

In a bid to slow down any negotiation, Theresa May has been warned if she enters into any deals with the US before Brexit, Britain could be breaching EU trade laws.

But Downing Street has confirmed she will start to discuss a US-US agreement during her meeting.

It is thought the plan will include allowing workers to be able to move freely between both countries so trade can be boosted.

Government sources have suggested this could give the Prime Minister necessary leverage in leaving the EU.

May said on Sunday: "We'll have an opportunity to talk about our possible future trading relationship, but also some of the world's challenges that we will face. I will be talking to Donald Trump about the issues that we share – about how we can build on the special relationship."

She added: "It's the special relationship that also enables us to say when we do find things unacceptable."

Spicer described May as the UK's "head of state" at a briefing yesterday and said there wouldn't be a press conference when the two leaders meet later this week.

‘Last Night in Sweden’? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation

By SEWELL CHAN FEB. 19, 2017

LONDON — Swedes reacted with confusion, anger and ridicule on Sunday to a vague remark by President Trump that suggested that something terrible had occurred in their country.

During a campaign-style rally on Saturday in Florida, Mr. Trump issued a sharp if discursive attack on refugee policies in Europe, ticking off a list of places that have been hit by terrorists.

“You look at what’s happening,” he told his supporters. “We’ve got to keep our country safe. You look at what’s happening in Germany, you look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this?”

Not the Swedes.

Nothing particularly nefarious happened in Sweden on Friday — or Saturday, for that matter — and Swedes were left baffled.

“Sweden? Terror attack? What has he been smoking? Questions abound,” Carl Bildt, a former prime minister and foreign minister, wrote on Twitter.

As the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet noted, Twitter users were quick to ridicule Mr. Trump’s remark, with joking references to the Swedish Chef, the “Muppets” character; Swedish meatballs; and Ikea, the furniture giant.

Mr. Trump did not state, per se, that a terrorist attack had taken place in Sweden. But the context of his remarks — he mentioned Sweden right after he chastised Germany, a destination for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war and deprivation — suggested that he thought it might have.

“Sweden,” Mr. Trump said. “They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible.”

He then invoked the terrorist attacks that took place in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels and Nice, France, last year, to make an argument for tightening scrutiny of travelers and asylum seekers. “We’ve allowed thousands and thousands of people into our country, and there was no way to vet those people,” he said. “There was no documentation. There was no nothing. So we’re going to keep our country safe.”

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, a White House spokeswoman, tried to clarify the president’s remarks Sunday, saying Mr. Trump did not mean to suggest that a particular attack had happened the night before, but rather was talking about crime in general in Sweden.

On Sunday, Mr. Trump offered his own clarification, writing on Twitter, “My statement as to what’s happening in Sweden was in reference to a story that was broadcast on @FoxNews concerning immigrants & Sweden.”

In that story, the Fox News host Tucker Carlson interviewed Ami Horowitz, a filmmaker who asserts that migrants in Sweden have been associated with a crime wave. “They oftentimes try to cover up some of these crimes,” Mr. Horowitz said, arguing that those who try to tell the truth about the situation are shouted down as racists and xenophobes.

(Mr. Carlson interjected, “The masochism of the West knows no bounds at all.”)

Mr. Horowitz said, “Sweden had its first terrorist Islamic attack not that long ago, so they’re now getting a taste of what we’ve been seeing across Europe already.”

It was not clear what he was referring to. In 2010, a suicide bomber struck central Stockholm, injuring two people. The bomber, Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly, 28, was an Iraqi-born Swede who had developed an affinity for Al Qaeda. But that attack occurred long before the current wave of migrants.

Sweden has a long history of welcoming refugees — Jews, Iranians, Eritreans, Somalis, Kurds and people from the former Yugoslavia, among others — but even some of the most tolerant and idealistic Swedes have raised questions about whether the country can absorb so many newcomers so quickly.

Henrik Selin, a political scientist and deputy director of the Swedish Institute, a state agency dedicated to promoting Sweden globally, said he was puzzled by Mr. Trump’s remarks.

“I do not have a clue what he was referring to,” he said in a telephone interview. “Obviously, this could be connected to the fact that there has been a lot of negative reporting about Sweden, since Sweden has taken in a lot of refugees.”

The country processed 81,000 asylum seekers in 2014, 163,000 in 2015 and 29,000 last year, with another 25,000 to 45,000 expected this year, according to the Swedish Migration Agency.

Mr. Selin completed a study recently focusing on negative news reports about Sweden’s acceptance of refugees. It found numerous exaggerations and distortions, including false reports that Shariah law was predominant in parts of the country and that some immigrant-heavy neighborhoods were considered “no-go zones” by the police.

Breitbart News, the right-wing website once led by Stephen K. Bannon, now Mr. Trump’s senior strategist, has published numerous stories alleging that migrants have been responsible for a surge in crime and for a wave of sexual assaults. Swedish officials have said that their statistics do not justify such sweeping assertions, and that the country has a high number of sexual assault reports relative to other European countries because more victims come forward, not because there is more violence.

Mr. Selin said the news reports “were highly exaggerated and not based in facts,” adding, “Some of the stories were very popular to spread in social media by people who have the same kind of agenda — that countries should not receive so many refugees.”

As for the cover-up alleged by Mr. Horowitz, Mr. Selin said: “That kind of claim has been in the political debate for 15 years now. But nobody has been able to prove there is a cover-up. On the contrary, the fact is that crime rates are going down.”

He added: “Swedish authorities have nothing to gain from hiding the truth. We are quite keen to ensure that the debate and the story about our country is fact-based and nuanced. We are more than happy to talk about the challenges our country faces as well as the things that are going well.”

Asked about Mr. Trump’s comment, Anna Kinberg Batra, the leader of the opposition Moderate Party, said in a statement, “President Trump has to answer himself for his statements, why he makes them and based on what facts.”

Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom declined to comment because, her press secretary, Erik Wirkensjo, said, “it’s hard to say what Trump is talking about.”

In an essay in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter, the journalist Martin Gelin speculated that “Trump might have gotten his news from the countless right-wing media in the United States that have long been reporting that Sweden is heading for total collapse.”

He added, “Among Trump supporters, there are common myths that Sweden is in a state of chaos after taking in refugees from the Middle East.”

Swedes ask what Trump's 'smoking' after he cites phony terror attack

By **Mark Moore**

February 19, 2017 | 8:15am | Updated

The former Swedish foreign minister wondered what Donald Trump was “smoking” after the president referred to a nonexistent terror attack in the Scandinavian country.

“Sweden? Terror attack? What has he been smoking? Questions abound,” a baffled Carl Bildt tweeted late Saturday about Trump’s comments during a rally in Florida earlier in the day.

Defending his immigration ban, Trump recounted terror attacks in Brussels, Nice and Paris – and then lumped in Sweden.

“You’ve got to keep our country safe. You look at what’s happening in Germany, you look at what’s happening last night in Sweden,” he said during the speech in Melbourne, Fla.

“Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden?” Trump continued. “They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible.”

The Swedish embassy on Sunday said it had reached out to the state department “to get clarity.”

Later, the White House said the president was talking about “rising crime and recent incidents, in general,” not “a specific incident.”

Trump may have conflated the notion of Sweden and terror from a Tucker Carlson interview on Fox News Friday night with a journalist who said there had been an increase in “gun violence and rape” in Sweden since the European migrant crisis began.

The Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet took a lighter approach to the non-existent attack by listing a number of news events that happened in the country on Friday — including a man severely burned, an avalanche warning and a police chase involving a drunken driver — but no terrorism.

'Sweden, who would believe this?': Trump cites non-existent terror attack

At Florida rally president refers to attack in Sweden that did not happen, possibly confusing it with Sehwan in Pakistan

Alexandra Topping

Sunday 19 February 2017 14.05 GMT First published on Sunday 19 February 2017 12.31 GMT

Donald Trump appeared to invent a terrorist attack in Sweden during a campaign-style rally in Florida on Saturday, inviting questions that he may have confused the Scandinavian country with a city in Pakistan.

With thousands of supporters gathered in an aircraft hangar in Melbourne, Florida, Trump used his speech to talk about migration in Europe and linked it to terror attacks in Brussels, Nice and Paris. He then added Sweden to the list, incorrectly stating that an attack had happened there on Friday.

Trump told supporters: "We've got to keep our country safe. You look at what's happening in Germany, you look at what's happening last night in Sweden."

"Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible. You look at what's happening in Brussels. You look at what's happening all over the world. Take a look at Nice. Take a look at Paris."

There were questions about whether Trump had confused Sweden with Sehwan in Pakistan, where more than 85 people were killed in a suicide bombing at the Sufi shrine on Thursday.

Some Swedes were baffled by the comments. One of Sweden's official Twitter accounts, controlled by a different citizen each week, currently a school librarian, said:

Sweden's foreign ministry spokeswoman, Catarina Axelsson, said the government wasn't aware of any "terror-linked major incidents".

She told the Associated Press that the Swedish embassy in Washington contacted the State Department on Sunday to request clarification of Trump's remarks and was waiting for an answer.

The former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt tweeted: "Sweden? Terror attack? What has he been smoking? Questions abound."

The source of Trump's remark is unclear, but it came after Fox News aired an interview with film-maker Ami Horowitz, whose latest documentary examines

whether high crime rates in areas of Sweden is linked to its previous open-door policy on people fleeing war and persecution.

According to the 2016 Swedish Crime Survey, crime rates in Sweden have stayed relatively stable over the last decade, with some fluctuations. In 2015, there were 112 cases of lethal violence in Sweden, an increase of 25 cases compared with 2014, but assaults, threats, sexual offences, car theft, burglary and harassment all reduced compared to the previous year – as did anxiety about crime in society.

Trump's comments come after Kellyanne Conway, one of his senior advisers, was ridiculed for blaming two Iraqi refugees for a massacre that never happened.

At the start of February Conway cited the fictitious "Bowling Green massacre" in an interview backing the travel ban imposed on visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries.

Two Iraqi men living in Bowling Green, Kentucky, were arrested in 2011 over a failed attempt to send money and weapons to al-Qaida in Iraq. They are currently serving life sentences for federal terrorism offences, but there was no massacre, nor were they accused of planning one.

On 29 January, the White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, referred three times to an attack in Atlanta – where a string of bombings were carried out in 1996 and 1997.

Later, in an email to ABC News, he wrote that he "clearly meant Orlando".

Forty-nine people were killed and more injured in the attack at Pulse, a gay nightclub in the Floridian city in June. It was carried out by Omar Mateen, a US citizen born in New York to Afghan parents. Afghanistan is not on the list of countries under Trump's travel ban.

Trump has repeatedly accused what he described as the "dishonest media" of producing "fake news". He repeated the attack on Saturday stating: "When the media lies to people I will never ever let them get away with it."

He added: "We are not going to let the fake news tell us what to do, how to live and what to believe," he said. "We are free, independent people and we will make our own choices."

After Trump's remarks in Florida, the Swedish news outlet Aftonbladet posted a story about crime that really had occurred in Sweden on Friday. Non-fake news it ran included: "Due to harsh weather in northern parts of Sweden the road E10 was closed between Katterjakk and Riksgransen" and "a man died in hospital, after an accident in the workplace earlier that day".

It added: "OK let's not be fake news, this story took place in the autumn, but was reported Friday before lunchtime and we thought you would like it. A wooden moose got the attention of a lovesick moose bull."

Former UK footballer Gary Lineker poked fun at Trump, tweeting:

To which one of his followers replied:

Another Twitter user posted a picture of famous Swedish export Abba, writing: “Four extremists responsible for #swedenincident are still at large, if you see these people phone @realDonaldTrump at once.”

‘WAS IT AL-IKEA?’

Donald Trump mercilessly mocked after appearing to invent refugee terror attack in Sweden during Florida rally

Donald Trump left Swedes scratching their heads after referring to the non-existent 'incident'

BY JENNY AWFORD

19th February 2017, 3:28 pm

DONALD Trump appeared to invent a terror attack in Sweden and blame refugees for the non-existent ‘incident’ during a rally.

The US President was mercilessly mocked after name-dropping the country along with places that have experienced terror attacks, such as Brussels and Nice.

He told a rally in Florida on Saturday that something had happened “last night” in Sweden – but politicians and journalists could not find any evidence of an incident.

"You look at what's happening in Germany, you look at what's happening last night in Sweden," Trump told the crowd.

“Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible."

He made the comments while defending his executive order that blocked refugees and travellers from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the US.

Model Ines Helene tweeted: “BREAKING: Terror organisation Al-IKEA has claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks that occurred last night in Sweden.

“4 armed suspects were reportedly shouting "ABBA-akbar."

Former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt tweeted: "Sweden? Terror attack? What has he been smoking? Questions abound."

Gunnar Hokmark, a Swedish member of the European Parliament, retweeted a post that said "#lastnightinSweden my son dropped his hotdog in the campfire. So sad!"

Hokmark added his own comment: "How could he know?"

Numerous social media users responded with Ikea-themed tweets.

Some posted photos of the impossible-to-understand instructions for assembling Ikea furniture, calling it "Secret Plans for the #SwedenIncident."

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Catarina Axelsson said that the government wasn't aware of any "terror-linked major incidents."

Sweden's Security Police said it had no reason to change the terror threat level.

"Nothing has occurred which would cause us to raise that level," agency spokesman Karl Melin said.

Trump's latest gaffe comes weeks after his advisor Kellyanne Conway referred to a "Bowling Green Massacre" that never occurred.

During an interview with MSNBC, she said: "President Obama had a six-month ban on the Iraqi refugee programme after two Iraqis came here to this country were radicalised, and they were the masterminds behind the Bowling Green massacre."

"Most people don't know that because it didn't get covered."

But it soon emerged that the attack didn't get covered because it never actually happened.

Trump Plans to Skip White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

By MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM FEB. 25, 2017

Capping a week of extraordinary hostility toward the news media, President Trump tweeted on Saturday that he would not attend this year's charity dinner of the White House Correspondents' Association, scheduled for April 29, a Washington tradition symbolizing comity between the president and the press.

Whether Mr. Trump would appear at the dinner had been an open question: The president has blasted the news media as the "opposition party" and on Friday delivered his most slashing broadside yet, telling the Conservative Political Action Conference that major news outlets were "the enemy of the people." Later, his press secretary barred journalists from CNN, The New York Times and other organizations from a briefing at the White House.

The level of tension seemed incongruous with a black-tie event that is typically a jocular, if occasionally sharp-edged evening. The dinner, which has attracted A-list celebrities in recent years, features a presidential roast of reporters and a comic routine by a notable entertainer. Presidents are expected to be self-deprecating, which Mr. Trump is decidedly not.

The event may also evoke dark memories for Mr. Trump, who was brutally mocked at the 2011 dinner by President Barack Obama and the late-night host Seth Meyers, both of whom skewered the real estate developer for his seemingly far-fetched political aspirations and reality-show gaudiness. Cameras captured Mr. Trump in the audience, stone-faced, and the evening has since been cited as a prime motivator behind his presidential run.

Still, a White House official said this month that Mr. Trump planned to continue the tradition of the dinner, which raises money for scholarships.

The Correspondents' Association, in a measured statement on Saturday, said that it "takes note" of the president's decision. Jeff Mason, its president, wrote that the dinner "has been and will continue to be a celebration of the First Amendment and the important role played by an independent news media in a healthy republic."

Mr. Mason said on CNN that one of the last times a president did not attend the dinner was in 1981, as it was shortly after the March 30 attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan. Mr. Reagan telephoned from his hospital room.

This year's dinner was already shaping up as an outlier. Vanity Fair decided not to hold its traditional after-party, considered the high-water event of the Washington social calendar. Its co-sponsor, Bloomberg L.P., bowed out on Friday, citing a lack of interest. The New Yorker also canceled an event.

Minutes after Mr. Trump tweeted his intention to stay home, suggestions were popping up on social media on who might attend in his stead.

“Let @AlecBaldwin play @POTUS at the dinner,” tweeted April D. Ryan, a White House correspondent for American Urban Radio Networks, referring to the actor who appears on “Saturday Night Live” impersonating Mr. Trump. “Now that could work.”

Trump says he's skipping White House Correspondents' Dinner

By **Bill Sanderson**

February 25, 2017 | 5:12pm

President Trump said Saturday he won't attend the annual White House Correspondents Association dinner.

"I will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner this year. Please wish everyone well and have a great evening!" Trump tweeted at 4:53 p.m. on Saturday.

The dinner, scheduled for April 29, draws reporters and celebrities and usually features performances by comedians. The president attends each year.

The White House Correspondents' Association has complained about how President Trump and his administration has handled press conferences and briefings. On Friday the association complained when The New York Times, CNN and other news organizations were excluded from a briefing by presidential press secretary Sean Spicer.

DON JOURNO SNUB

Donald Trump announces he will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Dinner – the first president to pull out EVER

The president said he hoped people attending will "have a great evening!" still

BY HOLLY CHRISTODOULOU

25th February 2017, 11:50 pm

Updated: 26th February 2017, 12:14 am

DONALD Trump has announced he will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Dinner – the first ever President to boycott the tradition.

The President did not say he would be cancelling the event completely but will be breaking tradition by not going himself.

He tweeted: "I will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Association dinner this year. Please wish everyone well and have a great evening!"

The move is bound to shock as the dinner takes place at the home of the President and it customary that the person in that position attends with their families.

The White House Correspondents' Association is an organisation of journalists whose job is it to cover the acting president.

The annual dinner was started in 1920 and is traditionally held on the last Saturday of April at the Washington Hilton.

It has only ever been cancelled due to death or major current events.

In 1930, it was axed when President Taft died, and in 1942 was cancelled due to the US' entry into the Second World War.

President Truman cancelled the dinner, which is held to raise money for gifted students in college journalism programs, in 1951 over the "uncertainty of the world situation".

But Trump is the first American president to pull out of the dinner entirely.

It comes as the billionaire tycoon was branded the "anti-press" president after he slammed major news networks as "fake news".

He has blocked multiple news outlets – such as the New York Times, CNN, BuzzFeed and the Mail Online from a press meeting with Sean Spicer.

The dinner is commonly thought of negatively because it represents the cosiness between the White House and the press.

It usually features a comic roasting the famous faces in attendance and the president, before the leader of the free world takes the microphone themselves.

Former president Barack Obama last year poked fun at Trump with barbed remarks.

Obama commended Trump's foreign policy experience, noting that the businessman previously owned the Miss Universe pageant and "has spent years meeting with leaders from around the world - Miss Sweden, Miss Argentina, Miss Azerbaijan".

He also said that Trump's property experience might come in handy when it comes to closing the controversial Guantanamo Bay detainment facility.

He joked: "And there's one area where Donald's experience could be invaluable, and that's closing Guantanamo - because Trump knows a thing or two about running waterfront properties into the ground."

It wasn't the first time Obama aimed a string of jokes at Trump.

In 2011, he joked he would be releasing his official birth video - a joke directed at Trump who frequently questioned the then-president's birth certificate.

A clip from Disney's The Lion King was subsequently played to a room full of laughing journalists, politicians and celebrities.

Trump will not attend White House correspondents' dinner

President caps week of conflict with press, WHCA cites first amendment

Martin Pengelly

Sunday 26 February 2017 11.24 GMTFirst published on Saturday 25 February 2017 22.35 GMT

Donald Trump on Saturday capped a week of tumultuous relations with the press by saying he will not attend this year's White House correspondents' dinner, which is scheduled for 29 April.

"I will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner this year," the president wrote on Twitter. "Please wish everyone well and have a great evening!"

The news came as relations between the Trump administration and the news media, which he has called "the enemy of the American people", have sunk to new lows. On Friday, leading outlets including the New York Times, CNN and the Guardian were excluded from a briefing by the press secretary, Sean Spicer, while friendlier conservative organisations were admitted.

Editors of excluded organisations expressed anger, although the White House Correspondents Association (WHCA) president, Jeff Mason, of Reuters, attempted to calm troubled waters.

In a statement on Saturday, Mason said the WHCA "looks forward to having its annual dinner" and added: "The WHCA takes note of President Donald Trump's announcement on Twitter that he does not plan to attend the dinner, which has been and will continue to be a celebration of the first amendment and the important role played by an independent news media in a healthy republic.

"We look forward to shining a spotlight at the dinner on some of the best political journalism of the past year and recognizing the promising students who represent the next generation of our profession."

Trump has recently reacted angrily to a series of reports citing anonymous sources in the White House, law enforcement and intelligence agencies about chaos in his administration, alleged contacts between campaign staff and Russian agents, and White House attempts to rebut such reports.

The difficult relationship between Trump – whose senior adviser Steve Bannon, formerly chief of the rightwing website Breitbart News, has repeatedly called the press "the opposition party" – and the media has already contributed to a number of withdrawals from the correspondents' dinner and related events.

This week Bloomberg followed Vanity Fair and the New Yorker in saying it would not host a party tied to the dinner. The New York Times has not attended the event since

2008; the Guardian will not attend this year. This week, BuzzFeed reported that another favourite target of Trump's, CNN, was considering pulling out as well.

Trump followed a familiar path on Friday night, when he wrote on Twitter: "FAKE NEWS media knowingly doesn't tell the truth. A great danger to our country. The failing @nytimes has become a joke. Likewise @CNN. Sad!"

Many observers have linked Trump's run for the presidency with events at the 2011 correspondents' dinner, in which Barack Obama ridiculed the businessman, who was in attendance, over his championing of the so-called "birther" movement.

The dinner is a traditionally lighthearted affair, celebrities mixing with journalists at tables and comedians "roasting" the president of the day, as Stephen Colbert did to George W Bush in an infamous speech from 2006. The president traditionally speaks as well.

The first dinner was held in 1921 and Calvin Coolidge was the first president to attend, in 1924. Since then every president has attended the dinner at least once.

Ronald Reagan did not attend in 1981 – after being shot – and Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon did not always sit down for dinner. Obama attended all eight events while he was in office.

According to the History Channel the dinner has been cancelled three times: following the death of former president William Howard Taft, in 1930, after the US entry into the second world war in 1942, and in 1951, during the Korean war.

In January, Trump skipped the Alfalfa Club dinner, another key event in the social calendar of a city in which the president is happy to pose as an outsider.

Rob Mahoney, deputy executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, told the Guardian on Saturday Trump should "act as a champion of press freedom" around the world, rather than attacking the media in a way that could "send a signal to other countries that it is OK to verbally abuse journalists and undermine their credibility".

In a statement, Guardian US editor Lee Glendinning said the exclusion of news outlets from Friday's briefing was "deeply troubling and divisive" and added: "Holding power to account is an essential part of the democratic process, and that's exactly what the Guardian will continue to do."

Trump Claims Obama Wiretapped Him During Campaign; Obama Refutes It

By REUTERS MARCH 4, 2017, 2:21 P.M. E.S.T.

WASHINGTON — U.S. President Donald Trump accused predecessor Barack Obama on Saturday of wiretapping him during the late stages of the 2016 election campaign, but offered no evidence for an allegation which an Obama spokesman said was "simply false".

Trump made the accusation in a series of early morning tweets just weeks into his administration and amid rising scrutiny of his campaign's ties to Russia.

"How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!," Trump wrote in one tweet. "I'd bet a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October, just prior to Election!"

The remarkable tussle between the current and former presidents just 45 days since the handover of power is the latest twist in a controversy over ties between Trump associates and Russia that has dogged the early days of his presidency.

U.S. intelligence agencies concluded last year that Russia hacked and leaked Democratic emails during the election campaign as part of an effort to tilt the vote in Trump's favor. The Kremlin has denied the allegations.

Trump has accused officials in Obama's administration of trying to discredit him with questions about Russia contacts.

Obama spokesman Kevin Lewis said it had been a "cardinal rule" of the Obama administration that no White House official ever interfered with any independent investigation led by the Department of Justice.

"Neither President Obama nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any U.S. citizen. Any suggestion otherwise is simply false," Lewis said in a statement.

The statement did not address the possibility that a wiretap of the Trump campaign could have been ordered by Justice Department officials.

Trump said the alleged wiretapping took place in his Trump Tower office and apartment building in New York, but there was "nothing found." The White House did not respond to a request to elaborate on Trump's accusations.

Trump was spending the weekend at his Florida seaside resort, Mar-a-Lago. He was scheduled to meet with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly before a dinner with officials also including adviser Steve Bannon and White House Counsel Don McGahn, the White House said.

Amid a political storm, Sessions on Thursday announced he would stay out of any probe into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election after it

emerged he met last year with Russia's ambassador, although he maintained he did nothing wrong by failing to disclose the meeting.

A Trump spokeswoman said the president spent part of Saturday "having meetings, making phone calls and hitting balls" at his golf course in West Palm Beach.

His supporters, meanwhile, staged small rallies in at least 28 of the country's 50 states, most of which passed off peacefully. But there were clashes in the famously left-leaning city of Berkeley, California, where protesters from both sides hit each other over the head with wooden sticks.

Trump's tweets caught his aides by surprise, with one saying it was unclear what the president was referring to.

Members of Congress said Trump's accusations require investigation or explanation.

Senator Ben Sasse, a Republican, described the allegations as serious and said the public deserved more information. He said in a statement it was possible that Trump had been illegally tapped, but, if so, the president should explain what sort of tap it was and how he knew about it.

U.S. Representative Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, called Trump's assertion a "spectacularly reckless allegation".

"If there is something bad or sick going on, it is the willingness of the nation's chief executive to make the most outlandish and destructive claims without providing a scintilla of evidence to support them," Schiff said in a statement.

Former Obama adviser Ben Rhodes strongly denied Trump's allegations: "No president can order a wiretap. Those restrictions were put in place to protect citizens from people like you," Rhodes wrote on Twitter.

Trump's administration has come under pressure from Federal Bureau of Investigation and congressional investigations into contacts between some members of his campaign team and Russian officials during his campaign.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said he had no knowledge of any wiretapping but was "very worried" about the suggestion Obama had acted illegally and would also be concerned "if in fact the Obama administration was able to obtain a warrant lawfully about Trump campaign activity."

Several other Republicans again urged an investigation into a series of intelligence-related leaks.

Obama imposed sanctions on Russia and ordered Russian diplomats to leave the United States in December over the country's involvement in hacking political parties in the Nov. 8 U.S. presidential election.

Under U.S. law, a federal court would have to have found probable cause that the target of the surveillance is an "agent of a foreign power" in order to approve a warrant authorizing electronic surveillance of Trump Tower.

Several conservative news outlets and commentators have made allegations in recent days about Trump being wiretapped during the campaign, without offering any evidence.

Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned in February after revelations that he had discussed U.S. sanctions on Russia with the Russian ambassador to the United States before Trump took office.

Flynn had promised Vice President Mike Pence he had not discussed U.S. sanctions with the Russians, but transcripts of intercepted communications, described by U.S. officials, showed that the subject had come up in conversations between him and the Russian ambassador.

Trump accuses Obama of having 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower

By **Kathianne Boniello**

March 4, 2017 | 7:23am | Updated

President Trump lashed out at his predecessor on Twitter early Saturday, claiming former President Barack Obama ordered electronic surveillance at Trump Tower during the election campaign.

"Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory," Trump tweeted at 6:35 a.m. as part of a flurry of early-morning tweets. "Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

The six-message tweetstorm intensified the controversy over his administration's ties to Russia, fed by a torrent of leaks from opponents within the government.

An Obama spokesman denied the charges Saturday afternoon.

"Neither President Obama nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any US citizen," said the spokesman, Kevin Lewis. "Any suggestion otherwise is simply false."

Lewis' statement did not address the possibility that Trump or his associates were surveilled as part of a Justice Department probe.

Trump, who drew a comparison to the Watergate scandal and called Obama a "bad (or sick) guy" in his tweets, did not offer evidence for his accusations.

The claims echo charges that had been espoused by conservative radio host Mark Levin on Thursday and were detailed Friday on Breitbart News.

The Justice Department and FBI requested court approval under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to eavesdrop on Trump and his associates last June, according to published reports.

The FISA court, which typically accedes to administration requests, did not permit the monitoring.

Five months later, according to a timeline laid out by Breitbart, the FBI successfully filed a narrower FISA request to monitor a server within Trump Tower that was suspected of ongoing contacts with Russian banks.

No evidence of illicit communications was found in that probe, November news reports said.

Trump's furious tone on Saturday was a departure from the generally warm statements he has made about Obama since taking office.

His diatribe began with a defense of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has been accused of lying under oath during his Senate confirmation hearings about his contacts with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

"Just out: The same Russian Ambassador that met Jeff Sessions visited the Obama White House 22 times, and 4 times last year alone," Trump later tweeted.

Sessions, who has denied wrongdoing, announced Thursday that he would recuse himself from any investigations into the 2016 presidential election, including probes into accusations of Russian meddling.

He will respond in writing on Monday to Senate Democrats' questions about his testimony, the Justice Department said.

The White House did not respond to requests to elaborate on Trump's Twitter accusations, which took his aides by surprise.

But backlash to the president's assertions was swift.

"The Deflector-in-Chief is at it again," tweeted House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. "An investigation by an independent commission is the only answer."

At a South Carolina town hall, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, a frequent Trump critic, appeared to agree.

"It's my job as a United States senator to get to the bottom of this," he said, suggesting congressional investigations are likely to continue.

'This is McCarthyism!': Trump accuses Obama of 'wire-tapping' his office before election

President accuses his White House predecessor of overseeing 'Nixon/Watergate'-style intervention

Chris Johnston

Saturday 4 March 2017 17.55 GMT First published on Saturday 4 March 2017 11.57 GMT

Donald Trump has accused Barack Obama of “wire tapping” his offices in New York City before the presidential election in November, claiming the former president had overseen a “Nixon/Watergate”-style intervention.

Launching a series of tweets at 5.35am eastern time on Saturday, the US president said: “Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my ‘wires tapped’ in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!”

He followed up that initial tweet with a string of others in the following 30 minutes which claimed Obama had defied a court’s rejection of a request to tap his office, and invited a “good lawyer” to make a case against the alleged operation.

The president then compared the alleged surveillance of his communications to Watergate – the scandal in the early 1970s that brought down Republican president Richard Nixon after he ordered a break-in of the Democrat party’s Washington headquarters.

Trump also made efforts to defend Jeff Sessions, the US attorney general, who is facing questions over his meeting with the Russian ambassador to Washington during the 2016 presidential election campaign.

He tweeted: “The first meeting Jeff Sessions had with the Russian Amb was set up by the Obama Administration under education program for 100 Ambs...” .

He added: “Just out: The same Russian Ambassador that met Jeff Sessions visited the Obama White House 22 times, and 4 times last year alone.”

There was no additional information provided to substantiate the president’s claims that Obama had “wire tapped” Trump Tower, and it was not clear on what information Trump was basing the allegations.

There has been no response to the tweets from Obama.

The Trump administration has been on the back foot over its contacts with Russian officials before the president took office in January.

Last month Michael Flynn was forced to resign as national security adviser over conversations with the Russian ambassador to Washington and misleading statements about them to the press and the vice-president, Mike Pence.

This week it was revealed that Sessions had two meetings with Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the US, last year twchich he failed to disclose to senators during his confirmation hearing.

Sessions said on Friday that he would recuse himself from investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 election despite backing from Trump, who described the controversy as “a total witch hunt”.

Trump’s tweets follow claims made by the conservative radio host Mark Levin on his Thursday night show about the alleged steps taken by the Obama administration to undermine the Republican candidate’s campaign to win the White House.

The presenter called the effort a “silent coup” by the Obama administration and called for a congressional investigation into the issue. That contrasts with demands from across the US political spectrum to examine Russian interference in the presidential election.

Levin’s comments were followed up by Breitbart News, the “alt-right” website formerly run by Steve Bannon, who ran the Trump campaign and is now the president’s chief strategist.

The article stated: “The Obama administration sought, and eventually obtained, authorisation to eavesdrop on the Trump campaign; continued monitoring the Trump team even when no evidence of wrongdoing was found; then relaxed the NSA [National Security Agency] rules to allow evidence to be shared widely within the government, virtually ensuring that the information, including the conversations of private citizens, would be leaked to the media.”

The Breitbart story references recent claims that the FBI had asked the foreign intelligence surveillance court for a warrant last year to monitor members of the Trump team suspected of being in contact with Russian officials. The request for the warrant was initially rejected before being granted in October, the reports have said.

Lindsey Graham, the Republican senator from South Carolina, said: “I am very worried that our president is suggesting that the former president has done something illegally. I would be very worried if, in fact, the Obama administration was able to obtain a warrant lawfully about the Trump campaign activity with foreign governments. It’s my job as a United States senator to get to the bottom of this – I promise you I will.”

The Democratic congressman Seth Moulton, a member of the House armed services and budget committees, told the MSNBC channel: “This is right out of Donald Trump’s reality TV playbook. He’s trying to distract attention from the real story here, which is his campaign, his administration’s contact with Russian officials ... There’s clearly a deeper story here and we the American people need to know how high this conspiracy goes.”

Moulton added: “Obviously contacts with Russian intelligence officials are monitored – that’s part of maintaining our national security. So if under the Obama administration they were simply monitoring contacts with Russian officials – not

trying to wiretap into the Trump campaign but simply looking at who Russian officials were talking with – and then Trump campaign officials got ensnared in that net, then it's a total mischaracterisation to say President Obama was wiretapping Trump.”

Rep Eric Swalwell, a Democrat who is a member of the House intelligence committee, told Fox News that Trump “is not credible when it comes to talking about Russia”.

Swalwell downplayed Trump's allegations. “I think this is just the president up early doing his routine tweeting, he said. “Presidents don't wiretap anyone. These are pursued by the Department of Justice in accordance with the FBI and signed off by a judge.”

'THIS IS WATERGATE'

Barack Obama denies 'ever ordering surveillance on any US citizen' following bombshell accusations he tapped Donald Trump's phone during US presidential election

Trump claims 'sick' ex-president involved in surveillance during heated election campaign

By Brittany Vonow, Mark Hodge and Patrick Knox

4th March 2017, 8:06 pm

Updated: 5th March 2017, 1:06 pm

DONALD Trump's allegation that his predecessor ordered his phone to be tapped is "simply false", Barack Obama's spokesman says.

In an astonishing salvo of early morning tweets, the firebrand President claimed his predecessor had bugged his phones during the "very sacred election process", slamming the allegations as a "Nixon/Watergate" scandal.

Trump, who started the Twitter rant at 5:30am US eastern time, branded the claims a "new low" before appearing to call Obama a "bad (or sick) guy".

But Obama has strongly denied the allegations.

His spokesman Kevin Lewis said: "President Obama nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any US citizen."

The property tycoon turned politician wrote: "How low has President Obama gone to tap my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"

Watergate refers to the early 1970s political scandal which forced the resignation of Republican President Richard Nixon.

It involved members of a campaign team to re-elect the President being caught breaking into Democratic party's headquarters in the Watergate Building and bugging their offices.

He also tweeted: "Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my "wires tapped" in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

McCarthyism was coined after the Communist witch-hunts of the early 1950s.

Trump later added: "Is it legal for a sitting President to be "wire tapping" a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW!"

Continuing his rant on his personal social media account, Trump wrote: "I'd bet a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October, just prior to Election!"

It is not clear what information Trump based his Tweets on.

Although on Friday, Breitbart News reported on radio host Mark Levin's claims that Obama had been involved in a "silent coup" against the Trump campaign using "police state" tactics during the election campaign.

Breitbart News is a far-right political new site which was previously spearheaded by Trump's Chief Strategist Steven Bannon.

The article, which lays out conservative radio personality Levin's claims, states: "The Obama administration sought, and eventually obtained, authorisation to eavesdrop on the Trump campaign."

Levin also suggested that former President Obama should be the subject of a congressional investigation in light of the claims.

The day before the billionaire's shock election win, former Heat Street editor Louise Mensch reported US spooks had been granted a court warrant to monitor Trump Tower.

Former Conservative MP Mensch reported that a "source within the intelligence community" had confirmed the story.

This week, the New York Times reported that officials within the Obama administration had attempted to spread information about Russian meddling during the divisive election.

And according to NYT, US intelligence agencies studied intercepted communications and financial transactions as part of a probe into alleged links between Russian officials and the Trump campaign in January.

But authorities have confirmed there was no convincing evidence of wrongdoing.

President Trump also tried to defend Jeff Sessions, the US attorney general who is facing questions over two meetings with a Russian ambassador during the presidential campaign in 2016.

He wrote: "The first meeting Jeff Sessions had with the Russian Amb was set up by the Obama Administration under education program for 100 Ambs..."

He added: "Just out: The same Russian Ambassador that met Jeff Sessions visited the Obama White House 22 times, and 4 times last year alone."

This week it emerged that Sessions had two meetings with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak – something he failed to disclose during his senate confirmation hearing.

On Friday, Sessions confirmed that he would recuse himself from investigations into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

Trump's New Travel Ban Blocks Migrants From Six Nations, Sparing Iraq

By GLENN THRUSH MARCH 6, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump signed an executive order on Monday blocking citizens of six predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States, the most significant hardening of immigration policy in generations, even with changes intended to blunt legal and political opposition.

The order was revised to avoid the tumult and protests that engulfed the nation's airports after Mr. Trump signed his first immigration directive on Jan. 27. That order was ultimately blocked by a federal appeals court.

The new order continued to impose a 90-day ban on travelers, but it removed Iraq, a redaction requested by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who feared it would hamper coordination to defeat the Islamic State, according to administration officials.

It also exempts permanent residents and current visa holders, and drops language offering preferential status to persecuted religious minorities, a provision widely interpreted as favoring other religious groups over Muslims. In addition, it reversed an indefinite ban on refugees from Syria, replacing it with a 120-day freeze that requires review and renewal.

But the heart of the sweeping executive action is still intact, reflecting Mr. Trump's "America first" pledge to safeguard against what he has portrayed as a hidden influx of terrorists and criminals — a hard-line campaign promise that resonated deeply with white working-class voters.

The new order retains central elements of the old one, cutting the number of refugees admitted to the United States each year to 50,000 from about 110,000. Mr. Trump is also leaving open the possibility of expanding the ban to other countries, or even putting Iraq back on the banned list if the country's leaders fail to comply with a requirement that they increase intelligence sharing, officials said.

"Unregulated, unvetted travel is not a universal privilege, especially when national security is at stake," said John F. Kelly, the homeland security secretary, appearing alongside Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson and Attorney General Jeff Sessions at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building in Washington on Monday.

Mr. Kelly said the order was now "prospective" and applied "only to foreign nationals outside of the United States" who do not have a valid visa. None of the men took questions.

The Trump administration quickly tried to break the legal logjam, filing papers in United States District Court in Washington late on Monday seeking to lift an order blocking the fulfillment of the initial ban.

But the president's revisions did little to halt criticism from Democrats and immigrant rights advocates, who predicted a renewed fight in the courts.

The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, described the new order as a “watered-down ban” that was still “meanspirited and un-American.”

Margaret Huang, the executive director of Amnesty International USA, said in a statement that the new order would “cause extreme fear and uncertainty for thousands of families by, once again, putting anti-Muslim hatred into policy.”

The new measure will be phased in over the next two weeks to avoid the frenetic, same-day execution of the order in January, which prompted protests across the country and left tearful families stranded at airports abroad and in the United States.

The redrafted order, delayed by a week so it would not overshadow Mr. Trump’s address to a joint session of Congress last Tuesday, represented a recognition that the rushed first attempt at the ban did not pass muster legally or politically.

Administration officials privately conceded that the initial version of the order was a political debacle that damaged Mr. Trump’s nascent presidency. But they were much more sanguine about the second order, arguing that the new, multiagency review process could be used in the future to bend Mr. Trump’s uncompromising messages toward Washington’s bureaucratic realities.

Mr. Trump signed the first ban with great fanfare, in front of reporters, at the Pentagon. “We don’t want them here,” Mr. Trump said of Islamist terrorists. “We want to ensure that we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas. We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country, and love deeply our people.”

This time, the White House issued a photograph of the president signing the order alone at his desk in the Oval Office.

Justice Department lawyers said the revisions rendered moot legal cases against the original travel ban. But opponents said the removal of a section that had granted preferential treatment to victims of religious persecution was a cosmetic change that did nothing to alter the order’s prejudicial purpose. Immigrant rights lawyers had argued that the provision was intended to discriminate against Muslims, pointing to recent statements by Mr. Trump.

“This is a retreat, but let’s be clear — it’s just another run at a Muslim ban,” said Omar Jadwat, the director of the Immigrants’ Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union, one of the groups that sued to stop the first order. “They can’t unring the bell.”

Eric T. Schneiderman, the attorney general of New York and a plaintiff in a suit seeking to block the first order, said his office was reviewing the new ban, adding, “I stand ready to litigate — again — in order to protect New York’s families, institutions and economy.”

Congressional Republicans, who were split over the first travel ban, had a more muted reaction. But Speaker Paul D. Ryan, who backed the first order, issued a statement saying the revised order “advances our shared goal of protecting the homeland.”

Citizens of Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Libya will face a 90-day suspension of visa processing as the administration analyzes how to strengthen vetting procedures, according to a homeland security summary of the order.

The removal of Iraq from the list came after talks with security officials in Baghdad and at the urging of Mr. Mattis and State Department officials, who have been in communication with Iraqi officials alarmed that the ban will turn public sentiment in their country against the United States.

“On the basis of negotiations that have taken place between the government of Iraq and the U.S. Department of State in the last month, Iraq will increase cooperation with the U.S. government on the vetting of its citizens applying for a visa to travel to the United States,” homeland security officials wrote in a fact sheet given to reporters.

The timing of the ban seemed intended to reset the White House political narrative, after a turbulent week that began with Mr. Trump’s well-received address to Congress. That success was quickly overshadowed by the controversies over Mr. Sessions’s failure to inform the Senate of his contacts with the Russian ambassador and Mr. Trump’s unsupported accusation that President Barack Obama tapped Mr. Trump’s phones during the 2016 campaign.

Critics say that Mr. Trump’s vow to impose “extreme vetting” on migrants, especially those fleeing the war in Syria, disregards already stringent screening measures, and the fact that none of the recent terrorist attacks or mass shootings on American soil were perpetrated by people from the nations listed in the ban.

Last week, The Associated Press reported that it had obtained a draft homeland security assessment concluding that citizenship was an “unlikely indicator” of a threat.

Homeland security officials, speaking to reporters by telephone on Monday, pushed back against that news report, arguing that it was culled from public sources and excluded classified information that paints a more dangerous picture.

An official speaking on the call said the Justice Department had identified 300 “refugees” who were being investigated for their links to Islamist terrorist groups or for holding pro-Islamic State positions. Some of those people already have permanent resident status, the official said.

But homeland security and Justice Department officials declined to provide further details, and would not say how many of the 300 people being investigated came from the countries covered by the revised travel ban.

Trump signs revised immigration ban

By **Daniel Halper** and **Marisa Schultz**

March 6, 2017 | 11:42am | [Updated](#)

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Monday signed a new executive order that removes Iraq from the list of countries targeted by his earlier travel ban, while allowing all current visa holders to enter the US.

“It is the president’s solemn duty to protect the American people and with this order President Trump is exercising his rightful authority to keep our people safe,” Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in announcing the revised ban.

“As threats continue to evolve and change, common sense [dictates] that we continually re-evaluate and reassess the systems we rely upon to protect our country.”

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said the order gives the US the ability to control who crosses its borders and to keep out those who wish to do harm.

“This executive order protects the American people — as well as lawful permanent residents — by putting in place an enhanced screening and vetting process for visitors from six nations,” Sessions said.

The revised order also ends an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees and instead treats them like all other refugees.

The new order is scheduled to take effect March 16.

The delayed start date is an attempt to avoid a repeat of the mass confusion that occurred at airports across the world when the first order was put in place without warning.

Iraq welcomed the change in its status, saying it sent a “positive message” when Washington and Baghdad are working together against the Islamic State.

Thousands of Iraqis have fought alongside US troops for years or worked as translators since the US-led invasion in 2003.

Many have resettled here after being threatened for working with American troops. And US-backed Iraqi troops are involved in trying to root out Islamic State militants in Mosul.

Tillerson said the State Department reviewed the original executive order with Iraq in mind.

“Iraq is an important ally in the fight to defeat ISIS with their brave soldiers fighting in close coordination with America’s men and women in uniform,” he said.

More than two dozen lawsuits were filed in federal courts against the original ban, and Washington state succeeded in having it suspended by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals by arguing it violated constitutional protections against religious discrimination.

Sessions reaffirmed that the Department of Justice stands behind the legality of the revamped executive order and Trump’s ability to authorize it.

“This Department of Justice will defend and enforce lawful orders of the president consistent with core principles of our Constitution,” he said.

“The executive is empowered under the Constitution and by Congress to make national security judgments and to enforce our immigration policies in order to safeguard the American public.”

The original executive order, signed Jan. 27, covered seven countries: Sudan, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Iraq.

Sessions said the new order will enhance the screening and vetting processes for visitors from the six remaining nations.

“Three of these nations are state sponsors of terrorism. The other three have served as safe havens for terrorists — countries where the government has lost control of territory to terrorist groups like ISIL or al Qaeda and its affiliates,” Sessions said.

“This increases the risk that people admitted here from these countries may belong to terrorist groups, or may have been radicalized by them.”

He said those countries are unwilling or unable to help vet visitors coming to the US, compromising “our nation’s security.”

“This executive order provides a needed pause, so we can carefully review how we scrutinize people coming here from these countries of concern,” he said.

The revised order will not apply to people who had a valid visa as 5 p.m. Jan. 27, 2017, around the time the first travel ban was signed by Trump.

The new order launches a 90-day period for the Department of Homeland Security to define a new series of requirements for countries to have full participation in US entry programs.

For countries that do not comply, the State Department, DHS and intelligence agencies can make recommendations on what, if any, restrictions should be imposed.

The new order spells out detailed categories of people eligible to enter the United States, such as for business or medical travel, or people with family connections or who support the US.

Two other major changes from the initial immigration order: The new order will no longer give preference to individuals from a “minority religion,” such as Christianity. That distinction gave more fodder to critics who said the initial order was targeting Muslims.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer repeated those criticisms Monday, saying the new order does nothing for national security.

“A watered-down ban is still a ban. Despite the administration’s changes, this dangerous executive order makes us less safe, not more. It is mean-spirited, and un-American. It must be repealed,” Schumer said in a statement.

Now, all refugee visas from all countries will be suspended for 120 days. When the program resumes, the order caps refugee admissions to the US at 50,000 for the 2017 fiscal year, down from 110,000 in 2016.

Homeland Security chief John Kelly stressed that the ban is being implemented to bolster national security.

“It is important to note that nothing in this executive order affects current lawful permanent residents or persons with current authorization to enter our country,” he said. “If you have a current valid visa to travel, we welcome you. But unregulated,

unvetted travel is not a universal privilege, especially when national security is at stake.”

In addition to 1,000 ongoing investigations into terrorists by the FBI, officials said the FBI is examining for “potential terrorism-related activity” 300 individuals who were admitted to the US as refugees.

The Justice Department declined to offer details on how many refugees were from the six targeted countries or how many of the individuals are current refugees or green card holders.

Trump travel ban: new order targeting six Muslim-majority countries signed

Iraq dropped from list of affected countries with Syrian refugees no longer facing indefinite ban – but 120-day suspension of refugee program to stand

Sabrina Siddiqui and Lauren Gambino in Washington and Oliver Laughland in New York

Monday 6 March 2017 21.49 GMTFirst published on Monday 6 March 2017 14.20 GMT

Donald Trump on Monday signed a revised executive order to reinstate a ban on immigration from certain Muslim-majority countries and suspend the US refugee program.

The new ban, which revokes a previous order issued on 27 January that prompted instant chaos and was eventually blocked by federal judges, marked a significant retreat for Trump and his administration's vigorous defense of the original travel ban as being within the president's legal authority. But activists said they were planning to challenge the new ban.

The new order seeks to address prior complaints by removing language that granted priority to religious minorities for refugee resettlement, which had been viewed as targeting Muslims. It states that Trump's original directive "was not motivated by animus toward any religion", a remark rejected instantly by refugee advocates and civil liberty groups, who said they planned to challenge the second order on similar grounds.

It also includes specific exemptions for lawful permanent residents, who had initially been covered by the previous order.

And it removes Iraq from the list of targeted states, and implements a more gradual roll-out, meaning the new travel ban will not come into full effect for another 10 days.

"Make no mistake," White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters Monday in reference to the changes. "We lost the element of surprise back when the court enjoined this in the ninth circuit and we had to go back to the drawing board."

The president quietly signed the order away from the presence of cameras or the press, a noteworthy change from the original travel ban's rollout at the Department of Defense on 27 January.

The revised ban was instead announced by the heads of the agencies that will be tasked with overseeing its implementation. Addressing a limited pool of reporters on Monday, secretary of state Rex Tillerson, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) secretary John Kelly, and attorney general Jeff Sessions dubbed the move critical to US national security.

“As threats to our security continue to evolve and change”, Tillerson said, “common sense dictates that we continue to reevaluate and reassess the systems that we rely upon to protect our country.”

The new travel ban blocks entry to the US for citizens from six of the seven countries named in Trump’s original order – Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Libya – for a period of 90 days. Iraq was removed from the list after criticism that the original order overlooked the country’s role in fighting terrorism and barred entry even to the Iraqi interpreters who had been embedded with US forces in the region.

“Iraq is an important ally in the fight to defeat Isis,” Tillerson said Monday.

Unlike the 27 January order, written by the White House and presented to the agencies as a *fait accompli*, an “interagency process” permitted concerns about second-order effects of the ban to influence the finished product.

In the weeks since the ban was issued, US military and Pentagon officials have voiced concerns that their relationship with Iraq, critical to fighting the Islamic State, would be negatively impacted. A US official said defense secretary James Mattis and state department officials were responsible for overseeing “special immigration visas” for Iraqi employees of the US, which aided in getting Iraq off the ban.

The revised order will also keep in place a 120-day suspension of the refugee program, but it will no longer identify Syrian refugees as subject to an indefinite ban. It also maintains a 50,000 annual cap on America’s refugee intake, which more than halved president Obama’s pledge to resettle 110,000 refugees in 2017.

Several other changes to the travel ban served as a tacit acknowledgement that the original order was hastily crafted and paved the way for a litany of legal questions.

That order was temporarily halted by a federal judge just days after it was issued. The ninth circuit federal appeals court upheld the ruling last month, denying the justice department’s request to reinstate it.

On Monday justice department attorneys informed the ninth circuit they believed the new order was unaffected by the court’s previous ruling. Bob Ferguson, the Washington state attorney general who brought the case against the federal government said in a statement he was “carefully reviewing” the new order.

Initial reaction to the revised order was positive among Republicans. House speaker Paul Ryan, who was among the few to aggressively defend the administration’s previous travel ban, said the revised order “advances our shared goal of protecting the homeland”.

The White House has continued to defend the travel ban as a pressing matter of national security. But the administration appeared to undermine its own rationale by delaying the revised order last week, citing a desire not to crowd out the positive media coverage that followed Trump’s joint address before Congress.

Chuck Schumer, the Senate Democratic leader, said the delay was “all the proof Americans need to know that this has absolutely nothing to do with national security”.

“A watered down ban is still a ban,” Schumer said in a statement, adding, “It is mean-spirited, and un-American. It must be repealed.”

The ACLU compared the 27 January travel ban with the one issued on Monday.

Grace Meng, an immigration researcher for Human Rights Watch’s US program, said the changes contained within Trump’s revised order were “merely cosmetic”.

“President Trump still seems to believe you can determine who’s a terrorist by knowing which country a man, woman or child is from,” Meng said in a statement.

Other refugee advocacy groups vowed to challenge the order in court, arguing that the revised language did not alter the intent to discriminate against Muslims.

In Washington DC on Monday night, protesters gathered near the White House to denounce the modified ban.

High school senior Victoria Nicholson, of Woodbridge, Virginia, said she first heard about the protest from a friend on Twitter. She and a friend rushed to spray paint a sign before dashing out the door to make it in time.

“I’m not going to settle for this,” she said. “It makes me so livid to see people who are OK with what’s going on because none of it is OK - from the ban to the wall. Nothing he is doing can be justified.”

Arona Kessler, an administrative assistant from Fairfax County, said she was alarmed by what she viewed as an attack on a single religion.

“My great-grandparents came to the US and Canada to flee the holocaust,” she said. “So it’s very scary to me to see specific groups of people singled out and targeted like this.”

Officials at the DHS and State Department told reporters on a conference call Monday the objective was not to bar individuals on the basis of religion.

“This is not a Muslim ban in any way, shape, or form,” an official said.

“There are dozens and hundreds of millions, if not one-point something billion Muslims who are not subject to this executive order.”

The emphasis, the official added, was on countries where the US lacked “the ability to make adequate screening and vetting determinations for nationals under current procedures”.

But Trump, as a candidate, called for “a total and complete shutdown” of Muslim immigration to the US. After the president signed the initial travel ban, former New

York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, a close associate of Trump's, said he asked him how to implement a Muslim ban legally.

"I'll tell you the whole history of it: When he first announced it, he said 'Muslim ban,'" Giuliani said on Fox News. "He called me up, he said, 'Put a commission together, show me the right way to do it legally.'"

Legal experts say that interview, coupled with Trump's own repeated statements, will likely continue to cloud the administration in legal challenges against the travel ban and its intent.

Findings from a DHS report, obtained by several news outlets in recent weeks, also cast doubt on the administration's rationale.

The document, the authenticity of which was confirmed by the Guardian but framed by a DHS spokesperson as "incomplete", noted that citizens from the countries identified in Trump's ban are "rarely implicated in US-based terrorism."

It further concluded that citizenship was an "unreliable indicator" of the threat posed by terrorism to the US.

DHS officials pushed back on the report in the call with reporters, citing classified information indicating a more significant threat. The justice department, they noted, had opened inquiries into 300 "refugees" for potential links to terrorism. But the officials declined to identify how many of those individuals came from the countries subject to the travel ban.

Faiza Patel, the co-director of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, said the term "open counterterrorism investigation" was not indicative in and of itself that an individual was involved in any terrorist activity.

Under the Bush administration, the DoJ launched 11,667 "assessments" of people and groups from December 2008 to March 2009. But they resulted in only 427 more intensive investigations.

TRUMP TRAVEL BAN

What is Donald Trump's 'Muslim travel ban', which countries are affected and why has Iraq been removed?

The US President is expected to sign the new executive order this week

By AMANDA DEVLIN AND JON LOCKETT

6th March 2017, 10:33 pm

Updated: 6th March 2017, 10:51 pm

DONALD Trump has removed Iraq from the list of countries affected by his 'Muslim' travel ban as he signed a second executive order.

The new order has already proved controversial, with the New York attorney general saying he is scrutinising the new ban, and Nigeria warning its citizens not to travel to the US.

Before signing the order, the leader of the free world simply said the it would be tailored to what he labelled a "very bad decision" from a federal judge to temporarily halt the ban.

He had previously said he had "no doubt" that he would win a court battle over the order that banned citizens from seven Muslim countries from travelling to the US.

But his latest announcement suggested that the matter would not be taken to court to avoid it being tied up in what the Justice Department said would be "potentially time-consuming litigation".

At the Oscars ceremony Comedian Jimmy Kimmel did not hold back as he ripped into Trump as he hosted the 89th Academy Awards.

He cheekily thanked the president for making the Oscars appear less racist in light of last year's #OscarsSoWhite controversy, saying: "Remember last year when it seemed like the Oscars were racist?"

In his sarcasm-laden speech, Kimmel, 49, who was hosting the ceremony for the first time, said the ceremony was being watched around the world by "countries that now hate us" admitting he knew the country was divided and had been encouraged to say something that would unite people.

He said: "There are millions and millions of people watching right now, and if every one of you took a minute to reach out to one person you disagree with and have a positive, considerate conversation – not as liberals or conservatives but as Americans – if we all did that it would make America great again. It starts with us."

The controversial executive order originally caused protests across America and has also led to an online petition in the UK to stop Trump's state visit to Britain later this year.

It even prompted Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow to make an extraordinary attack on Trump - saying he had "concerns" surrounding the visit.

So let's cut through the controversy and take a closer look at the order.

What is Donald Trump's 'Muslim travel ban' and which countries are affected?

The President's first executive order banned citizens from seven countries from entering the US over a 90 day period.

The countries affected were Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Iraq.

Trump has also suspended the US's refugee system over a 120 day period.

The divisive order also stops refugees from entering the US for the next 120 days.

The ban gives preference to accept Christian refugees from the Middle East over Muslim asylum seekers.

There was confusion among Homeland Security officials about how the ban affected citizens from the seven barred countries who hold valid US green cards.

While senior officials initially granted entry to green card holders, the White House overruled them and barred any person travelling from the seven countries.

But after a federal judge in New York blocked that part of Trump's order on Sunday, the President's administration has now changed their stance.

Three judges upheld the initial injunction against the order that was issued by Judge James Robart.

According to CNN, green card holders from the seven banned countries are allowed to fly to the US but will undergo a secondary screening upon landing which includes being interviewed and having their fingerprints taken.

There was also confusion around the situation regarding dual nationals.

Initially, a state department official declared that dual nationals holding a passport from one of the banned countries would not be allowed into the US.

Why has Iraq been removed from the list of banned countries?

Before the order was signed, a White House source told reporters that Trump would remove Iraq from the list of targeted countries.

The senior official said the new executive order would keep a 90-day ban on travel to the United States by citizens of six Muslim-majority nations - Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

They said Iraq has been taken off the list because of its heightened visa screening and data sharing, and its work with the US to defeat ISIS militants.

Thousands of Iraqis have fought alongside US troops or worked as translators since the 2003 invasion, with many resettling in the country after facing a backlash.

The official said the order also ensures thousands of legal permanent residents in the United States - or green card holders - from the listed countries would not be affected by the ban.

Why did the ban come up at the Oscars?

Iranian director Asghar Farhadi condemned President Trump's "inhumane" travel ban on immigrants, as his movie, *The Salesman*, won the best foreign language film Oscar.

Farhadi boycotted the ceremony, with two Iranian-Americans representing him at the bash.

"Dividing the world into the US and 'our enemies' categories creates fear," his acceptance statement read.

A number of Oscar-nominees showed their hatred of the travel ban by wearing blue ribbons to the ceremony.

Best Actress nominee Ruth Negga, *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda and supermodel Karlie Kloss were among the stars who sported the ribbons while walking the red carpet at the Oscars - to protest against the ban.

And host Jimmy Kimmel did not hold back as he ripped into Trump as he hosted the 89th Academy Awards.

He cheekily thanked the president for making the Oscars appear less racist in light of last year's #OscarsSoWhite controversy, saying: "Remember last year when it seemed like the Oscars were racist?"

Trump's administration has pointed out that it was President Barack Obama's regime that singled out the seven countries affected and made certain travellers pass an interview to get a visa to the States.

But Obama has thrown his support behind the protesters with his spokesman saying the former President "fundamentally disagrees" with Trump's order.

Spokesman Kevin Lewis said: "With regard to comparisons to president Obama's foreign policy decisions, as we've heard before, the president fundamentally disagrees with the notion of discriminating against individuals because of their faith or religion."

Does the travel ban affect the UK?

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson says ALL British passport holders can travel to the US – regardless of Donald Trump's ban.

After deep discussions with the US government over how the travel ban will affect British nationals and dual-nationals, Johnson confirmed the following:

- The Presidential executive order only applies to individuals travelling from one of the seven named countries.

- If you are travelling to the US from anywhere other than one of those countries (including the UK) the executive order does not apply to you and you will experience no extra checks regardless of your nationality or your place of birth.
- If you are a UK national who is travelling from one of those countries to the US, the order does still not apply to you – even if you were born in one of those countries outside those countries then the order does not apply to you.

However, extra checks may be made if dual nationals are travelling from one of the seven countries themselves. For example, a UK-Libya dual national coming from Libya to the US.

What did Mo Farah say about it?

Initially, a state department official declared that dual nationals holding a passport from one of the banned countries would not be allowed into the US.

That meant that people with a British passport and a Somali passport, such as Olympic gold medallist Sir Mo Farah, would not be allowed to enter America.

The Somalia-born, four-time Olympic champion slammed the ban as "unfair", adding it was "deeply troubling".

Sir Mo Farah said: "I believe that was an unfair decision.

"Suddenly your country... When you've been there for six years and done everything right, overnight to tell you that you can't come back to your kids, is unfair."

Why did Donald Trump revise the executive order?

On February 16, Trump announced that he would be handing down a new ruling that would be "tailored" to the concerns flagged by the federal appeals court judges.

He said: "The new order is going to be very much tailored to what I consider to be a very bad decision.

"We can tailor the order to that decision and get just about everything, in some ways more."

The Justice Department launched an appeal against the blocking of the executive order deeming it a "lawful exercise".

It's after Federal judge Robart, from Seattle, stopped the ban arguing it unlawfully discriminated against Muslims and was unconstitutional after two states, Washington and Minnesota contested the order.

On February 9, the US appeals court upheld the suspension of Trump's travel ban.

Who are the judges who blocked it?

A panel of three judges at the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco voted unanimously to uphold the temporary restraining order issued by Judge James Robart.

Releasing a 29-page ruling, the judges argued the government had failed to provide enough evidence that urgently implementing the ban was necessarily for the country's security.

It read: "On the one hand, the public has a powerful interest in national security and in the ability of an elected president to enact policies.

"And on the other, the public also has an interest in free flow of travel, in avoiding separation of families, and in freedom from discrimination."

But in the appeals court's damning assessment of Trump's case it stated "the government has pointed no evidence that any alien from any of the countries named in the order has perpetrated a terrorist attack in the United States.

"Rather than present evidence to explain the need for the executive order, the government has taken the position that we must not review its decision at all."

- Judge James Robart, 69, was the original judge to temporarily suspend the ban. He was nominated by President George W. Bush to a seat on the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington which he now holds. He is known for wearing bow ties with his judicial robes.
- While Judge Michelle T. Friedland, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, Judge Richard Clifton, who was also a George W. Bush nominee, and Judge William Canby who has been in the job 1980, voted unanimously to uphold the temporary restraining order.

The case will now likely end up being decided in the US Supreme Court - the highest court in America.

The ruling means that people from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen with visas can continue to enter the US.

Refugees, who were also facing being turned away from the US, are no longer blocked either.

How did President Trump respond to the controversy around his travel ban?

A defiant Trump defended his executive order insisting he needed to prevent "bad dudes" from entering the US.

In an extraordinary media conference from the White House, Trump railed that there had been "zero chaos" during his time as President.

He added: "I inherited a mess. It's a mess. At home and abroad, a mess".

He had earlier tweeted in defence of his order, saying: "If the ban were announced with a week's notice, the 'bad' would rush into our country during that week. A lot of bad 'dudes' out there!"

Trump also sensationally fired attorney general Sally Yates for refusing to back the travel ban.

The White House called Yates "weak on borders and very weak on illegal immigration".

Yates had written that she would not support travel restrictions targeting Muslim nations because she didn't think they were lawful just before she was due to be replaced by attorney general-designate Jeff Sessions.

"The acting attorney general, Sally Yates, has betrayed the Department of Justice by refusing to enforce a legal order designed to protect the citizens of the United States," the White House said in a statement.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Director Daniel Ragsdale was fired just two hours later without explanation.

President Trump responded to the ruling made on February 3 by Judge James L. Robart to temporarily halt the travel ban with outrage and vowed to file an "emergency stay" to overturn it.

He tweeted: "The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law-enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned!"

After hearing the block had been upheld, he posted: "SEE YOU IN COURT, THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!"

He added that he would blame the judiciary if there were terror attacks in the US while the ban was blocked.

But he remained confident that he would get his way eventually, telling reporters they would win in the end - and dismissed the ruling as "political".

What is the UK petition trying to stop Trump from making a state visit?

An online petition to stop Trump from making his planned state visit later this year has reached over 1.8million signatures.

Started by Graham Guest from Leeds following the President's travel ban, the petition states that such a visit would cause "embarrassment" to the Queen,

The petition reads: "Donald Trump should be allowed to enter the UK in his capacity as head of the US Government, but he should not be invited to make an official State Visit because it would cause embarrassment to Her Majesty the Queen."

In response to the petition, Theresa May has said that Trump's invitation for a state visit still stands.

The Prime Minister told journalists in a joint press conference in Northern Ireland that “the US is a close ally of the UK... we work together across many areas of mutual interest”.

She went on: “I have issued that invitation for a state visit for President Trump to the United Kingdom and that invitation stands.”

She said that “we have a different approach to these matters in the UK” but defended the right of President Trump to enact his campaign promises.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in cities across the UK to protest against Trump’s regime.

Protest events were held in Newcastle, Leeds and Edinburgh as well a huge rally held metres away from 10 Downing Street.

Why has Theresa May rejected the petition to prevent his UK visit?

The Government rejected the petition and confirmed it would go ahead with the state visit while accepting it recognised the "strong views" of the British public.

A statement on the petition website read: "[President Trump] should be extended the full courtesy of a state visit.

"This invitation reflects the importance of the relationship between the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

"At this stage, final dates have not yet been agreed for the state visit."

A counter petition supporting the state visit has been signed by more than 300,000 Brits.

The petitions were debated in the House of Commons on February 20, with MPs clashing in a heated three-hour session.

Trump Will Withdraw U.S. From Paris Climate Agreement

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR JUNE 1, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump announced on Thursday that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate accord, weakening efforts to combat global warming and embracing isolationist voices in his White House who argued that the agreement was a pernicious threat to the economy and American sovereignty.

In a speech from the Rose Garden, Mr. Trump said the landmark 2015 pact imposed wildly unfair environmental standards on American businesses and workers. He vowed to stand with the people of the United States against what he called a “draconian” international deal.

“I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris,” the president said, drawing support from members of his Republican Party but widespread condemnation from political leaders, business executives and environmentalists around the globe.

Mr. Trump’s decision to abandon the agreement for environmental action signed by 195 nations is a remarkable rebuke to heads of state, climate activists, corporate executives and members of the president’s own staff, who all failed to change his mind with an intense, last-minute lobbying blitz. The Paris agreement was intended to bind the world community into battling rising temperatures in concert, and the departure of the Earth’s second-largest polluter is a major blow.

Mr. Trump said he wanted to negotiate a better deal for the United States, and the administration said he had placed calls to the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Canada to personally explain his decision. A statement from the White House press secretary said the president “reassured the leaders that America remains committed to the trans-Atlantic alliance and to robust efforts to protect the environment.”

But within minutes of the president’s remarks, the leaders of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement saying that the Paris climate accord was “irreversible” and could not be renegotiated.

The decision was a victory for Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump’s chief strategist, and Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, who spent months quietly making their case to the president about the dangers of the agreement. Inside the West Wing, the pair overcame intense opposition from other top aides, including Gary D. Cohn, the director of the National Economic Council, the president’s daughter Ivanka Trump, and his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson.

Ms. Trump, in particular, fought to make sure that her father heard from people supportive of the agreement, setting up calls and meetings with world leaders, corporate executives and others. But by Thursday, aides who pushed to remain part of the agreement were disconsolate, and it was Mr. Pruitt whom the president brought up for victory remarks at the Rose Garden event.

The president’s speech was his boldest and most sweeping assertion of an “America first” foreign policy doctrine since he assumed office four months ago. He vowed to

turn the country's empathy inward, rejecting financial assistance for pollution controls in developing nations in favor of providing help to American cities struggling to hire police officers.

"It would once have been unthinkable that an international agreement could prevent the United States from conducting its own domestic affairs," Mr. Trump said.

In Mr. Trump's view, the Paris accord represents an attack on the sovereignty of the United States and a threat to the ability of his administration to reshape the nation's environmental laws in ways that benefit everyday Americans.

"At what point does America get demeaned? At what point do they start laughing at us as a country?" Mr. Trump said. "We don't want other leaders and other countries laughing at us anymore. And they won't be."

But business leaders like Elon Musk of Tesla, Jeffrey R. Immelt of General Electric and Lloyd C. Blankfein of Goldman Sachs said the decision would ultimately harm the economy by ceding the jobs of the future in clean energy and technology to overseas competitors.

Mr. Musk, who had agreed to be a member of a two business-related councils that Mr. Trump set up this year, wrote on Twitter that he would leave those panels.

"Climate change is real. Leaving Paris is not good for America or the world," he said.

Under the accord, the United States had pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and commit up to \$3 billion in aid for poorer countries by 2020.

By stepping away from the Paris agreement, the president made good on a campaign promise to "cancel" an agreement he repeatedly mocked at rallies. As president, he has moved rapidly to reverse Obama-era policies aimed at allowing the United States to meet its pollution-reduction targets as set under the agreement.

"We are getting out," Mr. Trump said Thursday. "But we will start to negotiate, and we will see if we can make a deal that's fair. And if we can, that's great."

In his remarks, Mr. Trump listed sectors of the United States economy that would lose revenue and jobs if the country remained part of the accord, citing a study — vigorously disputed by environmental groups — asserting that the agreement would cost 2.7 million jobs by 2025.

But he will stick to the withdrawal process laid out in the Paris agreement, which President Barack Obama joined and most of the world has already ratified. That could take nearly four years to complete, meaning a final decision would be up to the American voters in the next presidential election.

Republican lawmakers hailed Mr. Trump's decision, calling it a necessary antidote to the overreach of Mr. Obama's policies aimed at reducing planet-warming carbon emissions.

“I applaud President Trump and his administration for dealing yet another significant blow to the Obama administration’s assault on domestic energy production and jobs,” said Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader.

But Mr. Trump’s call for new global negotiations about the planet’s climate drew derision from Democrats in the United States and other heads of state.

President Emmanuel Macron of France and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada each issued rebukes to Mr. Trump. “Make our planet great again,” Mr. Macron said.

On Twitter, Miguel Arias Cañete, the European Union’s commissioner for climate, said that “today’s announcement has galvanized us rather than weakened us, and this vacuum will be filled by new broad committed leadership.”

Mr. Obama, in a rare assertion of his political views as a former president, said, “The nations that remain in the Paris agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries created.”

“Even in the absence of American leadership; even as this administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future; I’m confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we’ve got,” Mr. Obama said.

In recent days, Mr. Trump withstood withering criticism from European counterparts who accused him of shirking America’s role as a global leader and America’s responsibility as history’s largest emitter of planet-warming greenhouse gasses.

After a fierce debate inside the administration, the White House on Thursday took on the trappings of a celebration. The Rose Garden was packed with reporters, activists and members of Mr. Trump’s administration. Scores of staff members lined the sides of the Rose Garden as a military band played soft jazz.

Supporters of the Paris agreements reacted with pent-up alarm, condemning the administration for shortsightedness about the planet and a reckless willingness to shatter longstanding diplomatic relationships.

“Removing the United States from the Paris agreement is a reckless and indefensible action,” said Al Gore, the former vice president who has become an evangelist for fighting climate change. “It undermines America’s standing in the world and threatens to damage humanity’s ability to solve the climate crisis in time.”

Corporate leaders also condemned Mr. Trump’s action.

On its website, I.B.M. reaffirmed its support for the Paris agreement and took issue with the president’s contention that it was a bad deal for American workers and the American economy.

“This agreement requires all participating countries to put forward their best efforts on climate change as determined by each country,” the company said. “I.B.M.

believes that it is easier to lead outcomes by being at the table, as a participant in the agreement, rather than from outside it.”

Mr. Immelt, the chairman and chief executive of General Electric, took to Twitter to say he was “disappointed” with the decision. “Climate change is real,” he said. “Industry must now lead and not depend on government.”

But Mr. Trump was resolute.

“It is time to put Youngstown, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; and Pittsburgh, Pa., along with many, many other locations within our great country, before Paris, France,” he said. “It is time to make America great again.”

The mayor of Pittsburgh, Bill Peduto, responded on Twitter, “I can assure you that we will follow the guidelines of the Paris Agreement for our people, our economy & future.”

Trump pulls US out of Paris climate deal

By **Bob Fredericks**

June 1, 2017 | 3:39pm | Updated

President Trump announced Thursday that the US will pull out of the Paris global climate pact — fulfilling a campaign promise but alarming other world leaders and even going against the wishes of fossil fuel giants like Exxon and BP.

“The United States will withdraw from the Paris climate accord but begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris accord or an entirely new transaction in terms that are fair to the United States and its workers. So we’re getting out. We’ll see if we can make a deal. If we can’t, that’s fine,” Trump said to cheers during a ceremony in the Rose Garden in which he patted himself on the back for keeping his campaign promises.

“I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris,” Trump added after detailing what he said the costs of remaining in the accord would be.

President Obama in a statement lamented the decision, saying that other nations would benefit at the expense of the US.

“The nations that remain in the Paris Agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries created. I believe the United States of America should be at the front of the pack,” he said, adding that US cities, states and businesses would still work to reduce warming.

“Even in the absence of American leadership; even as this Administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future; I’m confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we’ve got,” Obama said.

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, a Democrat, also was not amused.

“As the Mayor of Pittsburgh, I can assure you that we will follow the guidelines of the Paris Agreement for our people, our economy & future,” he tweeted, also saying, “The people of Pittsburgh voted for Hillary Rodham Clinton — 80 percent.”

Supporters applauded the move.

“Predicting the future is notoriously difficult. Modeling is not an exact science,” said Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.).

White House talking points obtained earlier by the AP said the Paris accord was “a BAD deal for Americans” and that the president’s action would keep “his campaign promise to put American workers first.”

“The accord was negotiated poorly by the Obama Administration and signed out of desperation. The US is already leading the world in energy production and doesn’t need a bad deal that will harm American workers,” the notes read.

EPA Secretary Scott Pruitt and Trump adviser Steve Bannon, both climate change skeptics, pushed the president to withdraw, while Trump’s daughter Ivanka reportedly wanted her father to stay in the accord.

The White House had signaled that the move was likely, but Trump has been known to change his mind at the last minute on such major decisions.

Abandoning the pact was one of Trump’s principal campaign pledges, but America’s allies have expressed alarm about the likely consequences.

Trump’s decision reverses one of the Obama administration’s signature achievements, and means the US will join only Nicaragua — which didn’t think the treaty went far enough — and Syria as UN-member countries that aren’t aboard. Even China and Russia remain committed to the pact.

The US emits more carbon into the atmosphere than any country except China.

Abandoning the pact would isolate the US from international allies that spent years negotiating the 2015 agreement to fight global warming and pollution by reducing carbon emissions in nearly 200 nations.

While traveling abroad last week, Trump was repeatedly pressed to stay in the deal by European leaders and the pope.

American corporate leaders have also appealed to the businessman-turned-president to stay in the pact.

They include leaders of Apple, Google and Walmart. Even fossil fuel companies such as ExxonMobil, BP and Shell say the United States should abide by the deal.

In a Berlin speech, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said that fighting climate change is a “global consensus” and an “international responsibility.”

“China in recent years has stayed true to its commitment,” Li said Wednesday.

Obama enacted the deal without US Senate ratification. A formal withdrawal would take years, experts say, a situation that led the president of the European Commission to speak dismissively of Trump on Wednesday.

Trump doesn’t “comprehensively understand” the terms of the accord, though European leaders tried to explain the process for withdrawing to him “in clear, simple sentences” during summit meetings last week, Jean-Claude Juncker said in Berlin.

“It looks like that attempt failed,” Juncker said.

Donald Trump confirms US will quit Paris climate agreement

World's second largest greenhouse gas emitter will remove itself from global treaty as Trump claims accord 'will harm' American jobs

Oliver Milman, David Smith and Damian Carrington

Thu 1 Jun 2017 20.38 BST Last modified on Mon 27 Nov 2017 23.21 GMT

Donald Trump has confirmed that he will withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement, in effect ensuring the world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases will quit the international effort to address dangerous global warming.

The US will remove itself from the deal, joining Syria and Nicaragua as the only countries not party to the Paris agreement. There will be no penalty for leaving, with the Paris deal based upon the premise of voluntary emissions reductions by participating countries.

"In order to fulfil my solemn duty to the United States and its citizens, the US will withdraw from the Paris climate accord, but begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris accords or a really entirely new transaction, on terms that are fair to the United States," the US president told press in the White House rose garden on Thursday.

"We will start to negotiate, and we will see if we can make a deal that's fair," Trump said. "If we can, that's great. If we can't, that's fine."

But Italy, France and Germany issued a joint statement shortly after Trump's speech saying they believed the treaty could not be renegotiated.

Trump told the crowd outside the White House: "The fact that the Paris deal hamstring the United States while empowering some of the world's top polluting countries should expel any doubt as to why foreign lobbyists should wish to keep our beautiful country tied up and bound down ... That's not going to happen while I'm president, I'm sorry."

He added: "I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris."

Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, issued a rare statement saying the new administration had joined "a small handful of nations that reject the future". But he said that US states, cities and businesses "will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got".

Former vice-president Al Gore called the move "reckless and indefensible", while among the business leaders to express regret over the move was Jeff Immelt, chair and CEO of General Electric, who said "climate change is real" and "industry must now lead".

Trump, who spoke after being introduced by a warm-up band playing the George Gershwin classic Summertime, argued that the Paris agreement disadvantaged the US to the benefit of other countries, leaving workers and taxpayers to absorb the

costs and suffer job losses and factory closures. As of today, he said, the US will cease implementation of the nationally determined contribution and green climate fund, “which is costing the US a vast fortune”.

In 2015, nearly 200 countries agreed to curb greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent the runaway climate change that would occur should temperatures spiral 2C or more above the pre-industrial era.

Trump’s decision risks destabilizing the Paris deal, with remaining participants faced with the choice of trying to make up the shortfall in emissions cuts or following the US’s lead and abandoning the agreement.

The US emissions reduction pledge accounts for a fifth of the global emissions to be avoided by 2030, with an analysis by not-for-profit group Climate Interactive showing that a regression to “business as usual” emissions by the US could warm the world by an additional 0.3C by 2100. This would help push the global temperature rise well beyond 2C, causing punishing heatwaves, sea level rise, displacement of millions of people and the loss of ecosystems such as coral reefs.

The US withdrawal would not, though, derail global efforts to fight climate change, said Christiana Figueres, the former UN climate chief who delivered the Paris agreement. “States, cities, corporations, investors have been moving in this direction for several years and the dropping prices of renewables versus high cost of health impacts from fossil fuels, guarantees the continuation of the transition.”

The US will be the loser from its withdrawal, said Prof John Schellnhuber, a climate scientist and former adviser to the EU, Angela Merkel and the pope. “It will not substantially hamper global climate progress but it will hurt the American economy and society alike,” he said. “China and Europe have become world leaders on the path towards green development already and will strengthen their position if the US slips back. The Washington people around Trump fail to recognise that the climate wars are over, while the race for sustainable prosperity is on.”

“President Trump is putting his country on the wrong side of history,” said Laurence Tubiana, France’s climate ambassador during the negotiation of the Paris deal.

John Kasich, the governor of Ohio and a frequent critic of Trump, said he shared concerns about “flaws” in the treaty. “I’m convinced we can correct them and improve the agreement, however,” he said, “by showing leadership and constructively engaging with like-minded nations, not by joining the ranks of holdouts like Syria and Nicaragua.”

Bernie Sanders, the leftwing senator and former Democratic presidential hopeful, called the move an “international disgrace” and an “abdication of American leadership”.

But House speaker Paul Ryan, the most senior Republican in Congress, threw his support behind Trump’s decision, saying the Paris accord was “simply a raw deal for America”.

“In order to unleash the power of the American economy, our government must encourage production of American energy,” Ryan said in a statement. “I commend President Trump for fulfilling his commitment to the American people and withdrawing from this bad deal.”

Conflicting signals

Trump followed through with his campaign pledge to “cancel” US involvement in the Paris accord following months of conflicting signals over whether he would do so or just scale back the US ambition to cut emissions.

The withdrawal represents a victory for the nationalist elements in Trump’s administration, such as his strategist Steve Bannon, who have argued the Paris deal undermines an “America first” approach, harms domestic coal production and hinders efforts to repeal Barack Obama-era regulations such as the Clean Power Plan. On Tuesday, Trump met with Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency head who has called Paris a “bad deal” that should be discarded.

In his speech, Trump sought to frame his decision as part of this nationalist agenda. “The Paris agreement handicaps the United States economy in order to win praise from the very foreign capitals and global activists that have long sought to gain wealth at our country’s expense,” he said. “They don’t put America first. I do, and I always will.”

A group of 22 Republican senators, headed by majority leader Mitch McConnell, backed the anti-Paris view in a letter to Trump that urged a “clean exit” from the Paris deal, which they said added a “regulatory burden” upon the US.

The anti-agreement faction had jockeyed for Trump’s favour over a rival school of thought, including secretary of state Rex Tillerson and Ivanka Trump, the president’s daughter and adviser, that argued the US should remain in the Paris deal in order to preserve its diplomatic influence.

Hundreds of large businesses, including Apple, Google and Walmart, also threw their weight behind the deal, with even fossil fuel firms such as ExxonMobil, BP and Shell supporting the accord as the best way to transition to a low-carbon economy and stave off the perils of climate change.

In a bid to calm the frayed nerves of countries most at risk from rising temperatures, the EU and China announced an alliance to stay the course earlier on Wednesday. Their joint declaration called climate change a “national security issue” and a “multiplying factor of social and political fragility.” The Paris pact is a “historic achievement” and “irreversible”, the document says.

“It is absolutely essential that the world implements the Paris agreement,” said UN secretary general António Guterres. “If one country decides to leave a void, I can guarantee someone else will occupy it.”

Environmental groups were scathing of Trump’s decision, with more than 20,000 members of the Sierra Club calling the White House within hours of reports that the

president had opted to exit the deal. “Donald Trump has made a historic mistake which our grandchildren will look back on with stunned dismay at how a world leader could be so divorced from reality and morality,” said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club.

Bill de Blasio, the mayor of New York City, said he will sign an order committing the city to the Paris deal due to the “destructive power” of disasters like Hurricane Sandy.

'I REPRESENT PITTSBURGH NOT PARIS'**Donald Trump pulls US out of Paris climate change agreement and vows to create a 'level playing field' for the American economy**

President rails against deal that commits all nations into limiting global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions

By [Corey Charlton](#) and [Neal Baker](#)

2nd June 2017, 8:00 am

Updated: 3rd June 2017, 2:54 pm

DONALD Trump has announced he is withdrawing the US from the Paris climate change agreement in a bid to create a "level playing field" for the American economy.

Criticising its impact on US markets, he officially announced the withdrawal yesterday afternoon - ending a week of intense speculation.

Although he was reported to have kept an "open mind" about the deal over the past few weeks, his decision is unsurprising given he refused to bow to G7 leaders' demands he remain in during last week's summit.

European leaders begged him not to withdraw during the meeting in Sicily, but he said only that his final decision would be announced yesterday.

Announcing his decision in the White House Rose Garden on Thursday, the President argued the agreement held back US economic might.

"This agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries obtaining a financial advantage over the United States", he said.

Trump added that he wanted to create a "level playing field" while promising to independently establish the "highest standard of living, highest standard of environmental protection."

"I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris", he said.

Theresa May last night told Trump she was "disappointed" in his decision to withdraw the US from the landmark climate change agreement.

In a phone call, the Prime Minister said the UK remains committed to the international pledge.

But she held back from signing a scathing letter signed by other European leaders insisting the agreement, which limits the use of fossil fuels, could not be renegotiated.

Just hours earlier, five Nordic countries signed a letter begging Trump to "make the right decision" by pledging to stay in the deal.

And Boris Johnson warned Trump against withdrawing, saying it would be a "bad decision".

He left room for "re-entering" the agreement or negotiating "an entirely new transaction".

But the decision has already been met with scorn by critics — including his predecessor.

Obama said the move would see the United States "reject the future."

"The nations that remain in the Paris Agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries created," Obama warned in a statement.

"Even in the absence of American leadership; even as this administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future; I'm confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got," he added.

The US Conference of Mayors said it strongly opposed Trump's decision, while eco-warrior and former Vice President Al Gore slammed it as "a reckless and indefensible action" to pull out.

The 2015 Paris Agreement was the first pact to commit all nations to limiting global warming caused by emissions from burning coal, oil and gas.

However, Trump has previously expressed concerns about the impacts it could have on the US economy and American jobs.

The emission reduction targets agreed to by President Obama would require the imposition of huge controls across much of the US economy.

Overall, nations agreed to hold global warming to "well below" 2C over pre-Industrial Revolution levels, and to strive for a lower limit of 1.5 degrees.

Experts say even the two-degree ceiling is a tall order, requiring an immediate and deep reduction in planet-warming emissions from fossil fuels.

Yesterday a source told Reuters Trump was preparing to pull out of the agreement.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, had said Trump was favouring an exit, however, and was working out terms of the planned withdrawal with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

During the campaign, Trump had said the accord would cost the US economy trillions of dollars with no tangible benefit.

Trump also has expressed doubts about climate change, at times calling it a hoax to weaken US industry.

The Republican vowed at the time to "cancel" the Paris deal within 100 days of becoming President on January 20, part of an effort to bolster US oil and coal industries.

Trump has repeatedly shown he willing to shake up longstanding agreements with European allies.

He has regularly asserted NATO members are not meeting the defence organisation's obligations of spending 2 percent of GDP on their militaries.

As speculation Trump would withdraw from the agreement heated up this week, China - the world's number one polluter - is set to side with the UN and reaffirm its intent to transition its economy away from fossil fuels.

The joint-announcement expected tomorrow is likely a power-move designed to try and usurp the US's role as a global leader given Trump's emphasis on "America first" policies.

Trump orders indefinite ban on transgender troops

By **Joe Tacopino**

August 25, 2017 | 7:11pm | Updated

President Trump has reportedly signed a directive on Friday that prevents transgender individuals from joining the military while giving the Defense Secretary authority over what to do with those already serving.

The directive also tells the Department of Defense to halt sex-reassignment procedures for military personnel except in cases where it is necessary to “protect their health.”

The new policy goes into effect on Jan 1, 2018

The Obama administration in June 2016 had changed longstanding policy, declaring that troops could serve openly as transgender individuals.

A July 2017 deadline was set for determining whether transgender people could be allowed to enter the military.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis delayed that to Jan. 1, 2018, and Trump has now instructed Mattis to extend it indefinitely.

Trump gave Mattis six months to come up with a policy on those currently serving.

Trump Says Transgender People Will Not Be Allowed in the Military

By JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS and HELENE COOPER JULY 26, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump abruptly announced a ban on transgender people serving in the military on Wednesday, blindsiding his defense secretary and Republican congressional leaders with a snap decision that reversed a year-old policy reviled by social conservatives.

Mr. Trump made the declaration on Twitter, saying that American forces could not afford the “tremendous medical costs and disruption” of transgender service members. He said he had consulted generals and military experts, but Jim Mattis, the defense secretary, was given only a day’s notice about the decision.

Mr. Trump elected to announce the ban in order to resolve a quietly brewing fight on Capitol Hill over whether taxpayer money should pay for gender transition and hormone therapy for transgender service members. The dispute had threatened to kill a \$790 billion defense and security spending package scheduled for a vote this week.

But rather than addressing that narrow issue, Mr. Trump opted to upend the entire policy on transgender service members.

His decision was announced with such haste that the White House could not answer basic inquiries about how it would be carried out, including what would happen to openly transgender people on active duty. Of eight defense officials interviewed, none could say.

“That’s something that the Department of Defense and the White House will have to work together as implementation takes place and is done so lawfully,” Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, said.

Still, the announcement pleased elements of Mr. Trump’s base who have been dismayed to see the president break so bitterly in recent days with Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a hard-line conservative.

Civil rights and transgender advocacy groups denounced the policy, with some vowing to challenge it in court. Pentagon officials expressed dismay that the president’s tweets could open them to lawsuits.

The ban would reverse the gradual transformation of the military under President Barack Obama, whose administration announced last year that transgender people could serve openly in the military. Mr. Obama’s defense secretary, Ashton B. Carter, also opened all combat roles to women and appointed the first openly gay Army secretary.

And it represented a stark turnabout for Mr. Trump, who billed himself during the campaign as an ally of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

The president, Ms. Sanders said, had concluded that allowing transgender people to serve openly “erodes military readiness and unit cohesion, and made the decision based on that.”

Mr. Mattis, who was on vacation, was silent on the new policy. People close to the defense secretary said he was appalled that Mr. Trump chose to unveil his decision in tweets, in part because of the message they sent to transgender active-duty service members, including those deployed overseas, that they were suddenly no longer welcome.

The policy would affect only a small portion of the approximately 1.3 million active-duty members of the military. Some 2,000 to 11,000 active-duty troops are transgender, according to a 2016 RAND Corporation study commissioned by the Pentagon, though estimates of the number of transgender service members have varied widely, and are sometimes as high as 15,000.

The study found that allowing transgender people to serve openly in the military would “have minimal impact on readiness and health care costs” for the Pentagon. It estimated that health care costs would rise \$2.4 million to \$8.4 million a year, representing an infinitesimal 0.04 to 0.13 percent increase in spending. Citing research into other countries that allow transgender people to serve, the study projected “little or no impact on unit cohesion, operational effectiveness or readiness” in the United States.

Lt. Commander Blake Dremann, a Navy supply corps officer who is transgender, said he found out his job was in danger when he turned on CNN on Wednesday morning. Commander Dremann came out as transgender to his commanders in 2015, and said they had been supportive of him.

He refused to criticize Mr. Trump — “we don’t criticize our commander in chief,” he said — but said the policy shift “is singling out a specific population in the military, who had been assured we were doing everything appropriate to continue our honorable service.”

He added: “And I will continue to do so, until the military tells me to hang up my boots.”

The announcement came amid the debate on Capitol Hill over the Obama-era practice of requiring the Pentagon to pay for medical treatment related to gender transition. Representative Vicky Hartzler, Republican of Missouri, has proposed an amendment to the spending bill that would bar the Pentagon from spending money on transition surgery or related hormone therapy, and other Republicans have pressed for similar provisions.

Mr. Mattis had worked behind the scenes to keep such language out of legislation, quietly lobbying Republican lawmakers not to attach the prohibitions, according to congressional and defense officials.

But Mr. Trump was concerned that the transgender medical care issue could imperil the security spending measure, which also contains \$1.6 billion for the border wall that he has championed, and wanted to resolve the dispute cleanly and

straightforwardly, according to a person familiar with his thinking, who insisted on anonymity to describe it. That prompted his ban.

Republican congressional leaders were aware Mr. Trump was looking into whether taxpayer money should be spent on medical procedures for transgender service members, but had not expected him to go so far as to bar transgender people from serving altogether.

Mr. Trump and Republican lawmakers had come under pressure from Tony Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council, a leading Christian conservative group, and an ally of Mr. Trump's. Mr. Perkins opposed the bill over spending on transgender medical costs and lobbied lawmakers to do the same.

"Grant repentance to President Trump and Secretary Mattis for even considering to keep this wicked policy in place," the Family Research Council said in one of its daily prayers last week. "Grant them understanding, courage and willpower to stand up to the forces of darkness that gave birth to it and wholly to repeal it."

Opponents of allowing openly transgender service members had raised a number of concerns, including what they said was the questionable psychological fitness of those troops. They said the military was being used for social experimentation at the expense of national security.

"This was Ash Carter on his way out the door pulling the pin on a cultural grenade," Mr. Perkins said on Wednesday. "Our military leaders are saying this doesn't help make us a better fighting force; it's a distraction; it's taking up limited resources."

Mr. Carter objected to the decision, for its effect on the military and on those considering joining.

"To choose service members on other grounds than military qualifications is social policy and has no place in our military," he said in a statement. "There are already transgender individuals who are serving capably and honorably. This action would also send the wrong signal to a younger generation thinking about military service."

While some conservative lawmakers, including Ms. Hartzler, praised Mr. Trump, the president drew bipartisan condemnation on Capitol Hill and outrage from civil rights and transgender advocacy groups.

"There is no reason to force service members who are able to fight, train and deploy to leave the military — regardless of their gender identity," said Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

He called Mr. Trump's move "yet another example of why major policy announcements should not be made via Twitter."

Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island and the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, noted the irony of Mr. Trump's announcing the ban on the anniversary of President Harry Truman's order to desegregate the military.

"President Trump is choosing to retreat in the march toward equality," he said.

In June, the administration delayed by six months a decision on whether to allow transgender recruits to join the military. At the time, Mr. Mattis said the delay would give military leaders a chance to review the shift's potential impact. Mr. Mattis's decision was seen as a pause to "finesse" the issue, one official said, not a prelude to an outright ban.

The delay on recruits "was largely based on a disagreement on the science of how mental health care and hormone therapy for transgender individuals would help solve the medical issues that are associated with gender dysphoria," Gen. Paul Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during his reconfirmation hearing last week.

"I am an advocate of every qualified person who can meet the physical standards to serve in our uniformed services to be able to do so," he said.

Mr. Mattis, a retired Marine, has not been a major proponent of allowing transgender people to serve in the military, in part because medical accommodations, including hormone injections, could open the Defense Department to claims from other people not allowed to serve, like Type 1 diabetics, who also need regular injections.

But Mr. Mattis and the Pentagon's military leadership all seemed to have accepted that transgender people already serving in the military would be allowed to remain. A senior adviser to Mr. Mattis, Sally Donnelly, represented the Palm Center, an organization that advocated on behalf of the L.G.B.T. community in the military during the debate that led up to the Obama administration's decision to allow transgender people to serve, defense officials said.

Mr. Trump's abrupt decision is likely to end up in court; OutServe-SLDN, a nonprofit group that represents gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the military, immediately vowed to sue.

"We have transgender individuals who serve in elite SEAL teams, who are working in a time of war to defend our country, and now you're going to kick them out?" Matthew F. Thorn, executive director of OutServe, said in an interview.

Donald Trump says US military will not allow transgender people to serve

- **Decision marks a reversal of a policy initiated under Obama in 2016**
- **Nancy Pelosi: ‘Cruel and arbitrary decision to humiliate transgender Americans’**

Sabrina Siddiqui in Washington and **Molly Redden** in New York

Wed 26 Jul 2017 14.48 BST First published on Wed 26 Jul 2017 14.22 BST

Donald Trump said on Wednesday he would not allow transgender individuals to serve in the US military in any capacity, reversing a policy put in place by Barack Obama a year ago.

The US president tweeted: “After consultation with my generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States government will not accept or allow ... transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US military.”

He added: “Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming ... victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

Later, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, was not able to say if the thousands of currently serving transgender people would be thrown out of the military. She said: “That’s something that the department of defense and the White House will have to work [on] together, as implementation takes place and is done so lawfully.”

Trump’s decision marks a sharp reversal of a policy initiated under Obama in 2016, in which the Pentagon ended a longtime ban on trans people serving openly in the military.

Huckabee Sanders denied that Trump was breaking his campaign promise to protect the LGBTQ community. “The president has a lot of support for all Americans and certainly wants to protect all Americans at all times,” she said. “The president’s expressed concern since this Obama policy came into effect, but he’s also voiced that this is a very expensive and disruptive policy and, based on consultation that he’s had with his national security team, came to the conclusion that it erodes military readiness and unit cohesion, and made the decision based on that.”

Unusually, the new press secretary threatened to end the briefing if questions on the topic continued. “If those are the only questions we have, I’m gonna call it a day, but if we have questions on other topics, I’ll be happy to take them.”

The next question was about cabinet morale, but then a reporter returned to the issue of transgender people in the military. The briefing ended two minutes later.

The Pentagon appeared to be caught off guard by Trump's announcement, and deferred to the White House when reached for comment.

"We will continue to work closely with the White House to address the new guidance provided by the commander-in-chief on trans individuals serving the military," a spokesperson for the defense department said. "We will provide revised guidance to the department in the near future."

Under Obama, then defense secretary Ashton Carter announced on 30 June 2016 that any trans person already in the armed forces could serve openly "effective immediately".

Backlash to Trump's decision was swift, and transcended party lines.

Carter told the Guardian: "What matters in choosing those who serve is that they are best qualified.

"To choose service members on other grounds than military qualifications is social policy and has no place in our military. There are already transgender individuals who are serving capably and honorably. This action would also send the wrong signal to a younger generation thinking about military service."

Arizona senator John McCain, who chairs the Senate armed services committee, said: "The president's tweet this morning is yet another example of why major policy announcements should not be made via Twitter."

He added: "Any American who meets current medical and readiness standards should be allowed to continue serving. There is no reason to force service members who are able to fight, train, and deploy to leave the military – regardless of their gender identity."

Several studies had already found that reversing the ban was unlikely to have a negative impact on the military.

A 2016 study by the Rand Corporation estimated there are up to 6,630 trans people on active duty and up to 4,160 in the select reserve. There are roughly 1.4 million active-duty US service members.

The same study estimated that medical care for individuals who transition would cost roughly \$2.4-\$4m annually. Every year, the Pentagon spends approximately \$6bn on medical care for active members of the armed forces.

Trump's decision comes after the Pentagon recently delayed a deadline set by the Obama administration of 1 July 2017 to decide whether incoming recruits who openly identified as trans could enlist.

Last month, defense secretary James Mattis outlined the six-month delay on trans recruitment in an internal memo, in which he wrote: "We will use this additional time to evaluate more carefully the impact of such accessions on readiness and lethality."

The delay was negotiated after the chiefs of the army, navy, air force and marine corps requested more time to prepare for the recruitment of transgender service members. Reports have suggested the joint chiefs asked for an additional six months, while others wanted another two years. But there was no public indication that the joint chiefs were seeking an outright ban.

Mattis was on vacation at the time of Trump's announcement, signaling a lack of coordination between the White House and the relevant agencies.

An administration official fueled speculation over the president's motives by suggesting that the shift was a political ploy that would force Democrats facing re-election in states won by Trump into complex culture wars.

As a candidate, Trump cast himself as a supporter of LGBT rights and indicated he would uphold certain Obama-era policies designed to protect transgender people. But upon taking office, he rescinded his predecessor's guidance requiring public schools to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of their choice.

The president lifted the guidance in February, despite saying during his campaign that trans people should use "whatever bathroom they feel is appropriate".

Trump's decision on Wednesday came on the anniversary of Harry Truman's 1948 executive order desegregating the US military.

Nancy Pelosi, the House Democratic leader, condemned Trump for "a cruel and arbitrary decision designed to humiliate transgender Americans who stepped forward to serve our country".

Illinois senator Tammy Duckworth, who lost both her legs on duty in Iraq, also chastised Trump. "When my Black Hawk helicopter was shot down in Iraq, I didn't care if the American troops risking their lives to help save me were gay, straight, transgender or anything else. All that mattered was they didn't leave me behind."

Earlier this month, the House of Representatives voted down a measure that would have restricted funding for trans members of the military. The amendment would have prevented the defense department from providing medical treatment "related to gender transition" to service members, with an exception for mental health treatment.

Although the measure passed a House committee on a party line vote, it failed on the House floor on a 209-214 vote. Twenty-four Republicans banded together with Democrats to kill the proposal.

The author of the proposal, Vicky Hartzler of Missouri, celebrated Trump's decision on Wednesday. "I'm glad to hear the president will be changing this costly and damaging policy," she said. "Military service is a privilege, not a right."

MILITARY BAN**Donald Trump BANS transgender people from the military ‘in any capacity because of their tremendous medical costs’**

It's estimated up to 7,000 of the 1.2 million active-duty service members are transgender

By [Jon Lockett](#)

26th July 2017, 2:30 pm

Updated: 17th October 2017, 4:07 pm

PRESIDENT Trump revealed today he is to ban transgender people from any kind of military service in the US.

Trump made his shock announcement, which would represent a major shift in American military policy, on his Twitter feed.

He tweeted: "After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow...Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US Military.

"Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming...victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail. Thank you."

It's a significant change in the stance he took last year during his Presidential election campaign.

In June 2016 Trump wrote on Twitter: "Thank you to the LGBT community!

"I will fight for you while Hillary brings in more people that will threaten your freedoms and beliefs."

The Pentagon ended its ban on openly transgender people serving in the US military in 2016 under Barack Obama's administration.

The Pentagon ended its ban on openly transgender people serving in the US military in 2016. It was expected to start allowing transgender people to begin enlisting this year, provided they had been "stable" in their preferred gender for 18 months.

Last month Defense Secretary Jim Mattis approved a six-month delay in allowing transgender recruits to join the US armed forces, a move that alarmed transgender advocates.

Last year then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter cited a study by the RAND Corporation think tank saying there were between 2,500 and 7,000 transgender active-duty service members and 1,500 reserve transgender service members.

The President's announcement came amid debate on Capitol Hill over the Obama-era practice of requiring the Pentagon to pay for medical treatment related to gender transition.

There are as many as 250 service members in the process of transitioning to their preferred genders or who have been approved to formally change gender within the Pentagon's personnel system.

The cost for the treatment for these troops is estimated at between £2m and £6m - which is just 0.004 per cent of the Ministry of Defense's health care budget.

The dispute has unfolded as Congress considers a £500 BILLION spending bill to fund the Pentagon into the immediate future.

Representative Vicky Hartzler, Republican of Missouri, has proposed an amendment that would bar the Pentagon from spending any more money on transition surgery or related hormone therapy.

Trump's policy reversal will certainly anger transgender campaigners. And he is already under fire from some who claim his tweets are an "insult" to the country's heroic transgender troops.

Tweeting just after the announcement Democratic Representative Tim Ryan said: "The arguments being made against transgender service members are the exact same as those faced by women, African-Americans and any other minority groups before they were able to serve in our military."

He called Trump's decision "a disgrace & an insult to countless brave transgender service members".

Transgender soldier Chelsea Manning blasted the President for his "cowardice".

She was infamously jailed for passing Wikileaks a series of documents known as the Iraq and Afghan war logs, the diplomatic cables, and Guantanamo Bay files.

She was released from prison on May 17 after having her 35 year sentence commuted by Barack Obama as he prepared to leave office.

Former Navy Seal and transgender activist Kristin Beck also hit out at The Don tweeting "MEET ME & tell me I'm not WORTHY to my face."

Outgoing US President Obama shows clemency to Chelsea Manning" auto="true"]

Sue Fulton, a member of SPARTA, a group of LGBT people who serve or have served, wrote in an email to BuzzFeed that "under the authority of the Secretary of Defense, transgender service members have been serving openly, honorably, and with distinction over the past year.

"They are commanding troops, training new recruits and conducting special operations among many of the responsibilities of the approximately 15k on active duty.

"If President Trump chooses to overrule his Secretary of Defense, he will disrupt units, undercut the mission and ruin lives.

"His comments have nothing to do with military readiness, and he should allow people who have served to determine what's best."

Congressman Dan Kildee of Michigan, a Vice Chair of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Equality Caucus, said the ban "undermines our military's readiness" calling it "a slap in the face to the thousands of transgender Americans already serving in the military.

"Anyone who is willing to put on the uniform of the United States and risk their life in service to our country should be celebrated as patriots, regardless of their gender identity," he said.

"This short-sighted and discriminatory policy will make America less safe."

Trump Says His ‘Nuclear Button’ Is ‘Much Bigger’ Than North Korea’s

By PETER BAKER and MICHAEL TACKETT JAN. 2, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump again raised the prospect of nuclear war with North Korea, boasting in strikingly playground terms on Tuesday night that he commands a “much bigger” and “more powerful” arsenal of devastating weapons than the outlier government in Asia.

“North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the ‘Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times,’” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. “Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”

Mr. Trump’s combative response to a statement made the day before by Mr. Kim raised the temperature in the brewing confrontation between the United States and North Korea even as American allies in South Korea were moving to open talks with Pyongyang. The contrast between Mr. Trump’s language and the peace overture by South Korea highlighted the growing rift between two longtime allies.

The president’s tone also generated a mix of scorn and alarm among lawmakers, diplomats and national security experts who called it juvenile and frightening for a president handling a foreign policy challenge with world-wrecking consequences. The language was reminiscent of Mr. Trump’s boast during the 2016 presidential campaign that his hands, and by extension his genitals, were in fact big enough.

It came on a day when Mr. Trump, back in Washington from his Florida holiday break, effectively opened his new year with a barrage of provocative tweets on a host of issues. He called for an aide to Hillary Clinton to be thrown in jail, threatened to cut off aid to Pakistan and the Palestinians, assailed Democrats over immigration, claimed credit for the fact that no one died in a jet plane crash last year and announced that he would announce his own award next Monday for the most dishonest and corrupt news media.

The North Korea tweet near the end of the day seemed most distressing to some in Washington watching the escalating clash between the United States and a nuclear-armed North.

“I guess the president regards this as a show of strength,” Representative Jim Himes, Democrat of Connecticut and a member of the House Intelligence Committee, said on CNN. “But as everybody who’s ever been in a, you know, first grade playground recognizes, it’s usually the person who’s most aggressively pounding their chest that is in fact the weak one on the playground.”

Eliot A. Cohen, who was counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice under President George W. Bush, said the tweet demonstrated an immaturity that is dangerous in a commander in chief.

“Spoken like a petulant ten year old,” Mr. Cohen wrote on Twitter. “But one with nuclear weapons — for real — at his disposal. How responsible people around him, or supporting him, can dismiss this or laugh it off is beyond me.”

Mr. Trump’s supporters brushed off the criticism, calling the president’s words a bracing stand that would force North Korea to confront the potential repercussions of its efforts to develop nuclear weapons that could reach the continental United States.

Michael Flynn Jr., the son of the president’s former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, who has pleaded guilty to lying to investigators in the Russia investigation, said Mr. Trump’s tweet was “just awesome.” He added on Twitter: “This is why Trump was elected. A no bulls#t leader not afraid to stand up for his country.”

The president’s saber-rattling tweet shifted the tenor of his response to the South Korean initiative just hours after a milder initial statement. Mr. Trump, who has disdained the prospects of negotiating with North Korea, said earlier in the day that the possible talks between the two governments on the peninsula resulted from sanctions imposed by the United States and the international community. “Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not - we will see!” he wrote Tuesday morning.

Why Mr. Trump hardened his message later the same day was not immediately clear. But he has not hesitated to match North Korea’s incendiary language even as other American presidents resisted such back-and-forth taunting out of concern that it was unwise and unnecessarily rewarding the hermit nation.

Over the summer, Mr. Trump vowed to rain down “fire and fury” on North Korea if it posed a threat to the United States. In the fall, he went before the United Nations General Assembly to warn that he would “totally destroy North Korea” if the United States were forced to defend itself or its allies.

Earlier Tuesday, South Korea proposed holding talks with North Korea next week in Panmunjom, a village straddling the border between the two hostile countries. If North Korea agrees, it would be the first official dialogue between the Koreas in two years in what leaders in Seoul hope could dampen the talk of war that has consumed the past few months.

North Korea has made significant strides in the past year in developing intercontinental ballistic missiles that could eventually deliver nuclear warheads to targets as distant as the United States. More than two decades of efforts by the United States and other major powers have failed to thwart North Korea from building a nuclear arsenal in defiance of international law.

Mr. Trump has emphasized a more militant line, arguing that his predecessors were too soft in responding to the threat. He has ratcheted up American sanctions and lobbied the United Nations to increase punitive measures, as well. While at various points in the past he has suggested that he would be open to negotiations, he has more often emphasized lately that he did not believe talks would lead to a fruitful outcome. On more than one occasion when his secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson, publicly broached the possibility, Mr. Trump pulled him back, declaring, at one point, that talks would be a waste of time.

Many security experts have said there is no reasonable military option for restraining North Korea that would not involve unacceptable loss of life, which is one reason South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, is more eager for dialogue. But Mr. Trump and his national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, have argued that there is a viable military alternative.

Whether intended or not, the diverging messages between Mr. Trump and Mr. Moon could create a good-cop, bad-cop situation in which the South Koreans use the specter of a militant United States as leverage to win concessions from North Korea.

Mr. Kim has sent conflicting messages all by himself. In his New Year's Day speech that provoked Mr. Trump's tweet, Mr. Kim both floated the idea of talks and boasted of his nuclear capacity. "It's not a mere threat but a reality that I have a nuclear button on the desk in my office," he said. "All of the mainland United States is within the range of our nuclear strike."

Trump brags to North Korea about the size of his 'nuclear button'

By **Joe Tacopino**

January 2, 2018 | 8:52pm

President Trump taunted the leader of North Korea on Tuesday by saying his nuclear button is “bigger & more powerful” than Kim Jong Un’s.

“North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the ‘Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times,’” Trump tweeted two days after Un made the menacing statement about the nukes.

“Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”

The leader of the nuclear-armed nation on the Korean Peninsula claimed in his New Year’s address that “the entire United States” is within range of his nuclear weapons.

“A nuclear button is always on my desk. This is reality, not a threat,” Un said.

Donald Trump boasts that his nuclear button is bigger than Kim Jong-un's

President intervenes with provocative tweet after North Korea leader said his own launch button was always 'on my desk'

Lauren Gambino

Wed 3 Jan 2018 07.58 GMT First published on Wed 3 Jan 2018 03.33 GMT

Donald Trump has taunted North Korea's leader about the size of his nuclear arsenal after his UN envoy, Nikki Haley, dismissed the value of proposed high-level talks between Pyongyang and Seoul.

The US president used Kim Jong-un's New Year's Day speech as the basis for his latest provocative tweet against the leader, whom he has previously referred to as "little rocket man", saying the "nuclear button" in Washington is "much bigger and more powerful" than Kim's – "and my button works!".

In the speech, Kim warned the United States his country's nuclear forces were now "completed", adding that the nuclear launch button was always within easy reach.

Trump's retort came hours after Haley distanced the White House from proposed contacts between North and South Korea, saying it would not take any talks seriously if Pyongyang did not abandon its nuclear arsenal. A few hours later on Wednesday, the North reopened a vital line of communication with South, raising hopes of a diplomatic thaw.

The president's tweet drew swift condemnation – and some snark – from Democrats and foreign policy experts.

Reacting on CNN, Democratic congressman Jim Himes of Connecticut said Trump's tweet has "Freudians" abuzz and shows an impulse "to demonstrate that his is bigger and stronger than anybody else's".

However, Himes added, a more sobering consequence of Trump's hyperbolic rhetoric is that "it really doesn't matter what the president of the United States says any more because it's so bizarre, strange, not true, infantile".

Eliot Cohen, a former top official in the George W Bush administration and a Trump critic, said the president's pronouncement was "spoken like a petulant 10-year-old".

"But one with nuclear weapons – for real – at his disposal," Cohen said. "How responsible people around him, or supporting him, can dismiss this or laugh it off is beyond me."

Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, a thinktank in Washington, noted that in the past 24 hours Trump has "threatened to 1) cut aid to nuclear-armed, terrorist-laden Pakistan; 2) cut aid to miffed Palestinians after he

alters US Jerusalem policy, and 3) boasted his nuclear button is bigger than Kim Jong-un's. This is our commander-in-chief. Think about it."

Earlier on Tuesday Trump had tweeted that the US-led campaign of sanctions and other pressure were beginning to have a "big impact" on North Korea, referring to the recent escape of at least two North Korean soldiers across the heavily militarised border into South Korea.

"Soldiers are dangerously fleeing to South Korea. Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time. Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not – we will see!" Trump tweeted.

On Monday, in a speech broadcast live by state TV in North Korea, Kim said: "The US should know that the button for nuclear weapons is on my desk. This is not blackmail but reality."

But he added that the North's nuclear arsenal played a purely deterrent role. "The entire area of the US mainland is within our nuclear strike range," he said. "The US can never start a war against me and our country. These weapons will be used only if our security is threatened."

'MINE IS BIGGER THAN YOURS'

Donald Trump brags his nuke button is 'bigger and more powerful' than Kim Jong-un's after North Korea missile threat

The US President goaded the North Korean despot, boasting that his nuclear button 'actually works'

By Jenny Awford

3rd January 2018, 1:05 am

Updated: 4th January 2018, 5:01 am

DONALD Trump has bragged that his nuke button is “much bigger and more powerful” than Kim Jong-un’s after the North Korean tyrant threatened to attack.

The US President goaded the despot, boasting that his nuclear button "actually works".

He tweeted: “Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”

His outburst came after Kim sent the US a chilling New Year message warning North Korea's nuclear arsenal is complete and the launch button is always within reach on his desk.

The tyrant taunted the American president, who he said cannot attack North Korea because the country's nukes can now reach anywhere in the US.

Kim used his New Year address - broadcast on state television - to ratchet up tensions with the West days after the UN Security Council imposed new sanctions restricting oil sales.

He claimed the hermit state has achieved the historic feat of "completing" its nuclear forces in 2017 after a series of warhead detonations and ballistic missile launches.

Kim warned his nuclear arsenal is "reality, not a threat" and added he has a "nuclear button" on his desk.

He said: "The entire United States is within range of our nuclear weapons, and the nuclear button is always on my table."

Trump's response to Kim's threat came hours after US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley warned that North Korea may be preparing for another missile test.

"I hope that doesn't happen. But if it does, we must bring even tougher measures to bear against the North Korean regime," she said.

"We will never accept a nuclear North Korea."

The fresh UN sanctions were passed in response to Kim's ballistic missile tests in the Sea of Japan.

Russia and China have both been accused of secretly supplying oil to North Korea in defiance of international agreements.

The claims come after Russia offered to mediate between the US and North Korea as the Kremlin said it wanted "to clear the way for de-escalation".

Russia warned war between North Korea and the US would be worse than anything seen before in human history.

After Trump Seeks to Block Book, Publisher Hastens Release

By PETER BAKER JAN. 4, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump threatened legal fire and fury on Thursday in an effort to block a new book portraying him as a volatile and ill-equipped chief executive, but the publisher defied his demand to halt its release and instead moved up its publication to Friday because of soaring interest.

Angry at the publisher's refusal to back down, Mr. Trump took aim late Thursday night at the book's author, Michael Wolff, and one of his primary sources, Stephen K. Bannon, the former White House chief strategist, whose derisive comments about the president and his family stirred deep resentment in the Oval Office.

"I authorized Zero access to White House (actually turned him down many times) for author of phony book!" Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter shortly before 11 p.m. "I never spoke to him for book. Full of lies, misrepresentations and sources that don't exist. Look at this guy's past and watch what happens to him and Sloppy Steve!"

The president's blast at Mr. Wolff came at the end of a day in which Mr. Trump's effort to stop publication failed. In an 11-page letter sent in the morning, a lawyer for the president said the book, "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House," as excerpted in a magazine article, includes false statements about Mr. Trump that "give rise to claims for libel" that could result in "substantial monetary damages and punitive damages."

"Mr. Trump hereby demands that you immediately cease and desist from any further publication, release or dissemination of the book, the article, or any excerpts or summaries of either of them, to any person or entity, and that you issue a full and complete retraction and apology to my client as to all statements made about him in the book and article that lack competent evidentiary support," the letter said.

Undeterred, Henry Holt and Co., the publisher, announced that instead it would make the book available for sale starting at 9 a.m. Friday rather than wait for its original release date on Tuesday. "We see 'Fire and Fury' as an extraordinary contribution to our national discourse, and are proceeding with the publication of the book," the company said in a statement.

The book infuriated Mr. Trump in part by quoting Mr. Bannon making derogatory comments about the president's children. Mr. Bannon was quoted as saying that Donald Trump Jr. had been "treasonous" and "unpatriotic" for meeting with Russians during the 2016 campaign and that Ivanka Trump was "dumb as a brick." Mr. Trump fired back on Wednesday, saying that Mr. Bannon had "lost his mind" and had "nothing to do with me or my presidency."

Mr. Bannon, who had stayed in touch with Mr. Trump sporadically after being pushed out of the White House last summer, sought to smooth over the rift during his Breitbart News radio show on Wednesday night.

When a caller said that Mr. Trump had "made a huge mistake, Steve, bashing you like he did," Mr. Bannon brushed it aside. "The president of the United States is a great man," Mr. Bannon said. "You know I support him day in and day out, whether

going through the country giving the ‘Trump Miracle’ speech or on the show or on the website.”

The president cited those comments on Thursday morning when asked by reporters if Mr. Bannon had betrayed him. “I don’t know,” Mr. Trump said. “He called me a great man last night so, you know, he obviously changed his tune pretty quick.”

Although he responded to Mr. Bannon’s flattery, that did not mean Mr. Trump was ready to forgive, as his late-night tweet made clear. About a half-hour later, Donald Trump Jr. seized on his father’s new nickname for the famously rumpled and often unshaven Mr. Bannon in his own tweet. “I have a feeling #SloppySteve is going to go big,” Donald Jr. wrote. “Branding gold.”

Mr. Trump’s spokeswoman earlier in the day made clear that the president wanted Mr. Bannon punished for his disloyalty. Asked at her daily briefing whether Breitbart News should fire Mr. Bannon, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary said, “I certainly think that it’s something they should look at and consider.”

Through a long career in real estate and entertainment, Mr. Trump has repeatedly threatened lawsuits against authors, journalists and others who angered him, but often has not followed through, including after such a threat against The New York Times during the 2016 presidential campaign, and it was unclear whether he would in this case, either.

Mr. Wolff did not reply to a request for comment, but after his publisher moved up the release, he jabbed at Mr. Trump on Twitter. “Here we go,” he wrote. “You can buy it (and read it) tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. President.”

Most presidents have avoided legal confrontations over unflattering publications out of fear of giving them more publicity and promoting sales, but it is not unprecedented. Former President Jimmy Carter, shortly after leaving the White House, threatened to sue The Washington Post over a gossip column item asserting that his administration had bugged Blair House, the government guest quarters, while Nancy and Ronald Reagan stayed there before the 1981 inauguration. The Post retracted the item and Mr. Carter dropped the matter.

Mr. Trump’s threat generated a debate among advocates and legal scholars. “The president’s attempt to halt publication of a book because of its content is flagrantly unconstitutional,” said Suzanne Nossel, the executive director of PEN America, a group that defends free expression around the world.

The bar for any legal action by a president, the most public of public figures, is particularly high. “At the center of any libel case has got to be an actual statement of fact that’s alleged to be inaccurate and damaging,” said Bruce W. Sanford, a veteran media law specialist at BakerHostetler. “You can’t just say we don’t like this book and all the things in it and sue for libel. That’s not what libel cases are about.”

The book, which quickly shot up to No. 1 on Amazon’s best-seller list after articles about it on Wednesday, presents Mr. Trump as an unengaged candidate and president who grew bored when an aide tried to explain the Constitution to him and refuses to read even one-page briefing papers.

Advisers are reported to have called the president an “idiot,” a “dope” or “dumb” as dirt, and Melania Trump is described as being so unhappy about the prospect of life in the White House that she was in tears on election night. Mrs. Trump has disputed the characterization, and spokesmen for Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin; Gary D. Cohn, the national economics adviser; and Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser, all denied the disparaging quotes attributed to them.

Charles J. Harder, the president’s lawyer, has represented Mrs. Trump and other high-profile figures in cases against the news media. Based in Beverly Hills, Calif., he won Hulk Hogan’s landmark invasion-of-privacy case against Gawker Media and until recently represented Harvey Weinstein, the Hollywood mogul. Mr. Harder threatened to sue The New York Times over an article documenting sexual harassment by Mr. Weinstein. But Mr. Harder no longer represents Mr. Weinstein, and no lawsuit has been filed.

In his letter to Mr. Wolff and his publisher, Mr. Harder said the book itself admits “that it contains untrue statements.” In an author’s note, Mr. Wolff writes that many of the accounts that he collected “are in conflict with one another; many, in Trumpian fashion, are baldly untrue.” He said he sometimes “let the players offer their versions, in turn allowing the reader to judge them,” and in other instances “settled on a version of events I believe to be true.”

Mr. Harder argued that that proves actual malice and reckless disregard for the truth, standards that courts use to judge whether a public person has been libeled. Mr. Harder cited no specific statements that he judged untrue.

But some people cited in the book have disputed episodes describing them. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain denied suggesting to Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law and senior adviser, that British intelligence might have spied on Mr. Trump’s campaign. “This story, as we have pointed out, is a complete fabrication,” he told BBC Radio 4. “I mean literally, from beginning to end. I’ve never had such conversations, in the White House, outside the White House, with Jared Kushner, with anybody else.”

Asked on Thursday for examples of potentially libelous inaccuracies in the book, Ms. Sanders cited only an anecdote in which Mr. Trump seemed not to recognize the name of former Speaker John A. Boehner, even though he had previously posted on Twitter about the lawmaker.

“There are numerous mistakes,” she said, “but I’m not going to waste my time or the country’s time going page by page, talking about a book that’s complete fantasy and just full of tabloid gossip.”

Bombshell tell-all Trump book will be published early

By **Bob Fredericks**

January 4, 2018 | 5:18pm | Updated

The defiant publisher of an unflattering new tell-all book about President Trump thumbed its nose at the White House Thursday and said it would release the book on Friday instead of waiting until next week.

“Due to unprecedented demand, we are moving the on-sale date for all formats of ‘Fire and Fury,’ by Michael Wolff, to Friday, January 5,” a Henry Holt spokeswoman told CNN Thursday.

Wolff took to Twitter to thank Trump for the free publicity.

“Here we go. You can buy it (and read it) tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. President,” he wrote.

The book, which portrays the president as an uninformed bungler unfit for the Oval Office, was scheduled to be released next Tuesday.

But Trump and his aides have been trashing the book, creating a media buzz — and the president’s lawyers tried to block its release with a cease-and-desist order and threat of legal action.

Fire and Fury released early in defiance of attempt to ban tell-all Trump book

Trump denies he gave author access and hits out at ‘Sloppy Steve’, as spokeswoman dismisses claims about his stability and fitness to serve

Lauren Gambino, David Smith and Sabrina Siddiqui in Washington and Edward Helmore in New York

Fri 5 Jan 2018 10.34 GMT First published on Thu 4 Jan 2018 15.23 GMT

The US publisher of an explosive new book exposing chaos behind the scenes at the White House has brought publication forward to Friday in defiance of an attempt by Donald Trump’s lawyers to try to shut it down.

The book’s author, Michael Wolff, tweeted: “Here we go. You can buy it (and read it) tomorrow. Thank you, Mr President.”

Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House was due to be released on Tuesday. But after extracts were made public by the Guardian, the White House was thrown into a frenzy.

Claims in the book about Trump’s mental stability and fitness to serve were dismissed on Thursday as “disgraceful and laughable” by the White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders.

Trump tweeted that he had never granted Wolff access to the White House and had turned down his requests many times. Describing the book as “phony”, Trump said Fire and Fury was: “full of lies, misrepresentations and sources that don’t exist”. He said he had never spoken to Wolff: “Look at this guy’s past and watch what happens to him and Sloppy Steve!”

The president’s Twitter outburst followed a remarkable personal statement denouncing Steve Bannon, his one-time confidant, whom he castigated as self-aggrandizing and not a critical figure.

“Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my presidency,” Trump said. “When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind.”

Sanders said the president was “furious and disgusted” at Bannon’s attacks on his family, which included the claim that Donald Trump Jr’s Trump Tower meeting with a group of Russians who promised dirt on Hillary Clinton was “treasonous” and “unpatriotic”.

Then on Thursday, as the White House struggled to contain the fallout from the book, a lawyer for the president sent a letter demanding Wolff and his publisher, Henry Holt & Co, “immediately cease and desist from any further publication, release or dissemination”, or excerpts and summaries of its contents. The legal notice, sent

by the Beverly Hills-based attorney Charles Harder, also demanded a copy of the book.

Harder sent a similar letter to Bannon on Wednesday night, accusing the former chief strategist of violating an employee agreement and defaming the president.

The Guardian published details from the book on Wednesday after obtaining a copy from a bookseller in New England. New York magazine then rushed to publish a lengthy extract and more details began to emerge as major US publications including the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal received copies free from embargo.

About 250,000 copies of the book had already been shipped, supposedly to be held until Tuesday. On Thursday afternoon, a spokeswoman for Holt & Co told the Guardian publication in all formats was being brought forward to Friday “due to unprecedented demand”.

A statement from the publisher added: “Henry Holt confirms that we received a cease and desist letter from an attorney for President Trump. We see ‘Fire and Fury’ as an extraordinary contribution to our national discourse, and are proceeding with the publication of the book.”

Wolff is due on NBC’s Today show on Friday morning for his first on-the-record interview.

Ben Wizner, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s speech, privacy and technology project, said earlier Trump’s lawsuit had no chance of success.

“Even Donald’s Trump’s lawyers aren’t crazy enough to present this to a court,” he said. “It would be extraordinary and unprecedented for a court to respond to these claims by blocking publication. That is not going to happen.

“I think there is an audience of one for these legal threats and that’s Donald Trump.”

In a column for the Hollywood Reporter titled My Year Inside Trump’s Insane White House, Wolff gave more insight into what he discovered as he sat “day after day on a West Wing couch” for a year. Administration officials, he suggested, do not believe Trump is capable of fulfilling his role as president.

“Everybody was painfully aware of the increasing pace of his repetitions,” Wolff wrote. “It used to be inside of 30 minutes he’d repeat, word-for-word and expression-for-expression, the same three stories – now it was within 10 minutes. Indeed, many of his tweets were the product of his repetitions – he just couldn’t stop saying something.”

He added: “Hoping for the best, with their personal futures as well as the country’s future depending on it, my indelible impression of talking to them and observing them through much of the first year of his presidency, is that they all – 100% – came to believe he was incapable of functioning in his job.”

In a final anecdote, Wolff wrote: “At Mar-a-Lago, just before the new year, a heavily made-up Trump failed to recognize a succession of old friends.”

Much of Thursday’s White House press briefing centered on the book. Sanders said any claims about Trump’s stability were “disgraceful and laughable”.

“If he was unfit, he probably wouldn’t be sitting there,” she said.

Trump appeared before the media earlier in the Roosevelt Room, where he was meeting Republican senators about immigration. There were shouted questions from reporters, including: “Did Steve Bannon betray you, Mr President? Any words about Steve Bannon?”

Trump replied: “I don’t know, he called me a great man last night, so, you know, he obviously changed his tune pretty quick.”

Wolff’s book – “filled with false and misleading accounts”, according to the White House – soared from 48,449th on Amazon’s bestselling books list to No 1.

The author said his book was based on more than 200 interviews, including multiple conversations with the president and senior staff. Sanders claimed Wolff “never actually sat down with the president” and had spoken with him just once, briefly, after Trump took office. She dismissed the book as “trashy tabloid fiction”.

“Aides thought they had more time to prepare for the book’s formal release,” the Washington Post reported. “Trump spent much of the day raging about the book to top aides, officials and advisers said ... As he fumed, some aides were still frantically searching for a copy of the book.”

On Wednesday, Bannon hosted Breitbart News Tonight on Sirius XM radio as usual, making little reference to the public rupture.

When a caller brought up the issue, Bannon replied: “The president of the United States is a great man. You know I support him day in and day out.”

DON THE SHELVES

‘Fire and Fury’ book to be released four days EARLY despite Donald Trump’s threat to sue

Attorney Charles J. Harder has sent publisher Henry Holt and Co. a cease and desist letter ahead of the book's publication - with the controversial title now to be published today

By Mark Hodge and Brittany Vonow

5th January 2018, 1:00 am

Updated: 6th January 2018, 4:40 pm

A BOMBSHELL book that paints Donald Trump as an inept President in a chaotic White House will be published four days EARLY today - despite his threat to sue.

Sensational excerpts from Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* have laid bare his eccentricities and infuriated the US leader.

Trump's hard-hitting lawyer Charles J. Harder earlier issued a cease and desist letter to block the release - while asking for a copy for themselves.

But despite the threats, publisher Henry Holt and Co. has decided to release the book four days ahead of schedule.

The book will hit the shelves at 9am Eastern Time - 2pm in the UK - with author Michael Wolff tweeting: "Here we go. You can buy it (and read it) tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. President."

Wolff has already defended the claims in his book, saying he has tapes to back up quotes used in the book - and that the private dinner that saw Steve Bannon make his controversial comments was held at his own Manhattan townhouse, Axios reported.

The book has already caused controversy ahead of its release, with White House press secretary Sarah Sanders coming out swinging against it, saying that it contained "ridiculous lies".

The President himself called it "phony", and insisted he'd never spoken to Wolff "for the book".

He also branded his former strategy chief and campaign director Steve Bannon, who is quoted extensively in the book, as "sloppy".

She said: "I'm not going to waste my time or the country's time going page by page talking about a book that's complete fantasy, and just full of tabloid gossip, because it's sad, pathetic. Our focus is going to be on moving the country forward."

When asked whether Trump would go to court in an attempt to have the book banned from being published, she said: "That is something I would refer you to the president's attorneys, our position is very clear we think it is full of false and fake information."

Wolff's book is reportedly based on 200 interviews with White House staffers and members of Trump's election campaign team, including Steve Bannon.

The litany of bombshell claims in the book include that First Lady Melania "cried" when Trump won the election.

Other claims within the book include that Trump and his campaign team "didn't actually want to win the election" and that the President "eats cheeseburgers in bed while watching three TVs at once".

Another said that Trump's daughter, Ivanka, sought to become the "first woman president" - a plan she concocted with her husband Jared Kushner.

In response to claims that Trump never actually wanted to win the US presidency, Ms Sanders said: "It is absolutely laughable to think that somebody like this president would run for office with the purpose of losing.

"If you guys know anything, you know that Donald Trump is a winner and he's not going to do something for the purpose of not coming out on top and not coming out as a winner it's just, that's one of the most ridiculous claims in the book."

Harder, who is representing the President's private company the Trump Organisation, already blasted former White House strategist Bannon for collaborating with Wolff.

The lawyer accused the Breitbart chief of breaching confidentiality, insisting legal action was "imminent."

A letter to Bannon read: "You have breached the Agreement by, among other things, communicating with author Michael Wolff about Mr. Trump, his family members, and the Company,

The letter continued: "...disclosing Confidential Information to Mr. Wolff, and making disparaging statements and in some cases outright defamatory statements to Mr. Wolff about Mr. Trump, his family members, and the Company."

Trump cut ties with Bannon on Wednesday, saying his former adviser had "lost his mind," in a blistering statement issued after comments attributed to Bannon in the book were made public.

And continuing to distance himself from Bannon, Trump said: "Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my presidency."

But Bannon called Trump a "great man" in the wake of the book's controversy.

Some US news outlets have questioned the validity of statements made in Wolff's book.

Michael Wolff, 64, is best known for his columns which featured in New York magazine and Vanity Fair.

Women's March 2018: Protesters Take to the Streets for the Second Straight Year

By THE NEW YORK TIMES JAN. 20, 2018

A year after millions of people turned out for the Women's March and took to the streets en masse to protest President Trump's inauguration, demonstrators gathered on Saturday in cities across the United States, galvanized by their disdain for Mr. Trump and his administration's policies.

A deluge of revelations about powerful men abusing women, leading to the #MeToo moment, has pushed activists to demand deeper social and political change. Progressive women are eager to build on the movement and translate their enthusiasm into electoral victories in this year's midterm elections.

Here are some highlights:

- More than 200,000 protesters attended the march in New York on Saturday, according to Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles said 600,000 attended the march there, while organizers of the Chicago march said 300,000 attended that event. Thousands also turned out in Washington, Philadelphia, Austin and hundreds of other cities and towns around the country and world.
- Several speakers urged women to channel their energy into helping Democrats win races in the upcoming midterm elections. A rally called "Power to the Polls," organized by the leaders of last year's Women's March in Washington, will be held on Sunday in Las Vegas.
- President Trump said in a tweet that it was a "perfect day for all Women to March," while touting "unprecedented economic success and wealth creation" under his watch.
- Read our analysis of how activists have tried to sustain the energy from last year's marches — and the challenges they face next.

New York marchers said they felt empowered: 'I feel like the revolution is now.'

That's what Vanessa Medina, a 32-year-old nurse, said prompted her to participate this year, even though she didn't march last January. Ms. Medina, of Clifton, N.J., cited the Time's Up campaign against sexual harassment and Republicans' attempts to defund Planned Parenthood as her reasons for protesting.

"I want equal pay," her 11-year-old daughter, Xenaya, chimed in. "And equal rights."

Ann Dee Allen of Wauwatosa, Wis., stood by a vendor table on 60th Street and Broadway, holding a T-shirt and a handful of buttons she had just bought for the demonstration.

“I feel differently about it this year,” said Ms. Allen, 61, who works in communications for a health care organization. “Last year, I just felt kind of angry and impassioned. This year, I feel like I’m in it for the long haul.”

Women filled Central Park West from 61st Street north as far as the eye could see. A D.J. spun songs. The wind kicked up.

Desiree Joy Frias, 24, of the Bronx, and her grandmother, Daisy Vanderhorst, wore red capes and curved white hoods — the telltale outfits of the enslaved child-bearers of “The Handmaid’s Tale,” which was recently adapted for television from Margaret Atwood’s dystopian science fiction novel.

“We both watch the show,” said Ms. Frias, a law school graduate who said she belongs to an activist group called the “Handmaid Coalition.” “We’re a group of men and women that believe fiction should not become reality.”

Los Angeles women chanted, ‘¡Sí, se puede!’

In the middle of a park surrounded by gleaming downtown skyscrapers, hundreds of thousands of people assembled. Some hugged strangers. Others were still coloring in their signs.

“I’m done with men feeling like they have some sort of power over women, and I’m definitely done with having a president who believes that he has the power to take things from them, to take things that are provided — like Planned Parenthood — from women, when they deserve the same sort of health care as anybody else,” said Amanda Kowalski, 28, who works in financial services.

Claudia Grubbs, a 42-year-old high school teacher, returned after marching last year, which she said spurred her into donating to organizations that support women in politics.

“Over the last year, every day when I read the news or watch the news, I’m horrified at the things that Trump and his administration are doing, and I feel like going to the march will help re-center me, refocus me and not make me feel like I don’t know what is happening to our country,” she said. “I feel like it’ll help me gain a sense of balance and a sense of purpose, and help me pursue things that I want to pursue.”

Speakers urged women to run for office.

Ashley Bennett, a Democrat from Egg Harbor Township, N.J., unseated a longtime local Republican politician in her first campaign for office last November. She ran for Atlantic County freeholder against John L. Carman after he posted a meme on Facebook during last year’s march asking, “Will the women’s protest be over in time for them to cook dinner?”

Ms. Bennett told the crowd at Saturday’s march in New York that she was scared to run at first, and that she asked herself, “Am I the right person? Can I really do this? But then I realized that if you wait until you feel ready, you may never take action.”

In Washington, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of California, took the stage with other legislators who arrived from the Capitol. She praised the women who have already launched campaigns, many for the first time.

“They marched, and now they have run for office, and some of them have already won their office,” she said. “We want women to know their power in so many respects — by showing up not only on the day of the march, but in airports, in town halls.”

“It’s women who are holding our democracy together in these dangerous times,” added Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York. “To change the system, we need to change the players and have women at the table.”

President Trump commented on the marches.

On Twitter Saturday afternoon, the president seemed to celebrate the women’s demonstrations, even though the protests across the country had a distinct anti-Trump message.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the unemployment rate for women aged 20 and older has been falling steadily since 2012, years before Mr. Trump took office.

On Friday, Mr. Trump addressed the thousands of anti-abortion protesters gathered in Washington for the March for Life.

“We are with you all the way,” he said in remarks broadcast to the National Mall. The president, who once described himself as “very pro-choice,” has used his executive powers to curtail abortion rights.

The government shutdown became a rallying cry.

The federal government shutdown that took effect early Saturday did not dissuade marchers from taking to the streets.

One of the sticking points that led to the shutdown — disagreement over extending legal status to immigrants brought into the country illegally as children — has become a rallying cry for organizers.

The pink hats came back out in Washington.

On the Metro headed to the Smithsonian, participants on their way to the Lincoln Memorial wore the symbolic pink hats that became popular during last year’s march. Michelle Bloom, 52, a Washington teacher, held a sign as her daughter, Jenna, 14, repaired hers with duct tape. She had made it in her mother’s classroom Friday, tracing the handprints of her classmates who couldn’t make it to the march.

“It’s inspiring to see young and old coming together like this,” Michelle Bloom said. But, she added, “I thought there would be more.”

Women lined the frozen reflecting pool and slowly filled the grassy areas, but there was still space for kickball games around the Washington Monument. And people jogged and biked around the Mall, which would have been impossible a year ago, when the crowd of marchers was bigger.

The organizers of last year's march in Washington focused their energy this year on putting together an event Sunday in Las Vegas. The event, Power to the Polls, will serve as an opening rally for a national voter registration campaign.

While the crowds in Washington were not quite as large as they were in 2017, the Mall was still teeming with people.

Garrett Regunberg, 32, pointed to the rallies against President Trump's travel ban as an example of ongoing activism that has made a difference.

"There was a lot done in the first year to limit the damage that could have been done," he said. "The resistance is alive."

Chicago marchers were urged to 'go to the polls and flip those seats.'

Marchers packed into downtown Chicago to listen to speakers like billionaire Democratic donor Tom Steyer, who has urged Democrats to make the ouster of Mr. Trump a central campaign issue this year.

With midterm elections approaching, Mr. Steyer said, "We are going to have to be organized, we are going to have to be engaged and we are going to have to go to the polls and flip those seats."

Marchers shouted anti-Trump chants and carried signs saying, "Vote" and "Immigrants Make America Great."

"I'm an activist and an artist and I'm here to fight for women's equality and equality for all minorities," said Michelle Hartney, 39, of Chicago, who said she attended the Women's March in Washington last year.

Some activists decided to sit this one out.

Some women avoided the marches on Saturday because they felt they were too focused on electing Democrats, at the expense of other issues. They wanted the movement to be more inclusive of people of color and other marginalized groups.

Nadya Agrawal, 26, joined the big rally in Washington last year. "But it just wasn't what I thought it would be," she said. "It felt more like a commiseration rather than the start of a lot of work."

Gatherings like these, she added, were no substitute for more focused activism. "I hope that the women who are at this rally are also going to the next Black Lives Matter protest, or marching on behalf of DACA," she said.

Other gatherings across the country faced similar criticism on social media and in public statements. In Cincinnati, Black Lives Matter activists said on their website,

the march was not welcoming to minorities and was “a poorly veiled campaign to elect more Democrats to ‘resist Trump.’” In Philadelphia, activists criticized the rally in an open letter after they learned that the police would be on patrol. (Organizers said the security was normal for a large event and marginalized groups were well represented.)

Deandra Jefferson, 24, who helped write the letter, said in a phone interview on Saturday that the march “caters mostly toward middle class, straight white women,” and was not an effective way to dismantle oppression.

“They should stop organizing these marches until they decide what they’re going to do the other 364 days of the year,” she added.

The president didn’t make it to Palm Beach — but protesters did.

The shutdown kept the president from traveling as planned to his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida this weekend.

Despite his absence, several hundred protesters gathered north of the mansion, on the beach in front of Worth Avenue. Many people waved “Impeach Trump” signs.

For a Canadian politician, speaking out was empowering.

Organizers of the second Women’s March in Ottawa shifted the focus to issues directly affecting Canadian women. Many marchers wore red scarves as a gesture of support for the large number of indigenous women whose murders or disappearances have received relatively little attention from the police.

The march, which began at the Parliament buildings, was one of about three dozen across Canada.

Among those who addressed the crowd in Ottawa was Catherine McKenna, the environment minister, who has been one of the leading international voices against President Trump’s climate policies.

Late last year, Ms. McKenna confronted a reporter from a right-wing Canadian news outlet, Rebel Media, over its repeated references to her as Climate Barbie. Earlier, a Conservative member of Parliament apologized for describing her that way on Twitter.

“I realized that when I spoke out in my small case of being called Climate Barbie — when I did it I felt better, but I also saw that so many other people stood up for me and they also felt empowered,” Ms. McKenna said in an interview outside of a concert venue at the end of the march.

Although Ms. McKenna credited Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who regularly describes himself as a feminist, for encouraging women to enter politics, she said their numbers still must increase, and not just in Canada.

“I really believe that we wouldn’t have had an ambitious Paris climate agreement if we didn’t have strong women negotiators,” she said. “That’s one of the untold stories.”

In Rome, a Harvey Weinstein accuser received a hero’s welcome.

The actress and director Asia Argento, one of the first women to publicly accuse Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault, has been mostly vilified by Italian commentators. But the several hundred women who congregated in a downtown Rome piazza on Saturday morning gave her a rousing welcome.

“I’d like to see how many of you today acknowledge that you have put up with abuse, by raising your hands. And not just sexual. Abuse of power. Because we are women, because we don’t have power,” said Ms. Argento, as numerous hands timidly rose from the crowd.

The women chanted slogans in Italian and English in solidarity with a global sisterhood whose vision “is in sharp contrast with the Donalds of the world and other self-proclaimed geniuses,” said one of the keynote speakers, Loretta Bondi, of Rome’s Casa Internazionale delle Donne, or International Women’s Center.

Women also gathered in other corners of the world, including Frankfurt, Germany; Kampala, Uganda; and Osaka, Japan, where a small group chanted “Time’s up!” in English and Japanese.

Women's March descends on NYC on anniversary of Trump's inauguration

By [Georgett Roberts](#), [Khristina Narizhnaya](#), [Gwynne Hogan](#) and [Anna Sanders](#)

January 20, 2018 | 1:33pm | Updated

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers filled Manhattan streets Saturday to protest President Trump and his agenda on the one-year anniversary of his inauguration.

The marchers said they came to support universal healthcare, religious freedom, immigrants and women. They also protested Trump's proposed border wall.

Others said they marched simply to show their displeasure with Trump.

Mayor de Blasio's office said roughly 120,000 people joined the march, while cops on the ground said as many as 200,000. At one point, the rally stretched more than 20 blocks along Central Park West. It was one of 200 women's marches planned this weekend around the world.

Marchers sung and chanted in front of the Trump Hotel at Columbus Circle, calling it a "s***hole" – a reference to what the president allegedly called African countries during a recent Oval Office meeting.

"You can't build the wall," shouted Annabelle Sherman, a 7th grader, in front of the Trump Hotel. "Your hands are too small!"

"I don't agree with that we should build a wall to keep immigrants out because we are all immigrants," Sherman said.

Upper East Side resident Tracy Marx couldn't pick one reason for marching

"All of them," said Marx, in her 40s. "Immigration, health care, women's issues. I'm really happy that it's this big."

Roberta Brashear-Kaulfers, 62, who came to the march from Hawaii, said North Korea and the environment are her biggest issues with Trump.

"This whole thing with North Korea – it's too close to home" Brashear-Kaulfers said, citing the recent missile scare there. She was also upset at Trump for rolling back environmental protections like at Bears Ears National Monument in Utah.

Catherine Volk and her husband Charles Viens, both 54, left their home in Albany at 5 a.m. to drive down to the march.

“They are coming for women,” Volk said, referring to Republicans. “They’re coming for immigrants. They are coming for whoever are not rich Republicans. If we stand and do nothing we are responsible for what happens.”

Volk held a sign saying “Liberty & Justice for all” and her husband’s poster declared “First they came for the Muslims and we said not this time Mother F***ers.”

“It’s important we all stand together and stand with all women,” Viens said. “My wife is the smartest person I know and I get to stand with her.”

Marchers wore knitted pink-eared “pussy” hats and held an eclectic mix of colorful handmade signs decrying the president and his administration’s policies. Some marchers chanted “Have we had enough?” and “Are you fed up?” followed by a loud chorus of “Yes!”

Among the celebrities at New York’s march were actresses Amy Schumer, Edie Falco and Anna Paquin.

“Here’s hoping we make so much progress that they don’t need to see many more!” Paquin tweeted.

“This is our moment,” actress Rosie Perez declared to marchers during a speech calling for Democrats to flip the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. “Power to the pu**y, y’all!”

Ted Serafin, a 64-year-old retired postal employee from Rochelle Park, N.J, held a #MeToo sign and said he was “all for” the movement that brought sexual assault and harassment into the national conversation.

“It’s brave of them to stand up because men always have the power and every time women get out of line, there’s repercussions,” Serafin said. “With everyone sticking together it’s harder to ignore it.”

“He is a woman manipulator,” said Linda Gynor, a 72-year-old registered nurse from Manhattan. She held a sign urging people to vote for Democrats this November and declaring, “Democrats will clean the swamps. Drain Trump! Ryan! Kelly! and Sara Sanders.”

“He has no respect for women,” Gynor said. “He sees us as breeders and for sex.”

“We have such a buffoon as president — the things that he does. The lunacy,” said Sandy Epstein, a 65-year-old executive recruiter from Cresskill, N.J. “This is not our country. There is power in numbers. It’s important for people to see and know that there is a large number of people who disagree.”

Aaron Riel, 44, and his wife, 46-year-old Rebeca, came in from Burlington, VT.

“I feel like a very small clog in a very big machine,” said Riel, wearing a pink “pussy” hat and holding a sign saying, “Fight like a girl! Hear our voice.”

Rebeca was marching despite a broken back.

“I want everyone to have equal rights for everyone – people of color, different races, sexes, religions, sexual preferences,” she said. “Broken back and all, I don’t care!”

Robin Stinton, who traveled from Denver for the march, held a sign with Trump’s face and “s***hole” written on it.

“He is always pursing his lips like that,” said Stinton, a 70-year-old retired pediatric audiologist, as she pursed her own lips. That’s the s***hole and whatever comes out of his mouth is from the sewer.”

Gov. Cuomo, Mayor de Blasio and other politicians also attended the protest. Many of them spoke before a crowd of several hundred people at the Eleanor Roosevelt statue on 72nd Street and Riverside Drive on the Upper West Side.

“We have seen tremendous aggression and discrimination against women,” Cuomo said. “It’s been an ugly time in many ways.”

De Blasio called last year’s Women’s March “the greatest single protest in the history of United States of America” and telling Trump “this shutdown is the result of the division and hatred that you created.”

“When the government fails you, do it yourselves,” the mayor said. His wife, first lady Chirlane McCray, added, “We value women. We respect women. And everyday we fight like hell for women.”

“We’re going to stand up and march and we’re going to march forward every day until we actually make change,” Cuomo declared from a breakfast before the march.

One year later, thousands return for Women's March with spirits undaunted

At major rallies in Washington, New York, LA and beyond, some said Trump's 'disastrous' first year has left women angrier than ever

Lauren Gambino *in Washington*, **Adam Gabbatt** *in New York* and **Carla Green** *in Los Angeles*

Sat 20 Jan 2018 22.19 GMT Last modified on Mon 22 Jan 2018 21.27 GMT

A year after millions of women and men demonstrated in cities around the globe in an extraordinary rebuke of Donald Trump, crowds returned to the streets on Saturday.

Tens of thousands turned out in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and hundreds of other cities across the US and the world. Many women wore pink knit "pussy hats", an enduring symbol of the Women's March and the so-called "resistance" to Trump.

In Washington, where the federal government was shut down amid gridlock in Congress, the steps of the Lincoln Memorial were dotted with pink hats and handmade placards. A group of protesters held large block letters to spell "impeach".

The rally stretched along the national mall towards the Washington monument. A few dozen daring protesters watched the rally from atop the frozen reflecting pool. Under a warm sun, the pool began to melt. Several people had to be fished from the icy water.

Crowds were generally upbeat, basking in the sunshine. Activists said they were encouraged by a string of liberal victories in the past year, including the election of Democrats in state elections in Alabama and Virginia. But there was also a sense of challenges still ahead, especially as the 2018 congressional midterms approach.

"I think maybe there's more anger this year," said Liz Weiderhold, a teacher in Virginia who said she marched in Washington last year as well. "You can feel the pressure in the pressure cooker. We're more exasperated now that he's been in office for more than a year and we've seen what a disaster it's been."

The 2017 protest touched off a year of political resistance to Trump's presidency often led by women.

As speakers including the House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, and Democratic senator Kirsten Gillibrand noted during their remarks to the Washington rally on Saturday, women are running for office in record numbers and aiding grassroots efforts to protest, flooding lawmakers with calls and emails.

“If you care about winning back the House, flipping the Senate, then I urge you to support Democratic candidates all across the country,” Gillibrand said, to booming cheers. “This is our moment to stand tall, to fight back and be heard.”

The year of protest has also seen sweeping cultural and political change around sexual harassment in the workplace, through the social-media-fuelled #MeToo movement.

Organizers said they hoped the anniversary rallies and marches would help galvanize the movement ahead of the 2018 midterms.

“We started 2017 with perpetual outrage and now we are at the moment when we have perpetual outrage plus a plan in place for 2018,” Linda Sarsour, a co-chair of the Women’s March, told the Guardian.

Last year, embarrassed that the Women’s March in Washington dwarfed attendance for his inauguration the day before, Trump forced the then press secretary, Sean Spicer, to falsely claim the president drew the “largest audience to witness an inauguration, period”.

This year – if facetiously – Trump sought to embrace the marches.

“Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March,” the president tweeted from the White House on Saturday afternoon, as frantic negotiations with congressional leaders over the shutdown continued.

“Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic success and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months. Lowest female unemployment in 18 years!”

Trump was not supposed to be in Washington to witness the march. He had planned to be 1,000 miles away at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, celebrating the anniversary at a lavish party with Republican donors.

Outside the White House, marchers carried wry placards. Some turned Trump’s recent reported derogatory comment about “shithole countries” in Africa and Central America back on him, while others accused him of being Russian president Vladimir Putin’s “puppet” or begged him to tweet less, especially about North Korea.

In New York, thousands of people marched through Manhattan. The streets on the west side of Central Park were packed. One of the closest subway stations to the start of the march was Columbus Circle – right by the Trump International Hotel and Tower.

Lots of people posed for pictures in front of the Trump sign, among them Deborah Paray and Marteen Dinzes, both from New Jersey. They had fashioned a sign depicting Trump with a large hole for a mouth.

“A lot of shit comes out of that hole,” Dinzes said.

In Los Angeles, protesters were greeted by shouting vendors selling buttons, pink “pussy hats” and branded scarfs. One vendor, Walter Lopez, said he woke up at 3am to get to the march from Redondo Beach.

“I’m impressed by how many people showed up,” he said. “And I’m all about women, people, human beings. It’s a good thing I woke up.”

DUMP TRUMP!

Women's March sees tens of thousands of anti-Trump protesters take to the streets calling for US president to be axed on one-year anniversary

Pink 'pussy' hatted protesters from across the land marched in cities up and down the USA as the president marked his first year in office

By Sun Reporter

21st January 2018, 9:04 am

Updated: 22nd January 2018, 1:52 pm

TENS of thousands of activists have taken to the streets of America on the anniversary of Donald Trump's inauguration to protest the result of the last election.

Pink "pussy" hatted protesters from across the land marched in cities up and down the USA as the president marked his first year in office.

Actress Viola Davis addressed members of the Los Angeles crowd, many of whom carried signs like "Real news, fake president."

In Park City, Utah, where the annual Sundance Film Festival is in full swing, actress Jane Fonda and nationally known attorney Gloria Allred joined the women's march.

But Twitter loving Trump took the opportunity to troll the protesters this afternoon saying that it was a "perfect day" for women to march to celebrate the "economic success and wealth creation" during his first year in office.

He posted: "Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic success and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months.

"Lowest female unemployment in 18 years!"

But the demonstrators were unmoved and amused by their head of state's humour and marched on with slogan emblazoned signs

Oklahoma City protesters chanted "We need a leader, not a creepy tweeter!"

One woman donned a T-shirt with the likeness of singer Woody Guthrie, who wrote "This Land Is Your Land."

Members of the group Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Seattle burned sage and chanted in front of Seattle's rainy march.

In Richmond, Virginia, the crowd burst into cheers when a woman ran down the middle of the street carrying a pink flag with the word "Resist."

Singer Adele posed with actresses Cameron Diaz and Jennifer Lawrence on a demo for the Me Too sex harassment crusade.

Scarlett Johansson, flanked by film pal Mila Kunis in LA, accused actor James Franco of "preying" on women. He denies it.

The march in Washington, D.C., took on the feel of a political rally when U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, both Democrats, urged women to run for office and vote to oppose Trump and the Republicans' agenda.

"We march, we run, we vote, we win," Pelosi said, to applause.

People gathered from Montpelier to Milwaukee, from Shreveport to Seneca Falls.

"I think right now with the #MeToo movement, it's even more important to stand for our rights," said Karen Tordivo, who marched in Cleveland with her husband and 6-year-old daughter.

In Palm Beach, Florida, home to Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate, several hundred people gathered carrying anti-Trump signs before marching. There, a group of women wearing red cloaks and white hats like the characters in the book and TV show "The Handmaid's Tale" marched in formation, their heads bowed.

Cathy Muldoon, a high school librarian from Dallas, Pennsylvania, took her two teenage daughters to the New York rally and said marching gives people hope. She said this year's action is set against the backdrop of the Trump presidency, which "turned out to be as scary as we thought it would be."

"I've not seen any checks and balances," she said. "Everything is moving toward the right, and we have a president who seems to have no decency."

Earlier Saturday, dozens of activists gathered in Rome to denounce violence against women and express support for the #MeToo movement. They were joined by Italian actress and director Asia Argento, who made headlines after alleging in 2017 she had been sexually assaulted by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in the 1990s.

Argento addressed the criticism she received once she spoke up about her abuse.

"Women are scared to speak, and because I was vilified by everything I said, I was called a prostitute for being raped," she said at the rally.

Argento, who's 42, was strongly criticised by many Italian media and Italian women for not speaking out earlier and was hounded on Twitter with accusations that she sought trouble.

Weinstein has apologised for causing "a lot of pain" with "the way I've behaved with colleagues in the past," but he has denied "any allegations of non-consensual sex."

The 2017 rally in Washington, D.C., and hundreds of similar marches created solidarity for those opposing Trump's views, words and actions.

Millions of people around the world marched during last year's rallies, and many on Saturday talked about the whirlwind of the past year.