



***THE WRONG DIRECTION—POLICIES OF THE TRUMP  
ADMINISTRATION***

**YEAR ONE SUMMARY: VOLUME 2 - FOREIGN POLICY**

***Compiled and written by Colin Shanley, Foreign Policy Analyst***

**A PUBLICATION OF USRESIST NEWS**

[www.usresistnews.org](http://www.usresistnews.org)



**February 16, 2018**

## Introduction

To mark the one-year anniversary of the Trump Administration USRESIST NEWS is publishing compilations of administration policies in several domains--- civil rights, education, the environment, foreign policy, health, and immigration. This series sadly chronicles the backward steps this administration has taken in clamping down on civil rights, undermining public schools, loosening environmental protections, revising cold war style foreign policy, reducing access to health care, and blunting immigration. The disastrous results of these policies are becoming more apparent with each passing day. Income inequality between rich and poor is on the rise; our cities and rural communities are becoming more vulnerable to the impact of climate change; the civil rights gains made by women and minorities are being threatened; and America is losing its stature as a world leader. And this is just after one year.

USRESIST NEWS monitors and reports on Trump administration and congressional policies. We publish one-page Briefs every time a new policy comes out. The Brief summarizes what's in the policy, analyzes and critiques it, and provides a list of organizational resources for people who want to push back. To learn more please visit our website ([www.usresistnews](http://www.usresistnews)) download our news Briefs and sign up for our subscription service.

Ron Israel

Managing Editor

USRESIST NEWS

# Trump Administration Foreign Policies: Year One

## Summary

Throughout the 2016 Presidential campaign we were introduced to a wide assortment of alarming policy positions put forward by the Trump administration. Trump emphatically called for a non-interventionist approach to international affairs. His foreign policy goals seemed to be (a) keep America safe from foreign attack (though this did not include Russian attacks on the US election system); and (b) protect America's national interests by not letting other countries take advantage of us.

It is unlikely that Trump's foreign policy was grounded in any strong ideological foundation; Trump's position on a subject often seemed to be a matter of opposing whatever his predecessor, President Obama, had done. For example his first foreign policy act was to withdraw the United States from the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement that Obama had worked for years to create. Trump also withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement that Obama had supported.

Trump's foreign policy seems to signal a departure from the United States' long history of active overseas intervention. He has avoided getting America further involved in countries such as Syria and Libya. He frequently blames the destabilization and death toll in Syria and Libya as largely caused by the actions of the Obama administration. As a result of Trump's non-interventionist foreign policy America is viewed by many world leaders as retreating from the international leadership role it has played for decades. Other countries, such as China and Russia, are seeking to fill the vacuum created by America's departure from the world scene.

Trump's attitude towards the UN and NATO threaten to erase the few cooperative and stabilizing forces in the international world. Here in the Americas, he has threatened NAFTA and pushed for tariffs. Across the Pacific, the President has excused Russian aggression while simultaneously pushing us towards the brink of nuclear war against North Korea. In the Middle East and Africa, Trump has launched an attack on Syria; sold weapons to Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Bahrain; jeopardized the Iran deal; and taken a proactive role in supporting Israeli apartheid. With all his professions of spreading democracy, he has found himself in closer accord with autocrats such as Putin, Erdogan, and Duterte than our allies. He cares more about a world leader respecting him than the civil rights of their population. His actions have caused a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: creating the world of threats he and his supporters have always envisioned that we are living in. The following briefs are a summary of these actions and are grouped by region.

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# International Policy

## Trump Submits National Security Strategy Report

December 23, 2017

### Summary

President Trump revealed the first National Security Strategy Report of his presidency on Monday, further displaying his ideological departure from previous presidents. Trump's report takes a more grim perspective than past reports, painting a picture of a world overrun with jihadist terrorists, international crime organizations, and conniving allies seeking to undermine the United States. While clear directives are largely absent, proposed solutions primarily include raising the defense budget and further promoting neoliberal market reforms. China and Russia are mentioned as "revisionist powers", with a vague reference to Russia's targeting of "media [and] political processes". In highlighting the dangers of our "porous" border "chain migration" is designated as a threat, suggesting a further shift in rhetoric from opposing illegal immigration to immigration in general. This is not the only instance of Trump's use of the report for vague race baiting, as he states that one of the five universal truths setting the stage for our security strategy is that "A nation that is not proud of its history cannot be confident in its future." an uncomfortable allusion to the confederate statue conflicts of August.

### Analysis

What is most telling about this year's report is not the threats that are included, but those which are absent. Worldwide poverty is only cited as an excuse to deregulate the market, human rights are barely mentioned, and phrases such as "climate change" and "food insecurity" are completely missing. Russia and China are almost solely discussed as a pair, downplaying the far more serious danger to international peace and security that Russia has proven itself to be in recent years. North Korea's dangerous pursuance of nuclear weapons is mentioned, but there is no suggestion of a commitment to reduce the number of nuclear weapons around the world. In fact, Trump's perception of the largest factor engendering war and conflict is our under-funded, weak military – despite the enormously disproportionate amount of funds we direct to our defense in comparison to the rest of the world. Conversely, Trump also warns of the "grave threat" of our growing debt, which only comes off as more insincere when mentioned immediately after pushing for the largest tax cut in decades. The underpinning of what causes Trump's security strategy to read so differently from those of past presidents is that he does not believe the United States and its allies can grow together cooperatively. Trump promotes strategic partnerships, but ultimately he views all of our relationships as inherently competitive. Whether it be through trade deals or the spreading of American influence, in Trump's mind, we can only succeed at the expense of others.

### Engagement Resources

- **Read the full report:** [Here](#) you can find the full, 68-page report
- **Compare with the previous report:** [Here](#) you can find a summary of the main components of Obama's 2015 report.
- **Read an article on defense spending:** [This](#) 2016 article, written by Time magazine, explores the major disconnect between citizens and politicians ideas of appropriate defense budgets.

*This brief was compiled by Colin Shanley. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [colin@usresistnews.org](mailto:colin@usresistnews.org).*

# President Trump Addresses the UN General Assembly

Presidential Speech

## Summary

In his first speech to the U.N. General Assembly, President Trump extolled the importance of state sovereignty and denounced the perceived enemies of global democracy on the world stage. Following the path of isolationism and nationalism that he described in his inauguration speech, Trump promised that the United States “does not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch”. Moving away from precedent, he described the U.S. as an “example for everyone to watch” rather than a major source of aid or authority.

Trump also took the opportunity to levy some insults at the “loser terrorists” of ISIS, and “rocket man”, a name he has now twice used to refer to Kim Jong-un. Echoing the sentiments of Bush’s 2002 “axis of evil” speech, Trump decried North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela as “rogue regimes” that neglected the rights of their people and threatened the sovereignty of other states. With North Korean delegates in the front row, Trump continued to increase the fervor of his rhetoric, insisting that Kim was on a “suicide mission”. He suggested the premature death of the Iran nuclear deal was soon to come, due to the regime’s support of Hezbollah and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as their continued testing of ballistic missiles. He promised that the U.S. is prepared to take further action against Venezuela, in response to their backsliding democracy, and asked our allies to join him if necessary.

## Analysis

As the most headline-grabbing remark of the day, Trump’s “rocket man” line proved yet again the level of which he has found himself over his head as a world leader. Now that he is being tested with the most looming threat to our security in years, he has reverted to the strategy that won him his first victory as a politician in the Republican primaries: schoolyard insults. However, what worked for him within the environment of cable news squabbling is unlikely to produce any endearment now that lives are at stake, and voters are recognizing Trump’s fear-inducing inadequacy as commander in chief.

Trump’s promotion of sovereignty as a unilateral solution to worldwide conflict is a simplistic attempt to cling to the ideas that worked during his campaign, as if the strategy that appealed to out of work blue-collar Americans could somehow enforce civil rights around the globe. He betrays this approach in the same speech in his insistence that world leaders take up action against Maduro, as well as his cavalier attitude towards leading us into nuclear war. It seems his idea of sovereignty is only relevant when turning down refugees, but not when he wants to interfere with the affairs of another country. His failure to mention a grave threat to national sovereignty, the Russian annexation of Crimea, as well as the most serious recent human rights crisis, the genocide of Muslims in Myanmar, show that these ideals of humanitarianism and sovereignty are simply ideas he entertains when it serves him, rather than fundamental values underpinning his ideology.

## Engagement Resources

- Support the International Peace Bureau: [The IPB](#) is a peace federation founded in 1981 with the expressed priorities of disarmament and reallocation of military expenditure. Consisting of 300 member organizations across 70 countries, the IPB is building an international movement to reduce unnecessary conflict among states. You can support by [donating](#) or [applying to become a member](#).
- Donate to Seeds of Peace: Seeds of Peace is an organization focused on building peace and strengthening ties among those living in conflict ridden areas of the world. A

main element of the program is a camp for teenagers and educators from unstable regions to share and learn values of unity and leadership. You can support by [donating](#).

- Support the Human Rights Watch: The Human Rights Watch is a non-governmental, non-profit, international organization which provides a source of research and advocacy for human rights and anti-war causes around the world. You can find many ways to personally take action in the struggle for human rights on their [website](#).

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## Trump Signs Sanctions Bill

Passed Legislation

Signed on August 2, 2017

### Policy Summary

On August 2nd, President Trump signed a bipartisan effort to punish Iran, North Korea, and Russia. It imposes harsh sanctions and also requires the President to submit a report explaining any desire to remove them. Upon receiving this report, Congress would hold hearings and decide whether to allow or reject this proposal. The bill passed the Senate a few months ago (by a vote of 97-1) and originally only targeted Russia and Iran. It stalled in the House over procedure, and after clarifications and the addition of North Korea, it passed on July 25th by a vote of 419-3. With a veto-proof majority in both chambers, the bill will be implemented within the next six months. [LEARN MORE](#).

### Analysis

This sanctions bill is a mixed bag, and it is difficult to determine the efficacy of this legislation before implementation. The sanctions listed in the bill are important, especially [those against the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps](#), a paramilitary group in Iran. It is critical to punish Russia and others for their transgressions, and [the provision preventing the President from unilaterally overturning the sanctions](#) is essential considering [President Trump's history with the Russians](#). Yet sanctions alone are not enough to hinder these three nations, especially when they [exempt expensive energy projects](#). North Korea, [aided by China](#), [will not feel the effects of additional sanctions](#), and levying our soft power against these states [will only go so far](#). Additionally, the European Union has [threatened to respond](#) if the United States act unilaterally without [considering European energy companies](#). And in typical Trump style, he admonished the bill in [a rare signing statement](#), clearly upset with the restrictions it put on unilateral actions. He was later [mocked by Russian Prime Minister Medvedev on Facebook](#) in a move that will definitely perturb the President. If the Trump administration ever clarifies its position against these hostile nations, only then will the world unify against existential threats. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Current US Sanctions](#) — An extensive list by the Treasury Department of all US sanctions levied against foreign entities.
- [US Sanction Policy](#) — A complicated and technical explanation of sanction policy and guidelines by former Obama WH Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Treasury Jacob Lew

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## **Foreign Policy Flip-Flop: NATO Policy**

*This is the second in a series of USRESIST NEWS Briefs that chronicle the flip-flop nature of many of the Trump administration's foreign policies.*

### **NATO Commitments**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was founded in 1949 as a response to rising global threats. NATO is the paramount international defense alliance, and its members are some of the beacons of stability and democracy across the globe. Because of President Trump's malleable position, the United States —NATO's largest contributor and the cornerstone of the alliance— regularly has its priorities questioned and its commitment scrutinized.

#### **FLIP**

On the campaign trail, President Trump regularly criticized NATO, claiming the United States [should reconsider](#) its involvement and [famously remarking](#) that NATO may be obsolete. He [refused to commit](#) to Article V, NATO's concept of mutual defense, and this lack of assurance may be the most dangerous aspect of his rhetoric. President Trump's obsession with NATO members [paying their fair share](#) continued after his election, and he reaffirmed his comments about the obsolete nature of the alliance.

#### **FLOP**

In April of 2017, President Trump [defended himself](#), clarifying that he didn't know very much about NATO and emphasizing that it was obsolete. Right before his first foreign trip, [he stated](#) how confident he was that NATO members would help — even though the only time Article V was ever invoked was immediately following 9/11. Yet when the President finally made his address to NATO, he [refused to recommit](#) to mutual defense ([to the surprise of his international delegation](#)) and instead focused on the 2% defense spending benchmark.

Our national security is threatened by the President's muddled stance towards our most important coalition. Secretary of State Tillerson [seems resolute](#) in his support for the NATO alliance, and [he expressed](#) that "of course" the United States does support Article V. United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley also [restated this commitment](#), and even claimed that the United States has never faltered on its responsibilities to the alliance. Whatever the case, the Trump administration must bolster our most important military and political alliance for the sake of our country and the entire democratic world.

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## Selective Visa Application Restrictions

State Department Diplomatic Memorandum  
Issued on March 15, 2017

### Policy Summary

In instructions sent to all U.S embassies and consulates on March 15, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson began to outline a complicated process that some visa applicants may need to undergo. While the memo remains vague, they specifically reference that certain “population sets” would be subject to “increased scrutiny”, regardless of whether they were eligible for visas prior to the new restrictions. In line with President Trump’s calls for “extreme vetting”, the memo originally enumerated the six countries under Trump’s executive order as high priorities. This has since been redacted, but calls for investigating social media profiles and email accounts remain. [LEARN MORE \(UPDATE\)](#)

### Analysis

These new restrictions seem to fulfill Trump’s discriminatory ideas of [banning people based on ethnicity or national origin](#). Not only does the United States already use a [very complicated and thorough vetting process](#), but processes like this have [failed in the past](#). Racist policy hurts citizens domestically, and it [sends negative messages to our allies abroad](#) and the rest of the international community. [Regardless of the fate of Trump’s new executive order](#), Tillerson may be able to succeed with these new guidelines because their intentionally nebulous nature will make them harder to fight legally. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Amnesty International](#) — An organization that works across the globe to secure justice and human rights for all citizens, especially refugees and immigrants.
- [Refugee International](#) — An NGO that supports refugees and displaced people in many regions across the globe through donations and legal and personal assistance.
- [Immigration Advocates Network](#) — A collection of groups and organizations that provide labor and legal advice to immigrants as well as facilitates logistical and operational coordination between NGOs

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## Effects of the Budget on Foreign Policy

Office of Management and Budget  
Issued on March 16, 2017

### Summary

The White House published their first budget document on March 16th, and it detailed many cuts and increases for the 2018 budget. President Trump’s “skinny budget” only includes changes to discretionary spending, like a 28.7% cut to the State Department’s budget. President Trump plans to slash almost 2.5 billion dollars from programs that aid foreign investment to slow climate change, as well as a decrease in funding to United Nations peacekeeping and relief

programs. Additionally, Trump plans to slow funding to the World Bank, educational programs, and many poorer nations because they lack “strategic importance to the US.” [LEARN MORE](#)

## Analysis

This budget could be one of the most destructive budgets for the State Department in decades, despite Secretary of State Tillerson [weakly defending the cuts](#). President Trump’s [shift from traditional diplomacy](#) to one of military power is almost as dangerous as his obsession with countries “[paying their fair share](#).” With such large cuts to its budget, the State Department will recede from many critical areas in the world ([while still maintaining \\$3.1 billion to Israel](#)), and this will undermine years of democratization and peacekeeping efforts. While Trump claims to prioritize security, crippling the State Department’s budget will only [weaken and destroy](#) our international position. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Engagement Resources

- [Center for American Progress](#) – A nonpartisan progressive institute that works to raise awareness about global issues and work with legislators to craft important policy.
- [Freedom House](#) – A watchdog group that helps promote civil liberties and facilitates democratic peace in order to assure freedom throughout the globe.
- [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) – A federal bureau, which would be dismantled under the current budget proposal, that aims to establish congenial relationships between American citizens and citizens of other countries.

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## Mexico City Policy

Presidential Memorandum  
Released on January 23, 2017

### Summary

The Trump Administration has reinstated the Mexico City Policy, which was rescinded by both President Clinton and President Obama. The Mexico City Policy is a policy of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which prohibits foreign family-planning NGOs from receiving US federal funding if they perform or “actively promote abortion as a method of family planning.” The current administration has extended the policy to apply to all “global health assistance” NGOs instead of just those which focus on family planning. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

The Mexico City Policy is a regressive and restrictive gag order which ultimately does more harm than good. In a [research paper](#) published by the World Health Organization (WHO), they found a correlation between years in which the Mexico City Policy was in effect and higher abortion rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Contrary to assumptions, it appears as though the Mexico City Policy actually increases abortion rates. When successful organizations are prohibited from receiving funding, they cannot provide a multitude of other family-planning resources, which can lead to unintended pregnancies and poorly-planned family lifestyle. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Engagement Resources

- [Population Action International](#) — An international NGO which focuses on family planning. PAI is focusing a campaign against Trump’s gag order.
- [National Coalition Against Censorship](#) — NCAC is a large coalition of members from many different areas of influence who fight for freedom from censorship. NCAC has an opposition case against the Mexico City Policy.
- [Center for Reproductive Rights](#) — CRR works with the law to expand reproductive rights for all governments across the globe.

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# The Americas

## Cuban Diplomats Expelled in Response to Health Incidents

US-Cuba Relations

### Summary

The rebuilding of U.S.-Cuban relations experienced a strange hitch on Tuesday, as the Trump administration expelled 15 Cuban diplomats following an alleged attack on the U.S. embassy in Havana. The nature of the attack remains a mystery, as the only evidence is a shared set of inexplicable symptoms experienced by 21 U.S. diplomats and family members, as well as several Canadian diplomats. The symptoms, which began appearing among the victims shortly after the November U.S. election, and lasted until August, included hearing loss, dizziness, headache, fatigue, cognitive issues, and difficulty sleeping, according to a [report](#) made by the U.S. embassy. Several diplomats were awakened during the night by strange sounds which seemed to disappear when they left the room or moved into a different area.

While the State Department is yet to officially declare any cause for these symptoms, the theory popularly ascribed to by the media and their government contacts is that of a sonic attack.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla announced to the U.N. general assembly that the Cuban government was not involved, but an investigation has thus far been inconclusive.

Raul Castro has also authorized FBI agents to take part in the investigation, in the interest of full transparency.

### Analysis

The question of who is behind the attacks still remains a conundrum, even months after the initial reports. Many scientists [deny or at least question](#) the plausibility that the symptoms could have been created by a sonic attack. Other explanations such as an electromagnetic device or biological attack are similarly incapable of confidently explaining how the diplomats could be attacked so inconspicuously. A U.S. official [told CNN](#) that Castro would not have been as personally assuring if the Cuban government was responsible. The most likely interpretation is that the guilty party is someone with a vested interest in the destruction of U.S.-Cuban relations. This is a dangerous time for any kind of diplomatic interference, as President Castro is stepping down next year, marking the first time since the 1959 revolution that the Cuban presidency will not be in the hands of a member of the Castro family.

Over the past several years, relations between the U.S. and its Communist-led, island neighbor have been slowly improving after decades of tension. In December of 2014, President Obama and President Castro announced the beginning of a thawing process of hostility between the two nations, following talks between the leaders facilitated by Pope Francis and hosted mostly in Canada. The agreement included the lifting of travel and trade restrictions, as well as the reopening of both embassies. American tourists flocked to Cuba, and a closer partnership between the countries seemed forthcoming, until the 2016 election. Trump [announced](#) in June that he was “canceling the last administration’s completely one-sided deal with Cuba” in order to “expose the crimes of the Castro regime”. An overreaction by Trump to the still dubious claims that the Cuban government was behind the attack could deteriorate the delicate diplomatic relationship his predecessor fought to leave as part of his legacy in the latter half of his final term.

### Engagement Resources

- Donate to the Center for Democracy in the Americas: The CDA is an independent, non-profit organization pushing for more friendly U.S. policy towards Cuban sovereignty.

They were a key player in convincing the Obama administration to change diplomatic relations with Cuba in 2014. You can [donate](#) on their website.

- Support Engage Cuba: Engage Cuba is the leading coalition of private companies and organizations working to end the travel and trade embargo on Cuba. They focus specifically policy in the interest of strengthening ties between Cuban and U.S. businesses. You can donate or learn about ways to encourage your representative to support pro-Cuban policy on their [website](#).

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## **Trump Imposes Major Tariff on Canadian Plane Manufacturer**

New Tariff

### **Summary**

With U.S.-Canada relations unusually tense due to NAFTA renegotiations, the Trump administration has potentially taken a further step to weaken the historic bond between the two nations. An integral part of Trump's campaign promises hinged on reshaping the dynamic of our trade interactions in order to protect American jobs, and he has found an opportunity with the Canadian owned plane manufacturing company, Bombardier. Bombardier's C-series jet is set to be delivered to its U.S. customer Delta in the Spring of 2018. A trade case brought against Bombardier by U.S. competitor Boeing proved to be a rare opportunity for Trump to follow through on a campaign promise. The U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) determined that there is a reasonable case to be made against Bombardier, which meant that the dispute was advanced to the Department of Commerce. The decision was made that Bombardier has received subsidies or is selling at below cost to undercut American manufacturing, which resulted in an import tariff of 220% being levied against the Canadian company.

### **Analysis**

While the intent of Trump's protectionist policies has been primarily to promote American job growth, this tariff could endanger what Bombardier estimates are 22,000 jobs in Kansas and West Virginia, both states which supported Trump in the election. In addition, this could create an uncharacteristic division between the United States and Canada, as well as, to a lesser extent, Northern Ireland, who both are relying on the boost in employment the manufacturing of the C-series will create. This grievance is a further addition to a previous dispute regarding Trump's plan to restore tariffs against Canadian lumber companies, which were ended with the initial NAFTA agreement. The Bombardier tariff may be a plan to gain leverage for the U.S. in future NAFTA negotiations, but it could also be an insult to two countries who view themselves as close allies rather than competitors with the United States.

### **Engagement Resources**

- Support Atlas Free Trade: Atlas Free Trade is an organization established by the Atlas Network and tasked with encouraging research and advocacy on behalf of lowering trade barriers. You can [volunteer](#) which will allow you to keep in touch in regards to events being held around the world.

- Donate to the Center for Global Development (CGD): The CGD is a nonpartisan think tank focused on reducing worldwide poverty, partially by opening trade laws. You can donate [here](#).

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## Mexico Sugar Trade Agreement

Trade Negotiation

Issued on June 6, 2017

### Policy Summary

On June 6th, Mexico and the United States reached an important stage in the drafting process of the sugar trade deal between the two nations. Mexico agreed to every demand made by the United States and is willing to work with the American sugar industry to make further progress. The deal would protect American exports of high-fructose corn syrup, stymie a flood of sugar in bumper crop years from Mexico, and impose many other conditions to limit the open market provided by NAFTA. However, the American Sugar Alliance could not agree to the present terms, citing loopholes. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

With [President Trump threatening NAFTA](#), this agreement could build an important foundation and trust to continue the treaty. Commerce Secretary Ross and Mexican economic minister Guajardo [seemed to agree](#) on many fundamental economic principles which could be a good sign for many more deals to come. Yet many industries in the United States, including sugar, continue to [clog up and stifle negotiations](#) in order to increase profits. This hurts consumers with higher prices and less regulation, and not accepting this deal could set a poor precedent and [damage NAFTA negotiations](#) in the future. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [WTO](#) — An international organization dedicated to solving trade disputes and providing resources for freer trade
- [BSR](#) — BSR is a business network developing sustainable and freer commerce and trade
- [Atlas Free Trade](#) — A network of research and collaboration between concerned international advocates who wish to remove trade barriers.

*This brief was compiled by Jacob Malinowski. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [jacob@usresistnews.org](mailto:jacob@usresistnews.org).*

## Cuba Reversal

Presidential Directive  
Issued on June 16, 2017

### Policy Summary

On June 16th, President Donald Trump signed a directive with the intention of reversing Obama-era Cuba policy changes. The directive only dealt with a few regulations and left many in place. Specifically, private tours of Cuba are no longer allowed, and any educational trip will undergo an intensive audit. Furthermore, President Trump is restricting some business transactions with Cuba and will not permit any Americans from exchanging or dealing with any business owned by the Cuban military. Embassies will remain open, and many businesses will maintain operations and money will continue to exchange hands on the island. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

The President has taken a rather moderate stance on this reversal which goes against much of his [earlier rhetoric](#). Even Russia [criticized the language](#) of President Trump's speech on Friday, and this Cold War-era thinking does not aid the United States or its interests. The regulations he did repeal [will not convince](#) the Cuban government to change, and they have received [bipartisan condemnation](#) across the country. It will hurt [economic development of both nations](#). A cold and unfriendly approach to Cuba did little to soften the country during its multi-decade embargo throughout the Cold War. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [UNHCR-Cuba](#) — An assembly in the United Nations which furthers the rights and interests of refugees across the globe.
- [Amnesty International](#) — Amnesty International conducts advocates for justice for migrant workers and immigrants and protects them from mistreatment
- [Atlas Free Trade](#) — A network of research and collaboration between concerned international advocates who wish to remove trade barriers.

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## Tariff on Canadian Lumber

Proposed Tariff  
Proposed on April 25, 2017

### Policy Summary

President Donald Trump announced on April 25th a new set of tariffs on Canadian lumber policies. Citing an unfair deal, President Trump has launched a new set of duties ranging from 3% to 24% on five Canadian lumber companies. Currently, most Canadian lumber firms pay a tariff of 20% on exports to the United States. This dispute over Canadian lumber is many decades old, and President Trump will not be the first to issue new tariffs. While this decision will not be finalized by the Commerce Department until September, they are effective immediately and 90 days retroactively. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Analysis

Once again, President Trump did not consider all possible externalities with this new tariff. This duty would [hurt American homebuilders](#) and would raise the price for new homeowners across the country. Because the Canadian government [owns many of the forests](#) in Canada, they are able to offer better subsidies. Instead of negotiating, President Trump would rather [start a trade war](#) with our close ally and economic partner. This is dangerous for the United States politically, and a calmer and wiser approach may help the average American citizen more in the long run. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Engagement Resources

- [National Association of Homebuilders](#) — An association to keep a strong housing market and keep housing prices low.
- [Atlas Free Trade](#) — A network of research and collaboration between concerned international advocates who wish to remove trade barriers.
- [World Trade Organization](#) — A supranational institution that works to increase free trade and lower tariffs

*This brief was compiled by Jacob Malinowski. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [jacob@usresistnews.org](mailto:jacob@usresistnews.org).*

## State Department Issues Keystone XL Pipeline Permit

State Department Permit  
Issued on March 24, 2017

### Policy Summary

A press release issued on March 24th by the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs stated that a permit was issued to TransCanada for the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The statement detailed that this pipeline “would serve the national interest”, and follows President Trump’s call for the development of the pipeline. It would run from Canada to Nebraska and bring about 830,000 barrels of oil into the United States every day. The pipeline stalled under President Obama and was protested extensively by environmental activists and indigenous groups. The pipeline is not guaranteed, however, and the State of Nebraska must complete the authorization. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

The Keystone XL pipeline will have a negative impact on almost every affected sector. While it will create some temporary construction jobs, many of these will be Canadian, and [it will only leave about 35 permanent jobs](#) in the United States. While the oil giants argue that the oil sands will be excavated either way, a [steady fall in oil prices](#) seems to dispute this. Some of the oil may be refined in the United States, but oil exports are [primarily sensitive to demand, not supply](#). Furthermore, construction of the pipeline undermines [American efforts to decrease dependencies on fossil fuels](#). [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Environment America](#) — A grassroots environmental group that works to protect the environment and slow climate change through organizational and legislative advocacy.

- [Climate Action Network](#) — A global network of NGOs that work to slow the effects of climate change on an individual and national level.
- [American Council on Renewable Energy](#) — ACORE is a non-profit dedicated to expanding renewable energy in the United States, and it works with not only the government but also industry leaders and financial institutions.

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# Eastern Asia and Russia

## Trump Holds Phone Call With Putin

November 21, 2017

### Summary

On November 21st, President Trump announced that he had held a phone call with Putin lasting over an hour. The call reportedly focused on the Syrian civil war, the global fight against terrorism, the North Korea threat, and the Iran nuclear deal. Coming only a day after Putin was photographed embracing embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during a meeting in the Russian city of Sochi, Trump's call failed to broach any criticism of Assad or Putin's [decision](#) to veto a US-led UN investigation of the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. Putin's vetoing had come only hours after Trump tweeted about the necessity of the UN resolution in order to "ensure that Assad Regime does not commit mass murder with chemical weapons ever again" The call was part of Russian plans to restart talks to find a peaceful conclusion for the war in Syria, which was [followed](#) with talks with leadership from Turkey and Iran yesterday.

### Analysis

Trump's behavior surrounding his relationship with Putin continues to show his habit of playing nice with world leaders whose ideals and ambitions veer wildly from those of longstanding American foreign policy, while being enraged by any perceived slight back home. Putin has demonstrated that his plans for Syria strongly contradict with Washington's hope to completely remove Assad from power, and he seems to be taking the leading role in the planning of the future of the divided country. This follows in line with Trump's [reticence](#) to condemn or even acknowledge Putin's interference in the 2016 US Presidential election after their meeting at the APEC summit in Vietnam weeks ago.

### Engagement Resources

- Learn more: This article, written by Susan B. Glasser, takes an in-depth look at the complexities of Trump's behavior towards Putin and Russian ambitions. It was [published](#) by Politico.
- Read a summary of the Trump-Russia scandal: Vox has [published](#) a helpful lengthy visual summary of the events corroborating the story that Russia influenced our Presidential election last year.

*This brief was compiled by Colin Shanley. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [colin@usresistnews.org](mailto:colin@usresistnews.org).*

## Trump Declares North Korea a State Sponsor of Terrorism

November 20, 2017

### Summary

On November 20th, Trump returned North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Originally added in 1988 after the bombing of South Korean flight 858 the year before, President

Bush chose to remove them in 2008 after a U.S. report recognized their avoidance of state terrorism since the attack two decades earlier. This doesn't mean that the North Korean government has ever stopped toeing that line, between the continued support of terrorist groups such as Hamas, and the sinking of the South Korean ship ROKS Cheonan in 2010, the shelling of South Korean military forces on the island of Yeonpyeong that same year, and a cyber attack against Sony in 2015.

Despite these aggressions, the previous two administrations have maintained that keeping North Korea off of the list is the best path towards denuclearization and eventual peace. With the recent allegedly state-sponsored murder of Kim Jong-un's half-brother, nuclear provocations, and death of American tourist Otto Warmbier, the Trump administration has announced that North Korea will be returned to the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [announced](#) that this move would "tighten the pressure on the Kim regime, with an intention to have him understand that this is only going to get worse until you are ready to come and talk". North Korea has [returned](#) in kind early Wednesday morning, launching an ICBM missile finally capable of reaching the entirety of the continental United States.

## Analysis

Returning North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terrorism comes off as a largely futile attempt of the Trump administration to empty everything in their arsenal of aggression short of an actual military strike in a bid to force an end to their rapidly progressing nuclear program. The sanctions included in the listing, such as an end of military sales to the country, are largely redundant considering what has already been put into place, and [according](#) to Henri Féron with the Center for Korean Legal Studies at Columbia University School of Law, the pre-existing sanctions have had little effect on the North Korean economy thus far. The only presumable resulting effect of this declaration is just a further insult to the North Korean regime, which flies in the face of Trump's requests for a diplomatic solution earlier this year.

## Engagement Resources

- Read a Letter From the Former Deputy Commander of US Forces in Korea On His Assessment Of War With North Korea: This letter, released on November 10th by Representative Ted Lieu of California, outlines the unique dangers involved in a war with North Korea. It can be read [here](#).
- Support the International Peace Bureau: The IPB is a peace federation founded in 1981 with the expressed priorities of disarmament and reallocation of military expenditure. Consisting of 300 member organizations across 70 countries, the IPB is building an international movement to reduce unnecessary conflict among states. You can support by [donating](#) or [applying to become a member](#).

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## **Trump Concludes Asia Trip**

President Trump returned this Tuesday night from a 12 day trip Asia, his third major international trip after visits to the Middle East and Europe earlier this year. Trump spoke to leaders in Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines, with a focus on reining in the North Korean threat and forming “free and reciprocal” trade deals.

### **Japan**

Meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Trump managed to make small steps towards his proclaimed goals in the region in the form of new Japanese sanctions on North Korea. The sanctions will freeze the assets of nine organizations and 26 individuals. Commenting on the recent North Korean missile tests over Japanese territory, Trump proclaimed that “The era of strategic patience is over”. President Trump also secured a verbal agreement from Abe to purchase more US military equipment, meaning, in his words, “A lot of jobs for us and a lot of safety for Japan”. This move is intended to help close the \$69 billion trade gap between the two countries.

### **South Korea**

Following a similar agenda in South Korea, Trump announced that the country had agreed to order “billions of dollars worth of equipment”. After declaring at a joint news conference with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that the US was prepared to use a “full range” of military options if necessary, Trump headed to Camp Humphrey, which is set to be the largest overseas US military base when it finishes its expansion project in 2020. Trump also thanked President Moon for “instructing trade negotiators to work closely with us to pursue a much better deal, a deal that frankly has been quite unsuccessful and not very good for the United States”, after previously threatening to drop out of the deal altogether.

### **China**

In China, Trump was promised an increase in purchases of American products, including soybeans, aircraft engines, and computer chips. Trump complained about China’s tendency towards unfair trading practices, such as theft of intellectual property and closed markets, but these concerns went unaddressed. In response to this history of issues, Trump said “After all, who can blame a country for being able to take advantage of another country for the benefit of its citizens? I give China great credit. In actuality, I do blame past administrations for allowing this out-of-control trade deficit to take place and to grow.” While Trump did claim that China could fix the North Korea problem “easily and quickly”, he did not manage to gain anything more than a general verbal commitment to increase pressure.

### **Vietnam**

In Da Nang, Vietnam, Trump met with 23 other world leaders as part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Here, Trump insisted that he was “not going to let the United States be taken advantage of anymore,” and pledged to pursue bilateral over multinational trade agreements. Due to Trump’s decision to back out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal in his first week in office, the summit continued with the eleven remaining members of the agreement forming a new trade agreement which excluded the United States. After meeting with Putin at the summit, Trump responded to reporters’ questions about Putin’s involvement in the 2016 election by insisting that “Every time he sees me, he says, ‘I didn’t do that,’. And I believe, I really believe, that when he tells me that, he means it. I think he is very insulted by it.” He later clarified his statements, saying that “What I said is that I believe [Putin] believes that. As to whether I believe it or not, I’m with our agencies, especially as currently constituted with their leadership. I believe in our intel agencies, our intelligence agencies,” While in Vietnam, Trump

also tweeted a strange insult at Kim Jong-Un, saying that he would “NEVER call him ‘short and fat’” and forecasting that they may someday be friends.

## **The Philippines**

In the Philippines, Trump declared to now have a “better than ever” relationship with the controversial President Rodrigo Duterte. At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Manila, Trump asserted that “We want our partners in the region to be strong, independent and prosperous, in control of their own destinies, and satellites to no one,”. Keeping with this mentality, Trump avoided reporters questions in regards to the human rights crisis surrounding the Philippine government crackdown on drug trafficking, which has led to as many as 9,000 extra-judicial killings. Harry Roque, a spokesman for Duterte, said: “There was no mention of human rights. There was no mention of extralegal killings. There was only a rather lengthy discussion of the Philippine war on drugs with President Duterte doing most of the explaining.” Despite this, spokespeople for the US and the Philippines later issued a joint statement saying that they “underscored that human rights and the dignity of human life are essential, and agreed to continue mainstreaming the human rights agenda in their national programs.”

## **Analysis**

Despite the nearly two weeks spent overseas, Trump, writer of “The Art of the Deal” returned home with little to show from his negotiations. In leaving the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the US has reduced its significance in eastern trade, leaving little reason for Asian economic powers to make concessions on our behalf. While an enormous part of Trump’s 2016 campaign focused on China’s abuse of trade agreements, even going so far as to say that China was “raping” our country, Trump was quick to forgive, and seemingly even compliment, now that he is in a position to make a change. After insisting so often that it would be a simple matter to fix the uneven economic relationships the United States is involved in, it’s going to be hard for him to convince his voter base that a moderate increase in sales of military equipment and other goods have made a major impact once elections come around.

Trump also seems to be running out of steam with the issue of North Korea, falling back on his Twitter insult staple. He has had little luck in pushing our allies towards concrete policy changes towards North Korea, despite their greater threat of attack. China has no intention of changing the current arrangement, and South Korea has no interest in pursuing more of a militaristic approach.

Fitting with his surprisingly docile nature outside of our borders, Trump seems unable to speak ill of any authoritarian leader who compliments him. Just as he complimented Erdogan and ignored Saudi human rights issues, Trump continues to fawn over Putin and can’t seem to take a stand against the clear state terrorism occurring under Duterte’s rule. His eventual acceptance, however, that US intelligence agencies are correct in regards to Putin’s interference suggests he may be feeling the pressure from recent arrests back home.

## **Engagement Resources**

- Donate to United for Peace and Justice: United for Peace and Justice is an international group working to promote an end to war and the abuse of human rights. Last Saturday they organized a series of protests against war in North Korea. You can [donate](#) on their website.
- Stay up to date with Karapatan: Karapatan is an alliance of individuals, groups, and organizations working for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines since 1995. You can learn more about current campaigns on [their website](#).
- Read more about Trump’s visit to the Philippines: [Here](#) is a Washington Post article taking a more in-depth look at Trump’s failure to confront the human rights crisis in the Philippines.

*This brief was compiled by Colin Shanley. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [colin@usresistnews.org](mailto:colin@usresistnews.org).*

## Anti-Russian Influence Bill

Proposed Legislation  
Proposed in October 2017

### Summary

During the last election and a plethora of time after it, many congressional lawmakers and experts have hypothesized that the Russians had some form of influence during our national election. A group of senators introduced a bill that would mandate online political advisers to provide information about their aids. This information may pertain to who is paying for the aids or any other information to prevent foreign governments from influencing our US elections. [Democratic senators Mark Warner and Amy Klobucher](#) introduced the Honest Ads Act and it was cosponsored by Republican Senator John McCain. Klobuchar claimed that “Our entire democracy was founded on the simple idea that the people in our country should be self-governing. Now, 240 years later, our democracy is at risk. Russia attacked our elections, and they and other foreign powers and interests will continue to divide our country if we don’t act now.” [READ MORE](#)

### Analysis

[Adam Sharp](#), former head of news, government, and election on Twitter claimed that “It’s a good piece of legislation to address the modern realities of campaign financing and the need for disclosure”. In addition, the bill amends the Bipartisan Campaign Reform of 2002 by requiring tech platforms with more than 50 million monthly users to “maintain and make available for online public inspection a record of advertisers who spend at least \$500 on the platform for advertising on campaign issues”. This legislation will solve a major regulatory blind spot because online political aids are unregulated in the status quo. This is key as the Internet Research Agency found that Facebook created [nearly 470 fake accounts with purchases up to \\$100,000 ads](#), Twitter had [200](#) accounts and Google had discovered [\\$4,700](#) worth of ads. At the end of this day, this piece of legislation increases the level of transparency since it requires disclosures by these tech giants. This sentiment was repeated by [Alex Howard](#), deputy director of the Sunlight Foundation (a government transparency advocacy group) when he claimed “This is a substantive legislative proposal that addresses the online disclosure gap that we and other good-government advocates and campaign-finance experts have talked about for years.

### Engagement Resources

- [Town Hall Project](#)– This project compiles the open-to-the-public events held by state and local representatives. This provides a great opportunity to tell them that this executive order will do more bad than good. You can also dial 1-844-6-RESIST to be redirected to the office of your local member of Congress.
- [US Senate](#) – Contact your local representatives to take a stance against this proposed legislation.
- US House of Representatives – Contact your local representatives to take a stance against this proposed legislation

*This brief was compiled by Vaibhav Kumar. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [vaibhav@usresistnews.org](mailto:vaibhav@usresistnews.org).*

## **United States Denies Chinese Acquisition of American Semiconductor Company**

Acquisition Rejection

Rejected on September 13, 2017

### **Summary**

On Wednesday, September 13th, a federal board blocked the 1.3 billion dollar Chinese acquisition of Lattice Semiconductor, an American company based in Oregon. The board cited national security concerns related to the deal, and there has been some evidence of relations between the Chinese company and government. In the past 30 years, there have been only three other such rejections of acquisitions made by the President. Lattice announced they would cancel the proposed sale. [LEARN MORE](#)

### **Analysis**

It's unclear whether or not [the claim of endangered national security](#) is substantiated, but this denial [will not help US-Chinese relations](#). Amid other rising tensions, this trade acquisition was intended to smooth over some ties between the two countries. Lattice claimed [it would be able to double its employees](#), and both companies assured the board that [there were no national security risks at play](#). Furthermore, the Chinese Communist Party [will hold its Congress](#) in October, something that only happens once every five years. While it's unclear to the general public whether or not this denial is justified, [it will definitely harm the relationship](#) between China and the United States.

### **Engagement Resources**

- [Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States](#) — See how the board which monitors Foreign Investment operates
- [Capitol Hill Reaction](#) — See how Senate Democrats believe CFIUS should act in the North Korean Crisis

*This brief was compiled by Jacob Malinowski. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [jacob@usresistnews.org](mailto:jacob@usresistnews.org).*

## **North Korea Fires ICBMs Near Japan**

Weapons Test

Launched on August 29th, 2017

## Crisis Summary

North Korea fired an intermediate range missile into the Pacific Ocean on Tuesday, August 29th, 2017. Tensions have escalated sharply this year as North Korea has already launched 13 missiles. Earlier this month, in response to harsher United Nations sanctions, the North Korean regime successfully launched missiles with the capability of carrying nuclear weapons to Guam or the mainland United States. President Trump responded with a series of tweets and harsh words, calling for “fire and fury” in retaliation. Regarding the most recent test near Japan, the Trump administration released a statement saying that “all options are on the table”. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Analysis

As many Americans have seen throughout the standoff with North Korea, this administration is [ill-equipped and diplomatically-incapable](#) of handling a delicate situation. President Trump continues to make incendiary comments and remarks in an attempt to demonstrate strength. Instead, the President [confuses our allies](#) and scares the American people. Beyond the rhetoric, the Trump administration [lacks appropriate strategy](#) relevant to the crisis. The State Department is understaffed, President Trump [understands little about nuclear weapons](#), and the administration refuses to consider peaceful methods of negotiations. [Opportunities to negotiate are disappearing](#) and North Korea [may already be nuclear-capable](#). While the world desperately needs calm, collected, and thoughtful American leadership, [President Trump delivers uncertainty](#), ignorance, and dangerous ideas.

## Engagement Resources

- [Appropriate North Korea Policy](#) — A long piece by Tom Malinowski for Politico about a peaceful and reasonable response to North Korea
- [Chinese Complications](#) — Adam Mount writes on the biggest player in the region and how the United States can work with –or against– China.

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## Secretary of State Tillerson Rejects Anti-Propaganda Funding

Earmarked Funds

Set to Expire on September 30th, 2017

### Policy Summary

Secretary of State Tillerson has refused to sign-off on \$80 million of appropriated funds to combat propaganda. In 2016, the State Department created the Global Engagement Center (GEC) to fight ISIS misinformation campaigns. Its purview now includes Russian propaganda and fake news, and Congress authorized more funds in order to achieve this goal. Tillerson must approve of the \$80 million before September 30th or the funds will expire and the GEC will dissolve. Tillerson has not issued a statement regarding his refusal. [LEARN MORE](#).

### Analysis

The Secretary’s [feckless and irresponsible diplomacy](#) is reaching new heights with this obstinate move. First, the [GEC is a bipartisan and interagency program](#) dedicated to protecting our domestic and international security. With increasing digital threats by our adversaries, this

program is more important than ever. Instead of protecting our democracy, [Tillerson is worried about Moscow's response](#). Coupled with his [mismanagement of the State Department](#), endless [contradictions between him and the President](#), and [objectively-nefarious ethics violations](#), Rex Tillerson is [doing serious damage to an organization](#) which needs strong leadership now more than ever. [Learn more about the destruction of the State Department](#).

### Engagement Resources

- [Global Engagement Center](#) — Read the official State Department history and description of the GEC
- [Successes of the GEC](#) — An in-depth piece by the Washington Post exploring how the GEC combats terrorism
- [GEC Executive Order](#) — The original EO issued by President Obama creating the GEC

*This brief was compiled by Jacob Malinowski. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [jacob@usresistnews.org](mailto:jacob@usresistnews.org).*

## Trans-Pacific Partnership

Presidential Memorandum  
Issued on January 23rd, 2017

### Summary

On January 23rd, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in order to institute his “America First Trade Policy” and enforce a “bilateral basis in negotiating future trade deals.” TPP was an agreement made by the Obama Administration which created a trade zone of twelve countries that border the Pacific Ocean, including Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Australia (including others). The agreement essentially forms stronger ties between the nations involved —slashing tariffs, encouraging trade, and enforcing trade rules— and would slowly implement these new terms over the next 15 years. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

TPP could be one of the most important international economic agreements in history. The key is in the long term: TPP sets up a [large trading zone](#) and the United States would be the leader. GDP, real income, and exports are [expected to rise](#) over time. These types of trading zones will happen inevitably —and the United States could miss out on a [big opportunity](#). Not only this, but TPP would allow the United States to impose regulations and rules, from [environmental standards to worker's rights](#), and this benefits every country in the deal. Not only are bilateral deals less effective, but [something like the TPP](#) will emerge and the U.S. will be left in the dust. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Fairtrade Foundation](#) — An international advocacy group which works to secure fair prices and workers' rights for farmers.
- [Fair Wage Network](#) — An NGO which fights for fair minimum wage laws across and within nations in order to protect workers regardless of gender, class, or race.

- [Business Council for Global Development](#) — An organization which helps connect businesses in developing nations to their governments in order to advocate for economic, social, and environmental issues as well as success within the business.

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# The Middle East and Africa

## State Department Suspends Aid to Pakistan

January 9, 2018

### Summary

This past Thursday the State Department announced the cancellation of hundreds of millions of dollars in security aid for Pakistan. The point of contention is Pakistan's continued alleged hesitance to cut ties to terrorist organizations such as The Taliban and The Haqqani network. Pakistan has been accused of providing a safe haven and even funding for these groups, who are both currently fighting NATO forces in Afghanistan. While the exact dollar amount to be withheld is yet to be announced, the State Department has made it clear that the money will not be re-appropriated, and will be returned upon renewed commitment to fight terror by the Pakistani government.

The announcement, preceded with a signature furious tweet from the President, had all the trappings of another erratic departure from historic US foreign policy. However, this is instead another advancement in a long history of contention between the two countries. President Reagan's administration worked with Pakistan to fuel militant Islamist groups to fight Soviet influence in Afghanistan. Only a year after their victory in 1989, the US sanctioned Pakistan to discourage their pursuit of a nuclear arms program. Following 9/11, the United States found renewed interest in a Pakistani alliance and resumed funding. In 2011, the Obama administration suspended \$800 million in military aid shortly after finding Osama bin Laden hiding just three hours outside of Islamabad. In 2015, \$300 million of Pentagon funding was made conditional on Pakistan acting against the Haqqani network in Afghanistan.

### Analysis

While cutting funding to settle a dispute is classic of the Trump playbook, we may find that the United States does not have much leverage in this case. Pakistan has been a valuable asset for the US military in the war in Afghanistan. The Karachi port is an invaluable supply line and the US also uses Pakistani bases to launch drone strikes. The Pakistani military and intelligence community hold a strong influence over the civilian government, and according to the former Pakistani ambassador to the US Husain Haqqani, "Pakistan's military has convinced itself that it is acting in Pakistan's national interest and that pursuing that interest is more important than U.S. aid." Anti-American sentiment is rampant among the Pakistani populace, and bending to the will of Trump would not be a popular move in a country heading towards a general election in July. Islamabad issued a statement calling for "mutual respect and trust along with patience and persistence", but opposition leader Imran Khan insisted that it was "time for Pakistan to delink from the US." China, which already provides investment for a \$60 billion infrastructure program in Pakistan, is [promising](#) to grant further support. The two countries have maintained a long and fruitful relationship, while the Pakistani foreign minister described the United States as the "friend who always betrays". There's a good chance this may be the final straw for Pakistan.

### Engagement Resources

- **Read the State Department's Extended Explanation:** [Here](#) is the State Department's briefing
- **Read More About Pakistan's Relationship With China:** [Here](#) is an article by Al Jazeera on The Strategic Importance of Chinese-Pakistani Relations

*This brief was compiled by Colin Shanley. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [colin@usresistnews.org](mailto:colin@usresistnews.org).*

## Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel

December 6, 2017

### Summary

On December 6th, President Trump announced that the US formally recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and will begin the process of moving its embassy, which is currently based in Tel Aviv. The announcement was [identified](#) as a “new approach” for finding Trump’s [promised](#) “ultimate deal” for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While West Jerusalem is the capital of the state of Israel, East Jerusalem is considered to be occupied territory by most of the world, and is often envisioned as the eventual capital of a future Palestinian state. East Jerusalem is also home to both Jewish and Muslim holy sites, including the Western Wall, the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as over 300 thousand Palestinians. Other countries avoid provoking conflict by basing their embassies in Tel Aviv. The policy change has aroused ire from much of the Muslim world, with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation [announcing](#) that they will no longer accept US help in the peace process. Rallies protesting the move have been attended by thousands in [Jakarta](#), Indonesia; [Ankara](#), Turkey; and [Karachi](#), Pakistan. Several Palestinian protesters have been [killed](#) in clashes with the Israeli Defence Force. Even two of Trump’s favorite heads of state, Putin and Erdogan, have [criticized](#) his decision. A UN resolution declaring the move to be legally void – supported by the other 14 members of the Security Council – was vetoed by the US.

### Analysis

The transition towards recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is actually the culmination of a bill passed over twenty years ago. The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, which received bipartisan support, directed the embassy to be relocated no later than 1999. Clinton, and every successive president until now, have elected to sign bi-yearly national security waivers to keep the embassy in place. Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, who is leading the administration’s peace efforts, even convinced the President to do the same earlier this year. This tradition has allowed the United States to keep up appearances as a neutral mediator of the conflict. Trump’s decision reinforces the belief held by many Palestinians – that the United States is solely concerned with ensuring the goals of the state of Israel. This could have a permanent destructive effect on the possibility of ever finding peace between the two embattled groups.

### Engagement Resources

- **Learn about one martyred Palestinian activist:** Ibrahim Abu Thurayyah was a renowned activist who was killed by an IDF sniper during recent protests. Al-Jazeera has [more details](#) on his story and message.
- **Check out J-Street:** J-Street is a pro-Israel organization working to find a peaceful, humane solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. You can learn more about their positions on their [website](#).
- **Donate to the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights:** The USCPR is an organization founded in 2001 with the mission of shifting US policy towards recognizing the human rights of Palestinians. You can donate on their [website](#).

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## US Pulls Out of UNESCO

October 2017

### Summary

Last Thursday, the Trump administration officially announced plans to pull out of UNESCO — the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The United States originally left the organization in protest in 1984, citing a pro-Soviet Union bias, only to return in 2002. The most recent departure was announced by the Trump administration as being due to their pro-Israel bias. Despite all the political controversy, the actual purpose of the organization is fairly innocuous. UNESCO's primary function is to designate and protect international landmarks known as "world heritage sites", such as the Taj Mahal and the Grand Canyon. Otherwise, their funding goes towards education and cultural programs around the world, including literacy programs and holocaust education.

While this move is certainly in line with Trump's distrust of the U.N. and international agreements as a whole, this is really just the last step in a slow departure which began in 2011. UNESCO voted 107 to 14 to recognize Palestine as an independent state and participant, with France, China, Russia, and India in favor, the United States, Canada, and Germany against, and the UK abstaining. This triggered a 1990 US law prohibiting funding towards any UN body which recognizes Palestine as a state. Up to this time, the United States was providing 22% of the funding for UNESCO. The organization responded by suspending US voting rights two years later, delegating the US as a non-member observer. After years of limbo, Trump's decision to leave unilaterally puts any hopes of rectifying the dispute to rest.

### Analysis

Historical sites can have a lot more political power than some would expect. UNESCO's decision last July to designate part of the West Bank city of Hebron as not only a Palestinian world heritage site, but one that is actively endangered can be seen as a strong repudiation of Israel's actions in the region. Historical sites have [often been used](#) by the state to justify pushing Palestinians out of certain regions. UNESCO's activism in this area caused them to be [accused](#) of not "truly promoting culture and education" by a State Department spokesperson. While leaving UNESCO may have seemed fated to be since 2011, following through on this departure can have lasting effects on the ability of the United States to maintain power and influence around the world. Reneging on our agreements makes us look untrustworthy, and only serves to breed division. Other countries may follow our lead and stop payments towards UNESCO. If the hope of the Trump administration was really to maintain a balance between Israeli and Palestinian interests on the international level, leaving UNESCO only makes that harder. With one of the biggest sponsors of Israel no longer funding the organization, Israel may be forced to make more concessions to the Palestinians. Ultimately, this is still a victory for conservatives, who broadly oppose the UN as a whole.

### Engagement Resources

- Explore UNESCO: UNESCO does a lot more than designate world heritage sites. You can learn more on their [website](#).

- [Donate to the American Task Force on Palestine](#): The ATFP is a nonprofit organization based in Washington that aims to educate the American people about the national security interests of the U.S. in establishing a Palestinian state.
- Learn more about UNESCO's decision to designate Hebron as a world heritage site: [Here is an article](#) written for The Guardian in July examining the full implications of UNESCO's decision, which may have been a major factor in the decision to leave.

*This brief was compiled by Colin Shanley. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact [colin@usresistnews.org](mailto:colin@usresistnews.org).*

## Trump Moves Towards Decertifying Iran Deal

Plans for Iran Nuclear Deal

### Summary

The Iran Nuclear Deal, which has been repeatedly maligned by President Trump as an “embarrassment” and “the worst deal ever” may be left in an uncertain position this Sunday, as Trump plans to decertify the agreement. The agreement, formed in 2015 with Iran, China, Russia, France, the UK, and Germany, agreed to remove economic sanctions on the Middle Eastern state in return for their cooperation in reducing their nuclear program. Trump already issued waivers of sanctions relief in September, as per the agreement, but the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act requires him to now either certify the agreement every 3 months or pass it on to Congress to review new potential sanctions.

The cause of Trump's skepticism in regards to the deal is Iran's continued testing of ballistic missiles, which they [argue](#) are purely in the interest of self-defense. While this testing does not expressly violate the 2015 agreement, Iran has assured foreign leaders that they are willing to discuss limits to its military program. In regards to the decertification of the deal, Iranian Foreign Defense Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif [asserted](#) that “If Washington decides to pull out of the deal, Iran has the option of withdrawal and other options”.

### Analysis

While Republican lawmakers were on board to criticize the Iran deal during its initiation, Barbara Slavin of the Atlantic Council has [argued](#) that they are far less critical of the deal now that they don't have a president in office who will veto any attempt to end it. Republican leaders prominent in American foreign relations such as Bob Corker and Ed Royce are both now condemning Trump's disdainful treatment of international agreements. This propensity to avoid the responsibility of killing the deal seemingly extends to the White House, considering Trump's decision to leave the question of sanctions up to Congress after decertifying, rather than simply electing not to issue sanction waivers to Iran in September.

It's not surprising that finding a Republican willing to follow through on rhetoric and dismantle the Iran deal is such an elusive task; there's really no upside. Iran is hesitant to trust the U.S. already and making tangible progress on reducing aggression was hard earned. Reneging on our agreements so quickly only serves to strengthen the voices of hardliners in Iran who would rather see the country fully pursue militarism. Also, even just the suggestion of sanctions could create a hesitancy for foreign businesses to re-invest in the Iranian economy, which has been crushed by pre-agreement sanctions.

## Engagement Resources

- Support the Center for Human Rights in Iran: The CHRI is an independent, nonprofit organization working to protect human rights in Iran through reporting and media outreach. You can [donate](#) on their website.
- [Read](#) a longform article by the Atlantic which evaluates the merits of the Iran deal
- Call your [representatives](#) and ask that they commit to vote against sanctions if Trump decertifies the deal.

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## President Trump Threatens Iran Deal

Nuclear Agreement Indecision

### Summary

On September 18th, President Trump announced that the world would know “very soon” about the future of the JCPOA, commonly know as the Iran Deal. This agreement, negotiated by former Secretary of State John Kerry, stalled and prevented the Iranians from achieving nuclear weapons in exchange for removing sanctions on the country. President Trump campaigned on revoking the Iran Deal while both Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson wish to remain. President Trump has until October 15th to announce his intentions to Congress. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

President Trump’s [refusal to commit to a decision](#) on the Iran Deal only [fuels instability](#) and endangers the world. While the Iran Deal isn’t perfect, it’s [important to maintain the status quo](#) until we have a better agreement or a new strategy. Yet the President [continues to flip-flop on his policy](#), sometimes [signaling he’d like to remain](#), and he also conflicts with other top diplomats and secretaries. Many experts believe the [Iran Deal is working](#) despite its flaws, and the United States can [better punish Iran](#) if we remain in the deal. President Trump’s [ignorance in world affairs](#) could spark another global crisis, and [the United States is put in jeopardy because of it](#).

### Engagement Resources

- [Full Text of the Iran Deal](#)
- [Does the Iran Deal Work?](#) — A piece by the Atlantic examining the efficacy of the Iran Deal.

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## Trump Speaks About Involvement in Afghanistan

National Address  
Speech from August 21, 2017

### **Policy Summary**

On Monday, August 21st, President Trump spoke at Fort Myer, Virginia about future U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. He committed to victory in the region, ultimately defeating the terrorist organizations which operate in the country –including ISIS, al Qaeda, and the Taliban. While President Trump did not enumerate specific policies –claiming that providing details aids the enemy– national security staffers said there would be an increase of around 4,000 troops. This would bring the troop total to around 15,000 in a country the United States has been engaged with for almost 16 years. [ACCESS THE FULL SPEECH HERE](#)

### **Analysis**

President Trump missed the mark on almost every tenet of this speech. First, he looked unnatural as [he read from a teleprompter](#), clearly [hoping to look presidential](#) in his address crafted by the national security team. President Trump [contradicted his former instincts](#) about Afghanistan, [previously calling for](#) an immediate withdrawal of troops. The speech [criticized Pakistan](#) and [vaguely threatened India](#) but made no mention of a huge player in the region: China. Beyond these relatively minor mistakes, the entire pith of the plan [followed poor international logic](#). He [failed to mention our victory conditions](#), something which consistently injures American prospects at peace, and the [idea of a military win](#) in the Middle East is [archaic and misguided](#). The President's insistence on leaving out the details leaves the United States with [a lot of unanswered questions](#), and while this plan is better than the short-guided blunder of immediate withdrawal, President Trump once again [closed the door on diplomacy](#) for the political convenience of military strength.

### **Engagement Resources**

- [American Involvement in Afghanistan](#) — Read an easy-to-digest photographic history of the United States and Afghanistan by Business Insider
- [Interactive Map and Charts](#) — Visualize Taliban control and death tolls with this New York Times piece.

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## **State Department Approves Sale of Fighter Jets to Nigeria**

State Department Decision  
Congress Notified on August 2, 2017

### **Policy Summary**

On Wednesday, August 2nd, the State Department notified Congress that it approved the sale of twelve A-29 fighter jets to the Nigerian military. The jets are commonly used for counter-insurgency and reconnaissance, and the U.S. government hopes these planes will help Nigeria fight Boko Haram –an extremist group that has ravaged the country for over 15 years. The Obama administration suspended the sale over human rights abuses by Nigerian security forces as well as judicial and executive corruption. Although it is unlikely they will do so, Congress has 30 days to review and potentially block this sale. [LEARN MORE](#).

## Analysis

This approval by President Trump seems premature and short sighted. Nigeria has a [deplorable human rights record](#) that was lambasted by both [the Bush and Obama administrations](#). While Nigeria is [taking steps towards transparency](#) and peace, [key goals have not been met](#). Rewarding the government with such an arms sale [may discourage Nigeria](#) from going further to improve its domestic situation. Furthermore, it's unclear whether these twelve planes will [be enough to make a difference against Boko Haram](#), and the [lag time between approval and implementation](#) could be fatal. The Trump administration has created [a dangerous pattern of overturning previous restrictions](#) on arms sales to questionably-motivated nations which harms our national security and human rights reputation around the globe. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Engagement Resources

- [Human Rights Watch](#) — HRW works to report human rights abuses across the globe and lobby governments and corporations to do something about them.
- [Amnesty International](#) — Amnesty International conducts international research, advocates on behalf of the oppressed, and carries out campaigns to protect the vulnerable from human rights' infringements.
- [Adamawa Peace Initiative](#) — A program through the American University of Nigeria to bring peace and develop Nigeria

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## Trump Terminates Program Arming Syrian Rebels

Executive Decision

Issued on July 19, 2017

### Policy Summary

Before President Trump's July 9th meeting with the G20, the administration decided to conclude an operation that provided weapons to anti-Assad rebels in Syria, according to senior administration officials. President Obama initiated this secret program in 2013 through the CIA in order to establish military credibility in the region and bring Bashar al-Assad to the negotiating table without committing American forces. The rebels have slowly lost ground in Aleppo, Syria's capital, and continue to struggle against Assad. Since the program is unofficial and confidential, neither the White House nor the CIA officially confirmed that the President shut down the program. [LEARN MORE](#).

### Analysis

Although the program [failed to meet](#) its expectations, [canceling it was a clear giveaway to the Russians](#). Russian President Vladimir Putin, along with antagonists in Iran, [support the ruthless Assad regime](#). Despite [claims from the United States and Russia](#), the two nations colluded in order to reach the ceasefire agreement ([a naive idea in itself](#)). The Russians are [interested in global power](#), autocracy, and Western resistance. [ISIS will continue](#) to advance as President Trump gives up on the rebels. Ending this program is [not in the interests](#) of the United States nor the Syrian people; President Trump is sacrificing democracy for a false and dangerous partner. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Engagement Resources

- [The White Helmets](#) — A neutral and unarmed group of volunteers who risk their lives to provide medical assistance to the wounded in Syria.
- [Save the Children](#)— An NGO that helps tens of millions of children across the globe – especially in Syria.
- [Amnesty International](#) — Amnesty International conducts international research, advocates on behalf of the oppressed, and carries out campaigns to protect the vulnerable from human rights' infringements.

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## Foreign Policy Flip-Flop: Syrian Intervention

*This is the first in a series of USRESIST NEWS Briefs that chronicle the flip-flop nature of many of the Trump administration's foreign policies.*

### Syrian Intervention

President Trump does not have a consistent policy on Syria nor Bashar al-Assad, and this confusing stance damages American interests in the region. The Assad regime uses chemical weapons on its own people, colludes with Russia to maintain an authoritarian state, and fails to uphold even the most basic democratic principles. So how does Trump view this issue? We don't really know.

#### FLIP

Back in 2013, President Trump [seemed to agree](#) with the Obama Administration's position to renege on its "red line" on Syria. He [talked about coalition-building](#) with the Russians, and his [America First policy](#) (which is mostly an amalgamation of rhetoric and lofty ideals) led many to believe that Syrian intervention was out of the question. Only days before his missile strike, many White House staffers [informed the press](#) that regime change was no longer on the agenda of the United States.

#### FLOP

Yet in early April 2017, after another chemical weapons strike by the Assad regime, President Trump [launched 59 Tomahawk missiles](#) at a military facility outside of Homs, Syria. Trump was reportedly very disturbed by the pictures of children affected by chemical weapons, yet this decision [disappointed many of his supporters](#) on the alt-right. While his administration [still flounders](#) on developing a coherent policy in regards to Syria, Trump [appears to have no problem](#) engaging in the Middle East.

Having a confusing policy regarding the most dangerous state in the Middle East will only open up the United States to more criticisms and failures. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Tillerson [continues to speak](#) of peace and accountability with the Assad regime, and US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley has [repeatedly suggested](#) that America is interested in forced regime change. Not only does President Trump change his mind without justification, but

his international delegation fails to send a single message regarding our policy towards Syria and Assad.

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## Trouble with Diplomatic Relations with Qatar

Diplomatic Relations  
Crisis on June 6, 2017

### Policy Summary

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain all cut diplomatic ties and travel to Qatar on June 5th, and were quickly joined by Libya, Yemen, and the Maldives on June 6th. This move will lead to the removal of diplomats and embassies, and the travel restrictions prohibit air, water, or land travel between any of the nations and Qatar. This decision came after the claim that Qatar has been funding terrorists in both Iran and Israel. President Trump supported Saudi Arabia's decision via Twitter. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

Saudi Arabia, [while similar to Qatar in many ways](#), frequently suffers from criticisms from Qatar-funded news outlet Al Jazeera. This sort of press freedom could [hinder the power](#) of many regimes in the region. Furthermore, there are [many baseless claims](#) against Qatar and its alleged funding of terrorists in the Middle East. These allegations were only further perpetuated by President Trump, and this [quasi-endorsement of Saudi Arabia](#) empowered the nation to make much riskier and decisive moves. This sort of crisis is dangerous to stability and American credibility, and may continue to endanger interests in the region. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Alliance for Middle East Peace](#)— A coalition of organizations working to create a long-lasting peace in the Middle East
- [Qatar Charity](#) — Qatar's largest NGO which extends to many sectors, from education to health care to disaster relief
- [Qatar Foundation](#) — A foundation dedicated to development in Qatar for its citizens and as a model for the entire region

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## Human Rights Conditions Dropped on Arms Sale to Bahrain

State Department Policy  
Issued on March 29th, 2017

### Policy Summary

On March 29th, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson decided to proceed with a sale of F-16 fighter jets to Bahrain without human rights stipulations. The deal, which was proctored by President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, originally included conditions to release political opponents from prison and to suspend harsh crackdowns of pro-democracy advocates in the country. The United States regularly requires its allies to meet certain political or economic guidelines in order to receive aid. Bahrain is a critical ally of the United States with a strategic position in the Middle East, and the nation hosts the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Analysis

Removing human rights requirements for Bahrain is [dangerous and counterproductive](#). Because the State Department [no longer holds briefings](#), many analysts and experts can only speculate on the impacts of this deal. This new policy [endorses political crackdown](#) and discredits our reputation abroad. There are very few indications that this will increase security in the Middle East, and there are some implications of possible bias from [Tillerson's former company](#) or connections to Lockheed-Martin. Finally, as the State Department begins to relax on some restrictions, we can only expect that similar policy will be taken in Yemen or Saudi Arabia, two other nations with abysmal human rights records. [LEARN MORE](#)

### Engagement Resources

- [Human Rights Watch](#) — An organization which works to report on human rights violations and protect individual citizens across the globe.
- [Reprieve](#) — A group of lawyers and investigators who defend the legal rights of many people suffering human rights' abuses.
- [Amnesty International](#) — Amnesty International conducts international research, advocates on behalf of the oppressed, and carries out campaigns to protect the vulnerable from human rights' infringements.

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## Israel-Palestine Conflict

Press Conference Comments  
Made on February 15, 2017

### Policy Summary

On February 15th, 2017, President Trump hosted a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. During the press conference, Trump responded to a question about the two-state solution with extreme ambivalence. He stated that he likes "the one that both parties like" and would not commit to the previous administration's adoption of the two-state solution nor multiple agreements through the United Nations committing the region to resolve its conflict.

Additionally, US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley stated that the United States still supports the two-state solution but [does not consider Israel-Palestine](#) a “real threat in the Middle East.” [LEARN MORE](#)

### **Analysis**

The Trump Administration is again contradictory and misguided when it comes to important diplomatic policy. Trump’s passive rhetoric and refusal to take a stance not only sends a [confused message to our allies](#), but it also enables aggressive moves by the Israeli government to continue [illegal settlements](#) against the Palestinians. The United States has been committed to a two-state solution, from [recognizing the rights of Palestinian people to direct economic support of the Palestinian government](#), and to change this policy in response to one question from the media is feckless and irresponsible. [LEARN MORE](#)

### **Engagement Resources**

- [Palestinian Center for Human Rights](#) – A Gaza City based NGO which works to improve democracy and secure human rights for affected Palestinians.
- [Peace NGO](#) – An organization which works within the constraints of the United Nations in order to form a peaceful, two-state solution to the conflict.
- [Palestinian Children’s Relief Fund](#) – PCRf helps Palestinian children access necessary medical treatment for both physical and mental ailments.

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