

Coats center stage in Trump maelstrom

Intel director sounded alarms on Russia cyber assaults; Trump twisting, twisting in the wind

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The evolution of Dan Coats from a senator preparing to ease into retirement after a career in Washington and Berlin to that of a critical underpinning for President Trump's intelligence team was a gradual one, coming over a two-year period.

Coats was originally for Sen. Marco Rubio in the 2016 presidential race. He watched the Trump phenomenon sweep across Mike Pence's amber waves of Indiana grain and hand-delivered a letter of concern from his wife, Republican National Committeewoman Marsha Coats, to the newly minted nominee at a Fort Wayne event. He became a critical confidante to Pence as the Indiana governor joined the Trump team with a spot on the



U.S. Ambassador Dan Coats, emotionally embraces German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder following his Sept. 14, 2001, speech at the Brandenburg Gate to 200,000 Germans at a solidarity rally with America following the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

national ticket.

The evolution could be fitful, particularly during the pre-nomination era, with Coats confiding to NWI Times columnist Doug Ross, "I wake up every morning and the first question I ask is, 'What did he say last night?'" Ross also reported this: "I mentioned Hoosier political analyst Brian Howey's characterization of Trump as the drunken uncle in the attic. Coats laughed, but he didn't disagree."

Coats advised Trump to stick to his campaign stump MO. In the July 21, 2016, edition of HPI, Coats said he was in awe of Trump's appeal, noting that a rally in Cincin-

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Tariffs aren't terrifying

By **LINDA CHEZEM**

MARTINSVILLE – Hyper headlines about trade, tariffs, and treaties are really nothing new, and neither are the terrified commentaries about what is going to happen to the U.S. economy. The history of trade debate is part of our country's crazy quilt of political shifts and turns in policy. Just a quick look at history can calm us and provide a better context for the current trade debate.

Today's low U.S. tariff levels are the product of a (mostly) bipartisan consensus in favor of progressively freer trade that dates back to the post-World War II era. But that consensus was emphatically



“Dan Coats should stay right where he is. He is doing a superb job. Dan was one of the few who was prepared to help the president, to indicate precisely the dangers of cyber attacks from Russia.”

- Richard Lugar, in the HPI Interview, page 6



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not the case for the first 150 years or so of the nation's history: [Tariff policy](#) was the subject of fierce disagreement between Republicans (and earlier, Whigs) who favored high rates to protect American industries from foreign competition, and Democrats who by and large argued that any tariffs higher than necessary to fund the federal government unfairly taxed the many to benefit the few.

To be clear, we have learned lessons from the Smoot-Hawley tariffs. I do not suggest we should repeat that experience.

I admit that I am writing on something about which I have as much bias as I have knowledge. I am biased in favor of freely engaging in trade and against tariffs in general. But I also want a fair treatment for U.S. exports, not like past experiences when we have turned a blind eye toward exploitation of U.S. goods while other countries violated treaties with impunity. As for impacts of trade upon agriculture, I am also in favor of giving agriculture a break rather than another burden.

With my basic leaning toward free trade, I do not consider President Trump's trade initiatives as policies in the traditional sense, but rather as negotiating strategies. The president and Secretary of Commerce Ross have made a valid point; our trading partners tend to impose higher tariffs than the U.S. does. We should highlight the valid U.S. concerns and demand that our trading partners lower their tariffs through the proper channels.

But wait, you might say, haven't we done that for years? Well, maybe the tough talk from President Trump about what our trading partners have been doing to the U.S. is necessary to get us to a point of free and fair trade. It might be a good time to cease the whiny undermining of the president and start to seriously consider how we might best shape trade policy for the future, for the long haul.

In thinking about the long-term best interests of the United States, we need to strengthen our policy for agriculture. Sustainable and profitable agricultural production is a

national security priority. If you say it is not, then I say it should be. And by the way, my husband and I grow corn and beans on our farms. As producers, we pay part of our crop money into check-offs. Those dollars can be used to develop new products and to better market agricultural products, domestically, and in countries where we are getting along OK on the trade front. But, our check off dollars cannot be used to achieve the policy that U.S. agriculture needs.

I think it is in our best interests not to handicap the president as he attempts to negotiate in this trade climate. That is one of the jobs a president is elected to do. Let him do his best. As for Congress, it does not set the details of U.S. trade policy. In 1934, Congress delegated authority to negotiate trade deals with other countries and, under certain circumstances, raise or lower import duties to the president. And that is the authority President Trump has relied on for this year's tariff increases.

I love ranchers and farmers. There is no more community-minded and generous group of people in the world. When it is time to fight our country's wars, it's the rural 20% that provides over 40% of the military. The trade wars are another battle and yes, the rural communities are suffering from previous administrations' policies. Secretary Perdue believes that President Trump will not forget the farmers and ranchers. I agree with Secretary Perdue, but it is up to us, the farmers and ranchers, to tell President Trump how we want to be remembered.

President Trump could be the best president ever for rural America and for poor Americans. If the agriculture community will join together with proposals for policy changes in three critical areas, the President can make new and better agricultural policy supporting the production of food and essential agricultural products. We have a national security interest in the viability of agriculture and rural communities.

First, fix transportation. Immediately. Rewrite the Federal Motor Carrier rules so the price of transport-

tation of products and perishables does not continue to drive the price of food up. If we cannot get produce and livestock to the markets and agricultural products to the ports, trade negotiation will not matter. Update and repair the river locks and make river transportation of grain cheaper and easier. Fund well-designed, not special interest or advocacy group driven, research for transportation policy for remote and rural communities.

Second, recognize that the significant differences in climate and terrain of this country require a more localized approach to health and environmental policy development and implementation. Again, we have a national security interest in the viability of remote and rural communities.

Third, revise federal grant-making policy so that the money gets used for local needs within the broad programmatic areas. The money should not be siphoned off on its way back home to the taxpayers.

Coats, from page 1

nati drew 25,000 people. He told Trump, "If you change your speech, you might draw 250 people. I think you really need to be Donald Trump, but what I see now is a Donald Trump who listens and asks questions. If you can find that balance, you can find the sweet spot."

There was Trump's epic election upset, a tormented transition headed by Vice President-elect Pence, who urged Coats to join the administration as director of national intelligence with a pedigree of having landed in Berlin as ambassador to Germany just hours before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. In that capacity, Coats played a vital role in the invoking of NATO's Article V, which brought NATO nations to America's side as it began assaulting al-Qaeda warrens in Afghanistan. It is the only time in seven decades that Article V has been invoked. The U.S. ambassador spoke at the Brandenburg Gate to 200,000 Germans who turned out to show solidarity with America, with a visibly moved Coats embracing a clenched-jawed German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. It was the NATO alliance at its inspirational best.

The week from Hel ... sinki

And then came this past week, with President Trump rattling European capitals and the Washington establishment by castigating NATO leaders over spending levels, suggesting the U.S. might pull out of NATO and "go it alone," wondering why the U.S. would defend NATO member Montenegro, embarrassing a politically vulnerable British Prime Minister Theresa May while showing up late for a black tie dinner in his honor, casting the European

The president can direct White House staff to offer full support to the agencies to accomplish these critical aims long before he can fix the trade issues. Those of us who care about agriculture and our rural communities can quit whining and help the president make rural and agricultural policy great. ❖

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Union as a primary American "foe," and then his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. It was a summit many in the administration tried to dissuade Trump from having. There in the Helsinki presidential palace, Trump disappeared behind closed doors with Putin and just two translators. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, Ambassador Jon Huntsman and Chief of Staff John Kelly nervously waited outside for two hours and 10 minutes. Coats was back in Washington.

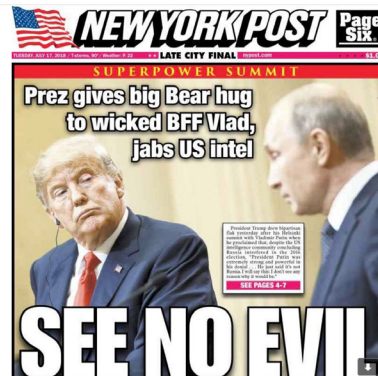
As Coats prepared to take the helm of U.S. intelligence, he prophetically told Doug Ross in January 2017, "Everybody underestimated, and they shouldn't have, Vladimir Putin. He's been two or three moves ahead of us on everything. It is stunning that we have allowed Russia to be the dominating outside power controlling events in the Middle East."

A critical prelude had come three days before the Trump/Putin summit, when Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein

announced 12 indictments of Russian GRU intelligence officers in Robert Mueller's Russia collusion probe, charges he advised Trump of prior to departing for Brussels.

Coats laid out his own markers in an [extraordinary address](#) at the Hudson Institute, literally saying that the "warning lights" with Russia are "blinking again." Coats then overtly warned Putin: "If your goal is to strengthen Russia at the cost to us ... we're not going to get anywhere. President Putin, the decision is up to you. We know you run the shop. We know you're making the decisions. But if you want to stay in this tit-for-tat, we're going to beat you."

Coats explained at Hudson, "Each morning when I get up, I'm given a roundtable of news on what hap-



pened while I was asleep, or what happened yesterday around the world. And almost without fail, the longest section of this news roundup is the section on cyber issues, which details multiple reports of cyberattacks and alerts. This issue affects all of us. And it is increasingly affecting numerous aspects of our daily life, as many of you are familiar with."

Coats continued, "Every day, foreign actors – the worst offenders being Russia, China, Iran and North Korea – are penetrating our digital infrastructure and conducting a range of cyber intrusions and attacks against targets in the United States. The targets range from U.S. businesses to the federal government (including our military), to state and local governments, to academic and financial institutions and elements of our critical infrastructure – just to name a few. The attacks come in different forms. Some are tailored to achieve very tactical goals while others are implemented for strategic purpose, including the possibility of a crippling cyberattack against our critical infrastructure."

Little did Coats know that within an hour after conclusion of the Trump/Putin summit, he would be thrust into the Trumpian maelstrom, front stage center. Asked by the AP's Jon Lemire if Trump believed U.S. intelligence services or Putin when it came to the 2016 assault on the U.S. election process, Trump responded: "All I can do is ask the question. My people came to me, Dan Coats and others, they said they think it's Russia. I have Putin, he just said it's not Russia. I will say this, I don't see any reason why it would be. I have great confidence in my intelligence people. But I will tell you President Putin was extremely strong in his denial."

That was just the first part of the jaw-dropping presser. Asked if he wanted Trump to win in 2016, Putin standing right next to Trump responded, "Yes, I did. Yes, I did. Because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal." Putin then was asked whether he directed any of his officials to help Trump's presidential campaign, but the Russian president sidestepped. Asked if the Russians had compromising intel on Trump or his family, Putin responded, "Yeah, I did hear these rumors that we allegedly collected compromising material on Mr. Trump when he was visiting Moscow. Please disregard these issues and don't think about this anymore again."

As these sensational soundbites reverberated across the globe, Coats issued a terse statement independent of the White House just hours after the Trump/Putin summit, saying, "We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we



will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security."

Back in Washington on Tuesday having scrapped an intelligence briefing, Trump had a lunch with Vice President Pence, who had obediently tweeted on the fateful Monday, "The truth is, over the last week, the world saw once again that President Trump stands without apology as the leader of the free world."

Meeting with congressional leaders, Trump walked back some of his Helsinki criticism of U.S. intel. "I accept our intelligence community's conclusion that Russia's meddling in the

2016 election took place. Could be other people also. A lot of people out there," Trump said, reading off a sheet of paper. "There was no collusion at all."

But on Wednesday, following his cabinet meeting, Trump was asked by a reporter if Russia was still targeting the U.S. Trump responded, "No," once again directly contradicting what Coats said on Monday and last Friday.

Would Coats resign?

After these head-spinning scenarios, the eyes of the world were on Coats. Would he resign in protest?

Former senator and Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Dick Lugar told HPI on Tuesday, "Dan Coats should stay right where he is. He should stay right on. He is doing a superb job. Today the president has walked back his criticism of the intelligence community. Dan was one of the few who was prepared to help the president, to indicate precisely the dangers of cyber attacks coming from Russia or anywhere else, though he made the case with Russia."

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, the evangelical former aide to Sen. Coats and fellow Wheaton College alum, was asked how Coats would respond to these unprecedented events. "I think his MO is to be a calm, insistent voice of reason and reality in the swirling chaos of the Trump administration," Gerson told HPI. "Unlike the president, Coats' service is not about egotism; it is about patriotism. I thought Coats' Hudson Institute speech was just excellent. It could not have been more timely or needed."

Another former aide to Sen. Coats, who spoke on background, told HPI, "I assume Dan Coats feels great responsibility to stick around, but he hopes he gets fired."

Thus is Coats' latest service to the nation. Many inside and outside the Trump administration, and in and out of the Republican Party and Congress, see Coats as



As AP's Jonathan Lemire presses Presidents Trump and Putin on Russian cyber assaults and whether the Kremlin has compromising information on Trump, the U.S. delegation winces. (New York Times photo)

one of the adults in the room, along with Defense Sec. Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Chief of Staff John Kelly. They see Coats as keeping Trump "within the guardrails." They fret that if Coats or Mattis resign in protest, they would likely be replaced by less competent sycophants who might goad Trump's worst demons.

Coats and the patriot's truth

Coats, who will be interviewed by NBC's Andrea Mitchell on night's "NBC Nightly News," has a lengthy track record of truth-telling in a Trump administration known for lying. President Trump considers accusations of Russian collusion a slap at his 2016 victory, and won't face facts – or the notion that the Kremlin are assaulting the 2018 mid-terms in similar fashion, resulting so far in two dozen indictments of Russian national and three companies.

Just prior to Coats taking the intel helm, an intelligence assessment by the CIA, NSA, FBI and Office of the Director of National Intelligence said on Jan. 6, 2017, "Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election."

On June 8, Coats explained, "In 2016, Russia conducted an unprecedented influence campaign to interfere in the U.S. electoral and political process." He expressed fears that the same type of assault was underway in this year's mid-terms. Trump would say 20 days later, "Russia continues to say they had noth-

ing to do with Meddling in our Election! Where is the DNC Server, and why didn't Shady James Comey and the now disgraced FBI agents take and closely examine it? Why isn't Hillary/Russia being looked at? So many questions, so much corruption!"

Helsinki has brought along even more disquieting hotspots and potential crises. The second news-cycle topic after Monday's jaw-dropping summit between Presidents Trump and Putin is what did they talk about for two hours and 10 minutes when they were alone? It's something we may never know. Or, perhaps we will in snippets as Putin sees fit.

As Coats continues to toil in an administration rocked to its core, as Special Counsel Mueller silently finishes the Russian component of his probe and turns to what happened on the American side of the pond, the craziest, most haywire days may not be behind us, but just over the horizon.

Just as William D. Ruckelshaus has gone down in history as a clean character, resisting President Nixon's efforts to void the special counsel probing the Watergate scandal that would bring that administration down, Coats is a similar soul. He is the Hoosier patriot minding the intel front, even as President Trump slashes and scorches its cred.

It's probably not the role Coats envisioned for himself two years ago as he stood on the precipice of retirement. His most profound impacts on American history lie just ahead. ❖



Marsha and Dan Coats at the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland where they supported nominee Donald Trump. (HPI Photo by Randy Gentry)

Lugar wants Coats to ‘stay where he is’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In the wake of President Trump’s controversial summits with the NATO allies, Great Britain and Russian President Putin over the past week, we contacted former senator Richard Lugar to get his perspectives.

HPI conducted this interview around 3 p.m. Tuesday, just as President Trump appeared to be walking back some of the comments he made during his press conference with Putin on Monday. Our first question was whether Trump was “fit” for office.



Lugar touched on the Hel-

sinki and NATO summits, the notion that Putin may have compromising information on Trump, Trump’s negotiations with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, and Trump’s tariffs with which Lugar believes has commenced a “disastrous” trade war.

HPI: I am interested in your assessment of how President Trump is handling things, particularly after the last week or so at the NATO summit, in Great Britain and then his meeting with Russian President Putin. Is Trump fit for the presidency?

Lugar: President Trump was elected by the people of the United States by the Electoral College. I’m not going to make a judgment about his fitness. However I tuned into CNBC and observed his press conference in Helsinki and I’ve been watching over the last half hour his statements in reaction to Helsinki. It appears to me that president still is concerned how the election was perceived by people. In essence, the attacks on the Mueller committee and upon others who suggest collusion with the Russians and other factors that might have influenced the 2016 election he takes really very seriously. He’s still pointing to that in Helsinki. He is popular, still has support. This doesn’t necessarily excuse the president’s statements, particularly ones about our intelligence. Today his comments kind of walked that back, that we have fine intelligence. So the question comes, was the president well prepared for his trip, not only to Helsinki but to NATO and to Great Britain? For example, the very, very tough remarks about NATO allies, particularly Germany, the president says today in his remarks to Congress they were simply trying to get them to pay their bills. He said they were very pleased. His attacks on Prime Minister May, who is in some political jeopardy in Great Britain, were certainly not very helpful to her cause. The whole trip was one [with] these very, very tough remarks in which the president was trying to show his strength and that’s his style. It doesn’t work particularly well in foreign relations.

HPI: Where does this leave the western alliance, which many of us believe has brought 70 years of relative peace and prosperity to Europe? And are you concerned where this is headed over the next several years?

Lugar: Yes I am. I am grateful the president is walking back some of the remarks he’s made about the alliance, saying everybody is pleased with each other. The NATO alliance is a critical factor in our own security. It has kept the former Soviet Union, now Russia, within its bounds in terms of Eastern Europe. We have at least seen the strength of that in terms of greater prosperity in various countries. It’s a very, very important alliance. As is NAFTA, in terms of Mexico and Canada, extremely important. That alliance has been under attack by the administration. In fact we’re pushing aside what is supposed to occur there. It is very dangerous for us. The rejection of the TPP treaty in the Pacific is hurting our agreements and opportunities. We had much greater strength with our allies South Korea and Japan. Finally, the totally rejection of



the Paris Agreement, whatever one believes about climate change and the ability to control Co2 gases, we are simply taking ourselves out of the picture all together. These are all very debilitating aspects of our foreign policy.

HPI: What are the challenges now facing Director Dan Coats? You’ve worked with Coats for decades and you know his mettle. He laid out some markers for President Trump last Friday at the Hudson Institute, saying the alarms with Russia were ringing, and then we saw what happened on Monday in Helsinki where Trump seemed to side with President Putin over U.S. intelligence agencies.

Lugar: I was asked if Dan Coats would resign or be fired. I made the statement that Dan Coats should stay right where he is. He should stay right on. He is doing a superb job. Today the president has walked back his criticism of the intelligence community. Dan was one of the few who was prepared to help the president, to indicate precisely the dangers of cyber (attacks) coming from

Russia or anywhere else, though he made the case with Russia. It's no longer just the nuclear threat or armed troops. Cyber (attacks) has the ability to tie up a country. It's very important that Dan stay on the job. The president now says he supports the intelligence community, but why in the world would he do that? He's making these outrageous statements.

HPI: I don't want to put you on the speculation front, which is something I've tried to resist, but are you concerned that President Putin has some compromising information on President Trump or his family?

Lugar: It's conceivable that he might. The Russians ability to hack Democratic campaign headquarters and other aspects have revealed a lot of information about some aspects of our politics and our campaigns. I don't know what kind of intelligence they may have accumulated on any members of the Trump family, or any leads on the sons or Jared Kushner, but I think the president has concerns about that. Yet at the same time why he would bring that to the fore is very difficult to discern.

HPI: You spent more than a quarter century working with the Kremlin and the Russian military on the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Walk me through after you left office, what has happened to Nunn-Lugar and has that impacted U.S.-Russian relations?

Lugar: Essentially, the new START treaty was ratified in 2010 when I was the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate. I lost the chairmanship to John Kerry. But I worked closely with John Kerry and the White House, with Vice President Joe Biden. We were on the phone all the time because it was very difficult to get the new START treaty, which was the last one to reduce the number of nuclear weapons. We have 1,550 each. We argued with Mitch McConnell, who was opposed to it because of pressure from (Sen.) John Kyl and others. It was very, very tough business to get to the two-thirds majority in that situation. But we did. That was the last arms control treaty. By 2012, the year I lost the primary election, that was my last trip to Russia on Nunn-Lugar business, I visited with the War Office and the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office indicated they might be amenable to more talks on arms control. The War Office was not interested. They did not want any more American inspectors in Russia. The result was that really ended arms control negotiations with Russia. I think the problem



Rep. Dan Coats, Vice President-elect Dan Quayle and Sen. Lugar at the 1988 press conference where Coats was appointed to the U.S. Senate by Gov. Robert Orr.

has been ever since that there has no spur to start up again and the trouble is the new START treaty expires after 2021. We really have nothing after that point. There was at least a hint that one of the (summit) agenda items might have been bringing up the possibility of more arms control, but there are many people in Russia and in our government who really want to build more nuclear weapons and that makes the situation more dangerous.

HPI: On the Korean peninsula, I thought President Trump meeting with Kim Jong-Un was a good development instead of the saber rattling we witnessed in 2017. Were we close to a nuclear war in the summer 2017? And what's going on with Trump and Kim and what may have been accomplished?

Lugar: I don't believe we were close to nuclear war in 2017 or 2018 for that matter. The fact is that the North Koreans have developed nuclear material. They are testing. They have small vehicles that can be put on a long-range missile that could conceivably reach the continental United States. I have been working on that. It is a predicament, because there has been no constraint on the part of Russia, or China for that matter or anybody else. I think the summit idea was a good one. I am pleased that it occurred. It was interesting the North Korean leader would go to Singapore or anywhere else since his own life could be in jeopardy. But he did, he returned to the country and it's not real apparent much progress has been made in terms of denuclearization, quite apart from inspections of various facilities. The Atomic Energy Commission has had observers in Iran. They made pretty good attempts to keep track of Iranian assets. For the moment it's not clear anything is occurring on the Korean front. That is disturbing.

HPI: Should we consider North Korea a permanent nuclear power now?

Lugar: No. The whole idea is to denuclearize, to



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get out of the picture altogether.

HPI: Is there any scenario where an armed conflict to resolve this would make any sense? Or would it be a humanitarian disaster?

Lugar: It would be a humanitarian disaster. On a nuclear weapon, who knows where the targets would be. Our predicament are the South Korean lives in the capital, which is almost in sight of the North Korean boundary. The last time I was in Seoul and went to the boundary and talked to the American commanding general, it was precarious for the population that includes thousands of American troops. It is a very touch-and-go situation. We cannot afford to have any kind of nuclear explosion. We're going to have to have more pressure on the North Korea leader. We may be able to offer some potential for development for North Korea. There could be a Nunn-Lugar option there. The Soviet Union was bankrupt and they called upon us to come over. They needed our money and the support of our technical advisers and likewise they needed a great deal of boost to their economy. We have a lot we could provide.

HPI: Are you concerned about President Trump's tariffs?

Lugar: At the moment, the trade war with China

and with others is a disaster as far as the United States is concerned. The idea that somehow steel and aluminum are being transported by others into the United States to the injury of our steel and aluminum industries is debatable. It is worth examining what exactly the problem is. But to halt steel and aluminum we are putting tariffs on hundreds of other articles. It is coming back to hit us, especially in Indiana; the soybean situation is a good example of what a disaster this is. There is the precarious nature of small farmers in Indiana and all over the United States. I have a farm of 604 acres in Decatur Township in Marion County and I follow the soybean and corn prices every day. We are in a situation where there are rumors that sometime before the fall election there may be some type of agreement with the Chinese, Canadians, Mexicans and whoever. I certainly hope so. I wish those negotiations will proceed to end this trade war. It is really a horrible example. Free trade is the whole answer to prosperity for America and every other country in the world. (The tariffs are) a detriment to development. I am hopeful we can move beyond where we are now. It's important for our farmers and very important to jobs in our state and country. ❖

What did Trump, Putin talk about for 2 hours?

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – What did President Trump and Russian President Putin talk about for two hours and 10 minutes when they were alone at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki Monday while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Ambassador Jon Huntsman, National Security Advisor John Bolton, and Chief of Staff John Kelly nervously waited outside?



It's something we may never know. Or, perhaps, we will in snippets as Putin sees fit. Asked whether the Russians recorded the Trump/Putin meeting sans aides (but, perhaps with a mic in Putin's cufflinks), former CIA Director John O. Brennan said on MSNBC's Morning Joe, "In

some manner, yes."

Did the Americans? "I have no idea," Brennan responded. "I think whatever Mr. Trump said in that meeting with Mr. Putin is now memorialized on Russian tape and it will be used when necessary by Mr. Putin against Mr. Trump. I am sure he was told that. Whether he accepts

what he is told by the men of the CIA and intelligence community, I don't know."

Brennan observed, "Putin is a skilled and trained KGB officer, a master manipulator who has decades of experience. Mr. Trump is way, way out of his depth when he goes one-on-one with Mr. Putin. U.S. intelligence capabilities are exceptionally precious but also exceptionally delicate. I don't know if Mr. Trump said anything in that meeting that could have compromised or impacted those capabilities. I still don't know why he didn't trust a John Bolton, a Mike Pompeo or a John Kelly to be in that meeting and to hear what he said, what Mr. Putin said."

To put all this in perspective, Brennan said that CIA agents never meet with Russian assets alone. Never. There is always an extra set of eyes and ears. The notion that the president of the United States would do this alone, without an established agenda or "deliverables" is unprecedented. It's never happened before.

It comes as a growing number of people are wondering if Trump has been co-opted by Putin, that instead of being Putin's head-of-state counterpart, Putin is really Trump's handler, which



would be an act of treason ranking with the Rosenbergs, Aldrich Ames, and Aaron Burr. I have resisted what a month ago would have been speculative hyperbole, but Trump has willingly played right into this. How does one explain his actions?

It comes after reporter Jonathan Chait wrote an extensive investigative piece in New York Magazine: [“Will Trump Be Meeting with His Counterpart — Or His Handler? A plausible theory of mind-boggling collusion.”](#) I’ve read this and watched the accompanying Russian video link and it is a stunning possibility few of us would have ever fathomed.

Trump poured gas on this fire when the AP’s Jon Lemire asked if our president believed U.S. intelligence services or Putin over whether the Kremlin assaulted the 2016 U.S. election. Trump responded, “All I can do is ask the question. My people came to me, Dan Coats and others, they said they think it’s Russia. I have Putin, he just said it’s not Russia. I will say this, I don’t see any reason why it would be. I have great confidence in my intelligence people. But I will tell you President Putin was extremely strong in his denial.”

That prompted Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, who said just three days before the summit that Russian cyber assaults on U.S. interests are on-going, to issue a post-Helsinki statement: “We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security.”

Trump tried to walk back his faith in Putin’s “strong” denial on Tuesday, saying he meant to say, “I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t be” Russia. But Trump also said, “I hold both countries responsible. I think that the United States has been foolish. I think we’ve all been foolish.” He called the Robert Mueller Russia collusion probe “a disaster for our country.” And he thought Putin’s proposal of combining the Mueller probe with a Kremlin-directed feint “an incredible offer. He offered to have the people working on the case come and work with their investigators.” Today, the White House is pondering a Putin proposal to hand U.S. citizens, including former Ambassador Michael McFaul, over to the Russians for questioning, which is a stunning notion.

Not only are these hair-brained proposals, it reveals an inherent fear in Trump over what lurks beneath the current public consciousness.

Putin was asked by AP’s Lemire if he wanted Trump to win in 2016. “Yes, I did. Yes, I did,” Putin responded. “Because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal.” They became abnormal after Putin annexed Crimea, instigated a Russian assault



on eastern Ukraine where his troops shot down a civilian Malaysian airliner.

Asked if he had compromising information on President Trump or his family, Putin sidestepped, saying, “Yeah, I did hear these rumors that we allegedly collected compromising material on Mr. Trump when he was visiting Moscow. Please disregard these issues and don’t think about this anymore again.” Note: Putin didn’t confirm or deny – he smirked.

Many of my readers voted for Trump in 2016 and support him today. As I’ve written in the past, Trump’s lack of preparation, his propensity to wing it, his frequent disregard for the truth, his assault on institutions ranging from NATO, the American judiciary, the free press, the now supplicant Republican Party, and the amateurish way he has run the White House are all indicators that he is letting these very supporters down.

The deeper danger is what we don’t know. Why did Trump meet with Putin alone? Why didn’t Trump release his tax returns when every other presidential candidate in the modern age has? Why does he show deference to a despot (who murders political opponents and journalists, poisons foes in Great Britain, annexes and assaults neighboring nations) while taking round house swings at our most faithful allies (Germans, Brits and even Montenegrans fight alongside us in Afghanistan).

These are mysteries now compounded by the surreal and depressing events in Helsinki. Working silently and steadfastly in Washington is the Special Counsel Robert Mueller, a former FBI director, a Republican, an Ivy Leaguer who enlisted to fight in the jungles of Vietnam, earning a Bronze Star with the “V” distinction for combat valor.

Trump’s mysteries probably have an expiration date. ❖

Coats gives INGOP cover in Trump storm

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

WASHINGTON – When Donald Trump was elected president, Republicans in the Indiana congressional delegation who had doubts about him were likely comforted by the fact that a well-known Hoosier politician would play a prominent role in the administration and might be a source of stability during storms the volatile chief executive might cause.



A former Hoosier political figure has indeed provided shelter for the Indiana GOP – but it's not the one they were expecting.

While Vice President Mike Pence has loyally bobbed up and down with Trump during the tempest following Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir

Putin, it's Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats who has been the rock to which the Indiana GOP has clung.

Thanks to Coats risking his job by pushing back when Trump took Putin's side regarding Russian interference in the 2016 election, Indiana Republicans could also stand against Russia without having to criticize Trump. It's an option that Pence didn't give them.

During a July 16 press conference in Helsinki with Putin, Trump blithely ignored U.S. intelligence findings that Russia tried to influence the election.

"My people came to me – Dan Coats came to me and some others. They said they think it's Russia. I have President Putin. He just said it's not Russia," Trump said. "I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be, but I really do want to see the server. But I have confidence in both parties."

Coats would have none of the equivalency Trump asserted between the U.S. intelligence operations he runs and the former KGB operative Putin.

"We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security," Coats said in a July 16 statement.

Pence's reaction was much more Trump friendly and painted a picture that sometimes only Pence can see.

"Over the last week, the world saw once again that President Donald Trump stands without apology as leader of the free world," Pence said. Well, Trump did seem apologetic to Putin.

Pence added: "What the world saw, what the American people saw, is that President Donald Trump will always put the prosperity and security of America first."

Actually, many Democrats and Republicans disputed that notion following Helsinki.

In reacting to Helsinki, the Indiana GOP delegation sided with Coats and was spared the need to exhibit political courage and poke the U.S. bear, Trump.

Not one Hoosier GOP member of Congress said a contrary word about Trump while essentially denouncing the stance he took in Helsinki. They have their former Senate colleague Coats to thank. "I want President Trump's diplomatic efforts to be successful, but I'll take the word of a Hoosier statesman over Vladimir Putin any day," Rep. Jim Banks, 3rd CD, said in a statement. "We must take seriously the warnings of Director Coats and the American intelligence community. Russia is not our friend."

Other Hoosier Republican members of Congress didn't mention Trump at all. Rep. Susan Brooks, 5th CD: "I am confident our intelligence community, in large part led by fellow Hoosier Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, has provided and will continue to provide reliable and trustworthy assessments on the threats facing our nation, and believe their credible claims of Russia's involvement in our 2016 presidential election."

Rep. Jackie Walorski, 2nd CD: "Russia is not our ally, and Vladimir Putin is not our friend. As DNI Dan Coats reaffirmed this week, it is undeniable Russia interfered in our election and seeks to undermine our democracy."

Sen. Todd Young: "I have no reason to doubt the clear conclusions of the intelligence community when it comes to Moscow's attempts to undermine our democracy."

Rep. Luke Messer, R-6th CD: "There is literally no one in public service that I admire more than Dan Coats. Dan has served our nation with integrity, dignity and a dogged tenacity for decades. I trust his judgment and trust whatever decision he makes about his future."

One of Messer's opponents in the GOP Senate primary this spring did mention Trump along with Coats.

"I believe that both President Trump and the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, have the safety and prosperity of Americans as their number one priority. The president should continue with his peace through strength strategy with Russia," Rep. Todd Rokita, R-4th CD, said in a statement. He went on to add that there's no evidence of a "conspiracy" between Trump and the Russians.

Former state Rep. Mike Braun, who defeated Messer and Rokita, for the Republican Senate nomination did not mention nor allude to Coats. He was fully on board with Trump, as he has been throughout his campaign on every issue.

"Russia is not our friend," Braun said in a statement. "Plain and simple. While the media continues to focus on relitigating the 2016 election, I believe the commander in chief is rightly focused on the future ahead and engaging with all nations, friend or foe, to secure a better future for our country."

His opponent this fall, incumbent Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly, both criticized Trump and praised Coats.

“When given the chance to stand up for our country and its security interests, President Trump instead emboldened President Putin and disregarded the consensus conclusion of the hard-working and patriot Americans in the intelligence community, including Director of National Intelligence and fellow Hoosier Dan Coats,” Donnelly said in a statement.

Coats was ascendant over Pence this week. Perhaps, behind the scenes, Pence was influential in getting Trump to sort of walk back his stance against U.S. intelligence agencies.

But it’s hard to tell each day where Trump is going to land. Will he double-down on dismissing the Russian threat? Or will he point to syntax errors – “would” instead of “wouldn’t” – to try to explain away controversial statements that made him look beholden to Putin. Trump has flip-flopped more in the last few days than a blue gill in a boat on an Indiana lake during a hot summer day.

But even Trump praised Coats as a “tremendous talent.” For now, it sounds as if his job is safe. That’s great news for Indiana Republicans seeking cover during the next Trump national security storm. ❖

Dem CD candidates find funding traction

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – Democratic challengers in two potential competitive Indiana congressional races and one outlier continue to post impressive FEC totals.

Ninth CD nominee Liz Watson reported \$501,065. Watson has raised \$1,072,696 for the cycle and reported an ending balance of \$471,347. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth raised \$228,942 for the second quarter and \$1,150,272 for the cycle, and had \$608,575 cash on hand. The 9th CD has a +13 Republican on the Cook Partisan

Index. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Likely Hollingsworth.

In the 2nd CD Democrat Mel Hall reported \$611,240 for the second quarter, \$1,419,241 for the cycle. Hall has loaned his campaign \$800,000. He had an ending balance of \$479,451. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski raised \$418,264 for the quarter, has raised \$2,062,652 for the cycle and had \$1,305,196 cash on hand. The Cook Partisan Index rates the 2nd +11 Republican. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Leans Walorski.

In the 3rd CD, which has a Cook Partisan Index rating of +18 Republican, Democrat Courtney Tritch who posted \$168,786 for the quarter, has raised \$497,236 for the cycle and reported \$310,865 cash on hand. Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Banks posted \$165,849 for the quarter, \$765,391 for the cycle and had \$502,401 cash ending balance. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Safe Banks.

Another po-

tential outlier, the 8th CD (+15 Republican on the Cook Partisan Index), found Democrat William Tanoos with \$155,524 raised for the cycle and \$19,686 cash on hand. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon had raised \$678,588 for the cycle and reported \$332,343 cash on hand. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Safe Bucshon.

In the open 4th CD (+17 Republican on the CPI), Democrat Tobi Beck reported \$63,666 for the cycle and had \$46,406 cash on hand. Republican State Rep. Jim Baird reported \$295,398 for the cycle, including \$250,000 from himself, and had \$30,346 cash. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Safe Baird.

In the open 6th CD (+18 Republican on the CPI), Republican Greg Pence reported \$1.68 million for the cycle and had \$254,511 cash on hand. Democrat Jeannine Lee Lake reported \$11,711 for the cycle and had \$208 cash on hand. **HPI Horse Race Status:** Safe Pence.

U.S. Senate

Money continues to pour into INSen race

U.S. Joe Donnelly posted \$1.9 million for the second quarter and has \$6.4 million cash on hand. That compares to \$2.5 million raised for Republican Mike Braun, who had \$1 million cash. The Braun campaign notes that the totals are “without personal contributions or loans.” Leading into the primary, Braun pumped more than \$6 million of his own fortune into the race, which Howey Politics Indiana

believes will top \$100 million by November, with millions of Super PAC and independent expenditures flooding in by then. Braun’s report comes after a Survey-Monkey Poll showed him leading Sen. Joe Donnelly 49-47%.

Donnelly called the \$1.9 million for the quarter “a new personal best.” The campaign said it was due to



Democrats Courtney Tritch of the 3rd CD (left), Liz Watson in the 9th CD, and Mel Hall in the 2nd CD.

substantial grassroots support. The average contribution was \$43.83, with 93% of all donations to Donnelly were \$50 or less. "Joe's back-to-back personal best quarters were driven by hard-working Hoosiers who gave what they could. They're the clearest sign yet that his message of hard work and common sense is inspiring Hoosiers everywhere," said Peter Hanscom, Campaign Manager for Joe for Indiana. "Thanks to a thrifty campaign and powerful grassroots support, we're excited that Joe will be able to continue spreading the word about his efforts to protect access to affordable health care and keep good-paying jobs in Indiana."

Donnelly, Braun fight over companies

Republican nominee Mike Braun continued his "company war" with U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly with a new TV ad released on Wednesday titled, "Standing with American Workers." The ad features testimonials from employees of Braun's company. "Despite bad trade deals that have sent jobs overseas for years, Mike Braun has built a business that's been creating high-paying jobs only in America for nearly 40 years," said spokesman Josh Kelley. "While Senator Donnelly's company sent Hoosier jobs to Mexico, Mike has only created jobs here in America."

Since the primary, the two candidates and various Super PACs and other advocacy groups have focused most of their attacks on Braun's Meyer Industries and Stewart Superior, a family company that Donnelly had invested between \$15,001 and \$50,000. The company shifted some production to Mexico in 2013. According to the Associated Press, subsequent financial disclosures show that Donnelly earned up to \$50,000 in dividends on his investment. The Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee quickly labeled Donnelly as "Mexico Joe," prompting Donnelly to divest in the summer of 2017.

An Axios/SurveyMonkey Poll released last week shows Braun leading Donnelly 49-47%, a statistical tie. The poll was conducted from June 11 to July 2. In a February Axios/SurveyMonkey poll, some 51% supported a generic Republican candidate while Donnelly had 45%. Braun defeated U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer in the May primary, so this latest poll is the first head-to-head data between Braun and Donnelly. **Horse Race Status:** Tossup

More Kavanaugh money flows

The conservative Judicial Crisis Network is dropping another \$1.4 million on ads to help Brett Kavanaugh get confirmed to the Supreme Court (Politico). The group's ad buy this week will bring its total spending to \$3.8 million, according to an official familiar with the efforts. The latest batch of ads will target four Democratic senators from conservative states on national cable and broadcast networks in their home markets: Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Doug Jones of Alabama.

Congress

2nd CD: Walorski writes Ross on tariffs

U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski joined a group of 149 members, urging Commerce Sec. Wilbur Ross not to put American jobs and economic growth at risk by imposing tariffs on automobiles and automotive parts. In a letter led by Walorski and Reps. Terri Sewell (D-Ala.), Mike Kelly (R-Pa.), and Ron Kind (D-Wis.), the members highlighted the economic benefits of the auto industry and warned of negative consequences if the ongoing Section 232 national security investigation into imports of automobiles and automotive parts results in tariffs, quotas, or other restrictions. "We support the Department of Commerce as it seeks a level playing field for our manufacturers and workers in the global marketplace and penalizes bad actors," the members wrote. "We do not believe that imports of automobiles and automotive parts pose a national security threat. Rather, we believe the imposition of trade restrictions on these products could undermine our economic security."

6th CD: NRCC adds Pence

The NRCC announced in a news release that Greg Pence, GOP candidate to represent Indiana's 6th CD, is among 18 candidates named to its Young Guns 'Vanguard' program. This program establishes a working relationship between the NRCC, its Vanguard candidates, and their future colleagues in the House Republican Conference. "Our Vanguard candidates will be instrumental in further expanding our economic comeback under Republican leadership," said NRCC Chairman Steve Stivers. "Voters in these districts were left behind by Democrats' failed leadership of the past. Our Vanguards won't allow these Americans to be forgotten any longer, and I have no doubt these candidates will emerge victorious in November."

Comey supports Democrats in the fall

Former FBI Director James Comey, who was fired last year by President Donald Trump, is urging voters to support Democrats in November's midterm elections (Associated Press). Comey says on Twitter that the "Republican Congress has proven incapable of fulfilling the Founders' design that 'Ambition must ... counteract ambition.'" That refers to the need for Congress to provide checks and balances to presidential power. Comey writes: "All who believe in this country's values must vote for Democrats this fall. ... History has its eyes on us." The former FBI director recently said he no longer considers himself a Republican.

Local

Mayor Daniel announces for 3rd term

Columbia City Mayor Ryan Daniel officially announced today that he would seek a third consecutive term. He has served in this role since 2012 and under his

leadership Columbia City has seen significant residential and business growth. In May, Columbia City was named as the "Eighth-Fastest Growing City in Indiana" by the Indiana University Business Research Center. "Serving and growing our community has been my goal since day one," said Daniel. "If reelected, we will continue to provide good government services and a focus on improving the quality of life for our citizens." In 2011, Daniel won a three-way primary and a three-way general election to become the second-youngest mayor in Columbia City's history. In 2015, he earned 76% of the vote to win a second term. "Community development has been a focal point during the past seven years," said Daniel. "A recreational community is an attractive community. We are continually striving to be that attractive and welcoming community."

National

Buttigieg, mayors in 2020 spotlight

No mayor has ever sprung directly from City Hall to the White House. But that historic streak stands to be tested in 2020, with at least three Democratic mayors mulling presidential campaigns: Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg (Politico). They're exploiting a newfound opening for politicians at the municipal level, one enabled by broader economic and cultural forces, among them the rise of the Democratic Party's diverse and ascendant Obama coalition. "At least before new media, it was less common for mayors to get national exposure," Buttigieg said recently. But Buttigieg, who burst onto Democrats' radar with his failed bid for Democratic National Committee chairman, has demonstrated that now, even the mayor of a small city can find a spark. "It's definitely a season for cities," said Buttigieg. "And it's definitely a season for mayors."

Poll shows 79% OK Trump/Putin summit

A new [Axios/SurveyMonkey](#) poll that shows why Republican fears of President Trump's base are real: A whopping 79% of Republicans approved of Trump's handling of Vladimir Putin at the post-summit press conference. And 85% think the probe into Russia's war on our elections is a distraction. Why it matters: Trump's superpower-like hold over the minds of Republican voters seems invincible. In a [CBS Poll](#) only a third of Americans (32 percent) approve of the way Donald Trump handled his summit in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a CBS News poll shows. Sixty-eight percent of Republicans approve.

Trump raises \$88M

President Trump has raised more than \$88 million for his reelection campaign over the last year and a half, giving him a dramatic head start on prospective Democratic challengers in the 2020 race (New York Times). ❖

AG Hill backtracks on special prosecutor

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – After studying politics and politicians for the entirety of my adult life, I've noticed the propensity of our elected leaders to want it both ways. This can be seen across a variety of issues.



Sen. Max Deere has grown adept at arguing for the sanctity of life when it comes to the issue of abortion, but he can launch an equally lucid rationalization for the death penalty. Rep. Tad Earwax hops on the stump and attacks the inherent evil of property tax increases and in the next breath can advocate jacking up the gas tax. No, turning and twisting facts, statistics and emotions to get the response you want from the voting public is nothing out of the ordinary when it comes to politicians of both political parties in Indiana.

I guess it should come as no surprise that Attorney General Curtis Hill should make the attempt to eat off of both sides of the plate when it comes to his disastrous problem with the sexual assault allegations. Hill's initial claims of being denied due process and an opportunity to tell his side of the story made him somewhat of a sympathetic figure to many people. To the average Hoosier not subscribing to the "get accused and get tarred and feathered" mentality of these "#MeToo" times, the early failure of legislative leaders and other elected officials to give Hill even a minimal presumption of innocence and due process smacked as unsportsmanlike.

Every attorney whom I discussed the situation with agreed that in an employment or civil law setting, Hill had no right to a presumption of innocence or due process. This apparent fact virtually mandated that unless Hill was willing to fold his tent and call it a day as attorney general, he had to shift the investigation from the political world to a criminal investigation.

Hill called a press conference on July 9 and read a brief statement laying out his case for an independent review of the allegations. As part of his statement Hill stated:

"I now stand falsely accused of some of the same crimes I spent 28 years prosecuting. Yet without a thorough investigation — without the right to face my accusers and review the evidence against me — I am convicted by public officials demanding my resignation. I believed that the standard in this country is that you are innocent until proven guilty—not guilty until proven innocent.

"I am not resigning. The allegations against me are vicious and false. At no time did I ever grab or touch

anyone inappropriately. The lack of fairness and the failure to recognize my constitutional rights are a complete travesty.

"Elected officials have called for my resignation without affording me any due process or conducting an actual, fair and independent investigation. The fact that the governor, who appoints the inspector general, has already determined the outcome of the investigation eliminates the ability of the inspector general to conduct a fair and independent investigation.

"This fundamental lack of fairness and due process regarding this prejudicial so-called 'investigation' is in violation of the principles on which this country was founded.

"I demand an independent investigation by the Marion County Prosecutor's Office, where my constitutional rights are respected and protected. Once the investigation is complete and I am exonerated, I would hope that my good name is properly restored with the same vigor with which it has been tarnished."

Most people who I've spoken with around the Hoosier State felt this was the right decision and fair. I was certainly one of those people.

But fast forward to July 12. Attorneys for Curtis Hill filed paperwork with the Marion County Superior Court challenging the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the alleged groping and sexual assault accusations. The crux of Hill's court filing is that the appointment of a special prosecutor is premature given that no criminal complaint has been filed by any of the four alleged victims.

Whoa there, Curtis! Didn't you just say on July 9, "I demand an independent investigation by the Marion County Prosecutor's Office..."? Did something change in the five days between your press comment and your court filing? There is something troubling about this incongruity. Do you want due process or do you not want due process?

Methinks I smell the odiferous presence of attorneys. Curtis Hill appears to have exited the world of righteous indignation and entered the ethereal world of legal purgatory.

Here is my best guess about the direction that the Curtis Hill mess is heading. First, appeal to the better angels in us all by calling for due process and a presumption of innocence that can only be afforded in a criminal investigation process. This strategy seems fair and serves to blunt the immediate cries of, "Off with his head!"

Next, criminal attorneys get into the picture and inform Hill that although the benefit of the criminal investigation is due process and a presumption of innocence, the downside could be charges filed, a possible conviction, jail time, disbarment and impeachment. Likely, his criminal attorneys reminded the former Elkhart County prosecutor that to enter a grand jury room is to throw caution to the wind. A county prosecutor once told me that there is no one more powerful than a prosecutor in front of a grand

jury.

Possibly, Hill's legal advisers have tried to move him to a Catch-22 world where he can't receive due process and presumption of innocence without a criminal investigation, but where he can't have a criminal investigation without a criminal complaint being filed. Sounds like a Pink Floyd song in the making: "If you don't eat your meat, you can't eat your pudding and how can you eat your pudding if you don't eat your meat?"

In this legalistic limbo, Hill lives to fight another day. In this environment maybe the public will move on to something more interesting, maybe Hill's base of public support will grow, maybe the accusers will be intimidated by the prospect of subjecting themselves to depositions and maybe the dust will settle with Curtis sitting behind the big desk in the attorney general's office.

Here is my prediction about the final outcome of this disaster. I believe that Hill's attorneys will convince him that the perils of going through the criminal process will be greater than the consequences of resigning his office. He would probably bring a complete halt to the inspector general's investigation and the work of a special prosecutor by resigning. By avoiding the potential consequences of criminal prosecution, Hill retains his membership in the bar and may continue to have a lucrative source of income. In addition, his pension would not be at risk. Of course, his reputation will be shot, but in the world we live in today, reputations come and go like the migration of sandhill cranes.

In my view, Hill will resign before the end of August, but not before taking a few wild swings at those who have called for his head. It will be a sad ending to a woeful tale. ❖

Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County and 4th CD Republican parties.

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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

Leaks and the attorney general

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – A leak in the roof is bad, nobody wants that. The leak to the Indianapolis Star of a report by four women of groping misconduct by Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill at a legislative sine die (final adjournment) party was good, too. Hill didn't want it, but it could even be good for Hill.



If it had not been leaked, legislative leaders apparently would have kept it secret. They reacted initially with horror about the leak, not horror about the allegations by the women. Now, they find the reported conduct so despicable that they call for Hill to resign. The report apparently wasn't so despicable before it was

leaked to the Star.

Much of the political speculation is that the damaging report about Hill, a Republican and former Elkhart County prosecutor, was leaked by Republican sources. That's based on the animosity toward him because of his maneuvering to challenge Gov. Eric Holcomb for the 2020 Republican nomination for governor.

So, was this Indianapolis bar episode about to become just another situation, oft described now in the #MeToo movement, where a powerful male could grin and grope and suffer no consequences?

Donald Trump said that "when you're a star," you can "grab 'em by the . . ." Can the attorney general grope a female legislator, grabbing her butt, engage in other inappropriate conduct with young legislative staffers and urge women at the bar to show more skin for free drinks?

Did Hill do this? Or did the four women lie?

Like the officials calling for Hill to resign, I tend to believe the women. But I don't know for sure what happened.

It is good that – because of the leak – the public now knows of serious allegations about a public official and that a special prosecutor could now seek facts about what happened. Good that this isn't another situation where allegations against a powerful person are hidden, while similar allegations against some "lesser" person in the bar would have led to arrest that night. Good possibly even for Hill if he has his day in court, the due process he seeks, and he isn't convicted of any offense.

He clearly was appealing to the powerful Trump base in maneuvering at the Republican State Convention, successfully frustrating the efforts of the governor and party leaders to put aside a divisive platform plank on same-sex marriage. Hill now responds in the Trump way, appeal-

ing to the base: Complete denial, no apology for anything, blame the news media and the political establishment for fake allegations.

There is the question of whether Hill is done politically, disgraced, or whether he gains support to challenge Holcomb for the governor nomination, seen as a martyr for the conservative cause and guilty of nothing but some silly nonsense. Another question, perhaps never to be answered: Who leaked the report and why?

Possibilities:

- A Republican deploring Hill's political maneuvering to take on Holcomb in the GOP primary for governor.

- A Democrat wanting to nail a Republican official as really sleazy to help with the crucial election this fall.

- A #MeToo cause believer disgusted with the possibility of a powerful man in Indiana getting away with deplorable conduct toward women.

- A person believing that the public should know about something some legislative leaders were intending to keep secret.

Motives of a leaker aren't always pure. Doesn't matter. What matters is whether the leaked information is true and is something the public should know.

The Star account of the report is accurate, whether or not one believes the allegations in it. It is good that the public now knows of something that otherwise would have been hidden, known by just a few and used by those insiders for their own purposes. ❖

Colwell has covered Indiana politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.

The E.U. is not a 'foe' of America

By CHRISTINA HALE

INDIANAPOLIS – The United States can withstand almost any mean-spirited or just plain bad domestic policy in the near term, but foreign policy is another matter entirely. It is no understatement to claim that stakes are extraordinarily high. Hoosier steelworkers get it. Hoosier farmers get it. Hoosier moms get it, and Hoosier teenagers get it too.



Whether people care about trade, their paycheck, military conflict, or other violence in the broader world, tension is again ratcheting up

all over. While we may not agree who they are, we likely will agree that we are living in a world suddenly full of James Bond villains. What our president says truly matters; there are no throw-away comments by the leader of the free world. The world is always listening – friends, enemies and frenemies too, whether for reasons of economic competition or balance of power.

The past week was remarkable for many reasons that directly relate to our standing in the world, but one comment continues to trouble me. It reveals that we are not attending to either history or the parameters of our present strategic alliances.

Yes, President Trump is walking back his claim that he has more faith in Russian FSB intelligence than that of our director of national intelligence, Dan Coats. Still there remains another very public presidential declaration that deserves more serious attention than it got. President Trump declared that he found that the European Union “is a foe, what they do to us in trade. Now you wouldn’t think of the European Union but they’re a foe.”

Troubling. Let’s look back at the history and intent. The advent of the E.U. was predicated on the notion that Europe could not withstand another world war on its soil, and that an antidote was necessary to the extreme nationalism that led to the literal destruction of the economies, infrastructure and populations of the member states.

First, the European Coal and Steel Community was created to control the means of war through economic cooperation, proposed by French foreign minister Robert Schuman to prevent further war between France and Germany by making “war not only unthinkable but materially impossible.”

Trade was the key means to achieve this, and the

first common market for coal and steel on the continent was launched with the hope it neutralizes competition between European nations over these most necessary resources. Over time it broadened its scope with the pact that caused the organization of the European Atomic Energy Community and also a customs union.

Still lacking a constitution, common security or social policy or a military, the E.U. exists to benefit the collective prosperity of member states and to eliminate conflict. These are good things; just ask your parents or grandparents.

The E.U. is not our foe, it is a group of allies that have formed a strategic partnership that leverages good trade policy for order and profit. It is also a convenient and lucrative market for U.S. goods and services – just ask our Indiana duck farmers.

Or ask any of the Hoosier businesses that in 2016 exported nearly \$9 billion of goods to Europe, accounting for 25% of our state’s total exports, according to the Indiana Business Research Center. In fact, the IBRC will tell you that Indiana is home to more than 400 European business facilities, and that Europe-based companies support 96,100 jobs in Indiana.

Those are a lot of Hoosier paychecks. Let’s remember that it is better to keep people earning here in Indiana, rather than sending them off once again to fight war in Europe. Words matter. Our allies deserve the confidence of our president and the constancy of our special relationship. There should be no question about that. ❖

Hale is with Kiwanis International. She is a former member of the Indiana House and the 2016 Democratic lieutenant governor nominee.

Family leave finally gets a hearing

By ERIN MACEY

INDIANAPOLIS – It’s about time.



On July 11, the U.S. Senate Committee on Social Security, Pensions and Family Policy held a landmark hearing on paid family leave. This hearing was long overdue and extremely critical to working families’ health and economic security. The U.S. is one of the only developed countries that does not offer some form of paid leave for family caregiving or serious illness, and just 15% of working people in the U.S. have

paid family leave through their employer. Here in Indiana, only 37% of working people have access to and can afford the unpaid leave provided under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

This means that nearly one in four women in the United States return to their cubicles, factory floors, or storefronts within two weeks of giving birth. It means that seriously ill children are left alone in hospital beds while their parents feel compelled to remain at their desks or cash registers. It means that thousands of people struggle and strain to keep up with the demands of their paid work while caring for an aging parent. A systematic approach to creating space for care across the spectrum is sorely needed.

Acknowledging that few workers have access to paid family leave, Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), the committee chair, began the hearing by listing off a number of potential benefits to expanded access to paid family leave, especially to lower-income workers who are less likely to have access to leave of any kind.

Beyond supporting caregiving, paid leave helps people to stay in the workforce, which is both beneficial to long-run earnings and economic growth. Adding, "I'm a doctor. I'm also concerned about infant and maternal health," Sen. Cassidy also noted that with access to paid leave, women are less likely to be readmitted to the hospital after giving birth and families are less likely to experience the devastation of losing an infant. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle and a panel of experts affirmed both the need for and the potential benefits of expanded access to paid leave.

While it is encouraging to see that we as a nation are moving beyond the "if" to the how's and why's, the policy details matter. To illustrate, let's consider the two proposals that have gained traction. One covers new parents only by allowing them tap Social Security funds early, requiring them to delay retirement and take a Social Security cut on the back end and replacing a small portion of their wages while on leave.

This would shut out the three-quarters of the individuals who currently take unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act and, without reform to Social Security, could further jeopardize retirement sustainability. On the other hand, the Family and Medical Insurance Leave

(FAMILY) Act, which is modeled after successful programs that passed with bipartisan support in several states, would establish an inclusive national paid leave insurance program to guarantee workers some pay when they need time to help a parent with Alzheimer's, adjust to night-time feedings, or recover from a car accident. It would be funded sustainably through employer and employee payroll contributions equivalent to a cup of coffee a week – and that means drive thru brew, not a triple latte.

Addressing America's paid leave crisis is critical and long overdue. Will Congress finally come together and solve one of the great challenges facing American workers in an effective, meaningful way? Every day they do not means more precious moments forgone.

The clock is ticking. ❖

Macey, PhD. is a policy analyst for Indiana Institute for Working Families and Indiana Community Action Association.

Photography With Punch

Mark Curry On Indiana Politics

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The collage includes several photographs: a man at a podium with a 'TRUMP' sign, a woman with red glasses, a man in a blue suit speaking, a woman with red glasses, a woman with glasses, an older man with a mustache, a man holding a 'LEGALIZE SUNDAY' sign in a restaurant, a woman in a blue jacket, two men in suits, a man in a dark suit, and a man in a white shirt.

Not good times for Lake County GOP

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – These aren't the best of times for Lake County Republican Chairman Dan Dernulc. It won't be a very good fall election. And, Dernulc knows it. And, in large part it's his fault. For starters, just one of the Democratic candidates for countywide offices in Lake County has opposition.



While Republicans rarely have little success in countywide races, they almost always field a full slate. And, a few years back, Republican Hank Adams was elected county assessor because Democrats nominated a candidate with so much baggage that even party faithful couldn't go along.

Adams died in office.

The only Republican for countywide office is Dan Bursac, who is a perennial candidate who this year faces a weaker Democrat in Sheriff Oscar Martinez. And then there is the County Council where none of the five Democrats has opposition.

The two council districts held by Republicans face Democratic opposition. One is Dernulc, himself, while the other is much more significant and has Democrats thinking they can win a seat they haven't held for decades.

In the 7th District, Republican incumbent Eldon Strong, part of the old guard, lost the primary to Christian Jorgenson by two votes.

Democrats, however, are far from conceding the fall election to Jorgenson. Running on the Democratic side is Philip Kuiper, a very popular former Lowell town councilman.

While south Lake County is generally Republican, Democrats think they have a chance because of the divisions resulting

from a bitter primary and Kuiper's popularity. With so few Democrats opposed this fall, the party is energized in that unopposed Democrats have vowed to help Democrats with opposition, including Kuiper. That help is expected to come in the form of money – since the unopposed don't need it – and door-to-door support.

The Democrats are especially high on Kuiper because Republicans remain in disarray since the Strong loss.

Democrats also are chuckling over what happened in West Creek Township in southwest Lake County. That was home to the late state senator and county commissioner Ernest Niemeyer.

One of the West Creek Township Board members died this year. The spouse will serve out the remainder of the term, but Dernulc didn't act quickly enough to get someone on the fall ballot. And yes, Democrats do have a candidate and will have a seat on the West Creek Township Board for the first time, perhaps, in history.

Republicans also don't have many state representative candidates in the districts that lean Democratic. But Democrats seem pleased that Chris Chyung is running against incumbent Hal Slager, who is seeking a fourth term.

Democrats aren't claiming victory, but feel Chyung, a progressive, will make a run at Slager. ❖

Rich James has been writing about politics and government for almost 40 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune, a newspaper born in Gary.

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Gerald Seib, Wall Street Journal: It was possible that Vladimir Putin would be the man in a tough spot after his summit meeting Monday with President Donald Trump. Instead, most of the squirming is being done not by the Russian leader, but by Republicans in Congress, by the American intelligence community and by overseas allies. All of them were left in limbo by Mr. Trump's decision not to challenge Mr. Putin publicly about any of the toughest issues between Washington and Moscow: Russia's annexation of Crimea, its interference in eastern Ukraine, the poisoning of Russian exiles in London or Russian meddling in the 2016 election. At least at the post-summit press conference, Mr. Putin escaped the meeting in Helsinki with the U.S. president appearing to accept his denials of official Russian interference in American politics, and without having been called out by his counterpart on any of those other deeds. In one indicator of how that went down back in Russia, as Mr. Putin flew home a headline on the website of RT, the Russian television network, blared: "I wanted Trump to win — Putin." But for Mr. Trump's potential friends, the equation was different. Most other Republicans want a tougher line on Russia than the president offered. The intelligence community has said repeatedly — including in a statement issued just hours after the close of the summit — that it believes Russia meddled in the 2016 election, while the nation's top intelligence official, Trump appointee Dan Coats, said just last week the Russians are preparing to do so again. Allies such as Angela Merkel of Germany and Emmanuel Macron of France, having been publicly skewered by Mr. Trump, now doubtless will wonder why Mr. Putin got no such rebuke—and whether the president will have their back as they seek to continue economic sanctions and otherwise confront Mr. Putin over Russia's interference in Ukraine. ❖



Michael Gerson, Washington Post: The president remains in total denial about Russian intentions and actions. This is unexplainable in strategic terms. Why would an American president so regularly praise and excuse a dictator dedicated to the overthrow of American influence? It is also unexplainable in political terms. Why wouldn't a president facing an investigation of Russian influence on his campaign find opportunities to distance himself from Russian aggression? There is no rational explanation for Trump's surrender to Russian designs. Perhaps Mueller will supply some type of unexpected, unsavory reason. But we know that Russia is Trump's Rosetta Stone — the key that will eventually explain the refusal of an American president to defend American interests. In the process, the Republican Party is becoming something that would have been unimaginable just five or 10 years ago. By following Trump into this strange, unhealthy Russian fetish, it is proving its loyalty while forfeiting its legitimacy. Much of the GOP is playing down Russian aggression. And it is actively undermining the investigation of that aggression. Trump's political tools have become Putin's useful idi-

ots. The party of national strength has become an obstacle to the effective protection of the country. If Mueller finds evidence of Trump's complicity, obstruction or corruption, Republicans in Congress must support the removal of the president from office. If Republicans in Congress can't make that simple pledge today, they must be removed from office. If the GOP proves unequal to this national security threat, it has ceased to be a responsible, governing party. ❖

David Brooks, New York Times: When C.S. Lewis was a boy, his mother died. "With my mother's death," he wrote, "all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis." It may seem melodramatic, but that passage comes to mind when I think of the death of America's relationship with Europe, and Donald Trump's betrayal Monday of the democratic values that were the basis for that relationship. Europe is America's mother continent. Our foundational institutions were inherited from Europe. Our democracy is Greek and British. Our universities are German. The etiquette book George Washington read to improve himself was translated from French, and so were Thomas Jefferson's ideals. Then as a mature nation, we became our parent's partner. After World War II, a reformed, American-led West stabilized itself. There were fights and rivalries, but underneath, there was an unspoken awareness — these are our kin. This trans-Atlantic partnership was a vast historical accomplishment, a stumbling and imperfect effort to extend democracy, extend rights, extend freedom and build a world ordered by justice and not force. Since 1945 it is the thing we have all taken for granted. Over the weekend, Trump ripped the partnership to threads. He said the European Union is our "foe." On Monday, Trump essentially sided with Vladimir Putin, who has become the biggest moral and political enemy of the Euro-American relationship. ❖

Charles Sykes, Weekly Standard: On Monday, Trump found that bigger bully and his cowering was the embarrassment heard round the world. The president did not merely insult and dismiss members of his own administration (Dan Coats) and attacked the institutions of his own government on foreign soil (the FBI and DoJ), he also demeaned his own country, all in order to curry favor with a bloody martinet, who is aggressively attacking us. Trump's performance was so bizarre that it seemed to leave many of his media courtiers (temporarily) speechless and caused otherwise sober analysts to wonder whether in fact the notorious "pee tape," was really a thing. Standing in the presence of a man who had ordered an attack on the American political system, Trump gave a master class in capitulation. ❖

Holcomb says Indy in Amazon running

INDIANAPOLIS – Sometime in the coming months, we will find out if Indiana was able to land Amazon's second headquarters ([WTHR-TV](#)). It would mean a compound that would ultimately encompass an area nearly five times that of Lucas Oil Stadium. It would also mean 50,000 high paying jobs. Here is what governor Eric Holcomb said Tuesday about our chances. "We're in a great position because of all of the work that has gone into on the overall list." The governor says Indiana is not going to let up on pushing to land the Amazon prize. HPI sources say Indianapolis is one of three cities still in the running, with the others Northern Virginia and Denver.



Russians say agreements forged

WASHINGTON – Two days after President Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian officials offered a string of assertions about what the two leaders had achieved ([Washington Post](#)). "Important verbal agreements" were reached at the Helsinki meeting, Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, told reporters in Moscow Wednesday, including preservation of the New Start and INF agreements, major bilateral arms control treaties whose futures have been in question. Antonov also said that Putin had made 'specific and interesting proposals to Washington' on how the two countries could cooperate on Syria. But officials at the most senior levels across the U.S. military, were scrambling since Monday to determine what Trump may have agreed to on national security issues in Helsinki

Trump ponders diplomat probe

WASHINGTON – The White House said on Wednesday it is entertaining a proposal raised by Russian President Vladimir Putin to interrogate

Americans in exchange for assistance in the ongoing US investigation into election interference, putting the White House at odds with the State Department ([CNN](#)). Putin raised the idea in his summit talks with President Donald Trump on Monday, according to White House press secretary Sarah Sanders. The Americans wanted for questioning by Moscow include Michael McFaul, the former US ambassador to

Russia, and American-born financier Bill Browder, who successfully lobbied the US government to impose new sanctions on Moscow. Sanders indicated on Wednesday no final decision had been made but that the proposal was under consideration.

Hill attorneys allege defamation

INDIANAPOLIS – Attorney General Curtis Hill is now exploring a defamation lawsuit ([WTHR-TV](#)). This new development comes as the embattled AG hires a law firm after allegations surfaced that he groped several women at an Indianapolis bar. His attorneys held a news conference Wednesday morning and said Hill has been defamed by malicious, false allegations included in a state memo. They're calling on state leaders to release the names of the people who wrote that internal memo and leaked it to the media. They say the attorney general is considering a lawsuit against those people once the names are released. "We are taking a position about fairness and due process," said employment attorney Sandra Blevins. "If Attorney General Curtis Hill cannot fight to protect fairness and due process for himself in this situation as the duly elected Indiana attorney general, then those rights belong to no one." According to an internal state memo, four women claim Hill inappropriately touched them at a bar in March. Three of those women have come forward, sharing details of the alleged groping. But the attorney general says there are discrepancies

between their stories and what appears in the state memo. House Speaker Brian C. Bosma and Senate President Pro Tem David Long reacted, saying, "We believe Curtis Hill is the individual who should be answering questions about allegations of inappropriate conduct, and we stand by our prior statements regarding this matter. We are fully cooperating with the Inspector General's Office as they conduct their current investigation and will await the results."

Toyota president warns of tariffs

PRINCETON, Ind. – Millie Marshall, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana, published commentary in the [Evansville Courier & Press](#) under the headline "Import auto tariffs will hurt Hoosier workers." Indiana "is where our 5,400 team members build three of Toyota's most popular vehicles —Highlander, Sienna and Sequoia," Marshall wrote. "We make more than 400,000 vehicles a year and over 5 million vehicles since we started production. When you count supplier and indirect jobs, we account for 27,500 jobs and a total investment of \$4.3 billion... Import tariffs on vehicles and components will increase product costs, lead to higher prices for consumers and a decline in sales, auto production, jobs and vehicle exports... We urge Indiana's congressional delegation, including Senator Joe Donnelly and Senator Todd Young, to oppose this misguided idea and apply the brakes to auto tariffs. They would hurt our plant and our state." At a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, President Trump threatened "tremendous retribution" against the European Union, specifically mentioning auto tariffs, if his meeting with EU officials next week doesn't yield what he considers a fair auto trade deal ([Wall Street Journal](#)).