

From: [Craig Quigley](#)
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Subject: EXECUTIVE INSIGHT BRIEF | March 17, 2017
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Ladies & Gentlemen, below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group.

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EXECUTIVE INSIGHT BRIEF | March 17, 2017

TOP STORIES

SHUTDOWN POLITICS RETURN TO THE SENATE. Senators are firing the opening salvos in a new fight over funding the government. With President Trump releasing his first budget request Thursday, both parties are preemptively pointing fingers over who would be responsible if Congress misses a deadline in April to avoid a government shutdown. [Read more](#)

REX TILLERSON: MILITARY ACTION AGAINST NORTH KOREA IS 'ON THE TABLE'. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned Friday that military action against North Korea was "on the table" if the country continued to develop its weapons program. "If they elevate the threat of their weapons program to a level that we believe requires action then that option is on the table," he told a press conference in South Korea. [Read more](#)

ISRAELI JETS STRIKE INSIDE SYRIA; MILITARY SITE NEAR PALMYRA REPORTEDLY TARGETED. In the most serious clash between Israeli and Syrian forces since the start of the Syrian conflict six year ago, Israeli aircraft struck several targets in Syria overnight, the Israeli military said Friday. Israel targeted a military site near the [ancient city of Palmyra](#), the Syrian military said, in what would be one of its deepest airstrikes inside Syrian territory since the

[civil war](#) began there. [Read more](#)

SOMALI REFUGEES KILLED NEAR BAB AL-MANDEB STRAIT. At least 31 Somali refugees have been killed off the coast of [Yemen](#) after a helicopter attacked the boat they were traveling in, according to a local coastguard officer in the Houthi-controlled Hodeidah area. Mohamed al-Alay told Reuters news agency that the refugees, carrying official [UNHCR](#) documents, were on their way from Yemen to Sudan when they were attacked late on Thursday by an Apache helicopter near the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. [Read more](#)

BRITAIN'S GCHQ DENIES 'RIDICULOUS' CLAIM IT HELPED WIRETAP TRUMP. British spy agency GCHQ has issued a rare and angry denial of a "ridiculous" allegation, repeated by White House press secretary Sean Spicer that it eavesdropped on President Donald Trump during the election campaign. The signal intelligence agency went public after Spicer quoted a Fox New analyst to support Trump's so-far-unfounded [claim that he was wiretapped by President Barack Obama](#). [Read more](#)

FLYNN WAS PAID \$67K BY RUSSIAN INTERESTS, DOCUMENTS SAY.

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn was paid more than \$67,000 by Russian companies before the presidential election, according to documents released Thursday by a Democratic congressman. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland asked the Trump administration to provide a comprehensive record of Flynn's contacts with foreign governments and interests. [Read more](#)

MOUNT ETNA ERUPTION TRIGGERS 'VIOLENT EXPLOSION', 10 INJURED. Scientists, tourists and a television news crew were among 10 people injured in a "violent explosion" Thursday when magma spewing from Sicily's Mount Etna hit snow, officials said. The blast was caused by a "phreatic eruption" in which fast-moving lava moves over snow, creating high-pressure pockets of steam, Marco Neri, a volcanologist at Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology told NBC News. [Read more](#)

ADMINISTRATION

TRUMP SET TO MEET MERKEL AT WHITE HOUSE AFTER CRITICIZING HER DURING CAMPAIGN. President Trump on Friday is set to welcome Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel to the White House in what is expected

to be an amicable encounter despite Trump's campaign criticism about her "ruining" Germany. Merkel was reportedly on her way to the airport Monday to fly to Washington when Trump called her to postpone the trip due to the impending snow storm that blanketed the Northeast. [Read more](#)

TRUMP'S MIDEAST SURGE HAS PENTAGON DEBATING 'MISSION CREEP'. President Donald Trump's pressure on the military to "demolish and destroy" the Islamic State is raising anxiety inside the Pentagon that the United States could end up in another open-ended ground war, according to current and former military officials. [Read more](#)

SOURCES: TRUMP EXPECTED TO TAP WHEELER AS EPA DEPUTY. President Donald Trump is expected to tap Andrew Wheeler, a coal lobbyist and former aide to Sen. Jim Inhofe, to be deputy administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, sources familiar with the hiring process told POLITICO. Sources cautioned that the decision has not yet been finalized, but they said Wheeler is expected to get the job. [Read more](#)

CONGRESS

FREEDOM CAUCUS ALIGNS WITH BANNON IN RISKY OBAMACARE GAMBIT. Steve Bannon was furious. Last weekend, the Washington Examiner published [a story](#) claiming that President Donald Trump had vowed to back primary challengers to run against Republicans who oppose the GOP's health care plan. The article named Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows as a "possible target." [Read more](#)

DEM REP: US NEEDS A PLAN TO DEAL WITH POTENTIAL RUSSIAN NUKE. Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) says a nuclear war with Russia is a real possibility to U.S. should prepare for. "For a long time, Russia and the United States had this sort of mutual agreement, mutually assured destruction," he said Friday on CNN's "New Day". [Read more](#)

SCALISE: THERE'S A PATH TO 'YES' FOR THOSE WHO OPPOSE OBAMACARE REPEAL. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise sounded optimistic Friday morning that controversial legislation making its way through Congress to repeal and replace Obamacare will ultimately have the votes to pass the House of Representatives even though a number of Republican

members have already expressed opposition to the bill. [Read more](#)

POLITICS

TRUMP TAKES A GAMBLE IN CUTTING PROGRAMS HIS BASE RELIES ON. President Trump's proposal on Thursday for deep cuts to the budgets of a broad part of the federal bureaucracy was billed as a tough-minded and necessary correction to the growth of the government's power. But even members of his own party questioned some of the cuts — and what was not being cut. The harshest criticism of Mr. Trump's budget came from Democrats and liberal organizations. [Read more](#)

RAND PAUL: 'UNHINGED' MCCAIN MAKES 'STRONG CASE FOR TERM LIMITS'. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) on Thursday shot back at Sen. John McCain after the Arizona Republican accused Paul of working for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "I think he makes a really, really, strong case for term limits," Paul said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." [Read more](#)

TRUMP BUDGET: MEALS ON WHEELS CUTBACK PROMPTS BACKLASH. One planned cutback has generated a particularly strong backlash: President Trump's intention to eliminate the entire Community Development Block Grant, which funds housing assistance and various community programs. Among them is Meals on Wheels, which provides food to the elderly and disabled, to veterans, and to others who are unable for some reason to leave their homes. [Read more](#)

DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

US ARMY GETS WORLD RECORD-SETTING 60-KW LASER. The U.S. Army is taking delivery of a 60 kilowatt-class laser from Lockheed Martin as the company wraps up demonstrations of the capability. "In testing earlier this month, the Lockheed Martin laser produced a single beam of 58kW, representing a world record for a laser of this type," the company said in a statement Thursday. [Read more](#)

TRUMP EYES FORMER FLIGHT SURGEON MARK GREEN AS NEXT ARMY SECRETARY. Former Army flight surgeon and Tennessee state Sen. Mark Green is the leading pick to take over as President Donald Trump's Army

Secretary, according to sources close to the process.

Green, best known as the special operations soldier who interviewed former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein after his capture by American forces in 2003.

[Read more](#)

HOW INTELLIGENT DRONES ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WARFARE.

The drones fell out of the sky over China Lake, California, like a colony of bats fleeing a cave in the night. Over 100 of them dropped from the bellies of three Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jets, their sharp angles cutting across the clear blue sky. As they encircled their target, the mechanical whir of their flight sounded like screaming. [Read more](#)

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

WHAT AMERICA WOULD LOOK LIKE UNDER THE TRUMP BUDGET. The budget [unveiled by the Trump administration on Thursday](#) would remake the United States -- vastly expanding national defense but cutting or gutting dozens of programs that touch the lives of Americans every day. Charter schools would get more money. But federal money would be eliminated for an agency that improves water and sewer systems in impoverished corners of Appalachia. [Read more](#)

BRITISH REGULATORS TO INVESTIGATE 21ST CENTURY FOX'S DEAL FOR SKY. Britain asked regulators on Thursday to investigate whether 21st Century Fox's \$14.3 billion deal to take full control of the British satellite television giant Sky would give the media mogul [Rupert Murdoch](#) too much control over the country's media landscape. The takeover for the 61 percent of Sky that 21st Century Fox does not already own was [agreed on in December](#) and is the second such effort to combine the two companies since 2011. [Read more](#)

WINE BAR SUES DONALD TRUMP FOR UNFAIR COMPETITION OVER D.C. HOTEL. A Washington restaurant filed an unfair competition lawsuit Thursday against President Donald Trump and the company that runs his D.C. hotel, claiming he's siphoning away customers who hope to "curry favor" with his administration. Cork Wine Bar, a well-reviewed eatery about 1.5 miles from the \$200 million Trump International Hotel, is suing Trump as a private businessman and not as president, but suggests that he could remedy the

problem by resigning. [Read more](#)

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

TO KEEP THE GREAT BARRIER REEF ALIVE, THE OCEANS MUST BE COLDER. To save coral reefs around the world, global temperatures need to level off or decline, according to a new study of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) over the past 20 years. Warming waters are the key driver of mass bleaching, the study found. As the world continues to heat up, these bleaching events will become more frequent and more severe, putting the future of coral reefs at risk. [Read more](#)

TRUMP'S NASA BUDGET CANCELS EUROPA LANDER AND ASTEROID REDIRECT MISSION. The president's budget request for NASA is out, and it looks like the space program won't be dealing with as many of the extreme cuts that other federal agencies are facing next year. Released this morning, the request would give NASA \$19.1 billion for fiscal year 2018, roughly \$200 million less than the \$19.3 billion the agency received for 2016. [Read more](#)

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT TO WITHDRAW OBAMA-ERA FRACKING RULE, FILINGS REVEAL. The Trump administration plans to withdraw and rewrite a 2015 [rule aimed at limiting hydraulic fracturing](#), or "fracking," on public lands, the Interior Department indicated in court filings Wednesday. The move to rescind the 2015 regulation, which has been stayed in federal court, represents the latest effort by the new administration to ease restraints on oil and gas production in the United States. [Read more](#)

TECHNOLOGY

RUSSIAN SPIES HELPED HACK YAHOO, AS IF TENSIONS WEREN'T HIGH ENOUGH. The Department of Justice indicted two Russian hackers, as well as two Russian spies, in the 2014 Yahoo data breach that compromised 500 million user accounts. (Not to be confused with the breach of 1 billion Yahoo accounts in 2013.) The charges are hacking, economic espionage, trade secret theft, wire fraud, and identity theft. [Read more](#)

AMAZON BRINGS ALEXA TO THE IPHONE. Amazon is bringing Alexa to the iPhone today right inside of the company's main app. While this isn't the first

time Alexa has been on a smartphone - third parties have made it happen already – this is the first time it's coming directly from Amazon. And it could be a huge help to anyone who's filling their home with Alexa-enabled devices.

[Read more](#)

SONY'S PATENT FOR WIRELESS CHARGING BETWEEN DEVICES WILL TEST YOUR FRIENDSHIP. Asking a pal to tether over some data when you're running close to the cap (or at least, the throttle cap) is trying enough, but soon you might have something else to test the limits of your friendships. According to a new patent by Sony, published this month, the Japanese giants want you to be able to mooch battery power wirelessly from nearby devices. [Read more](#)

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TOP STORIES

U.S., IN REVERSAL, ISSUES PERMIT FOR KEYSTONE OIL PIPELINE.

The Trump Administration announced on Friday that it would issue a permit for construction of the [Keystone XL](#) pipeline, a long-disputed project that would link [oil](#) producers in Canada and North Dakota with refiners and export terminals on the Gulf Coast. [Read more](#)

EX-EGYPT LEADER MUBARAK RETURNS HOME AFTER YEARS-LONG

DETENTION. Egypt's former President Hosni Mubarak returned home on Friday, free following his release from custody after legal proceedings that took years since his 2011 ouster -- years during which the country witnessed major upheavals and rights activists saw their hopes scuttled that the autocrat would face justice for the deaths of hundreds who defied his rule. [Read more](#)

KHALID MASOOD: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE LONDON ATTACKER.

In a horrifying attack in London on Wednesday, a lone assailant plowed a car into crowds of people gathered on Westminster Bridge before stabbing a police officer dead outside UK Parliament. The assault on the heart of Britain's capital left four people dead. On Thursday, police [named the attacker](#) as 52-

year-old Khalid Masood. But there is still much we don't know about the man who carried out the deadliest terror attack the UK has seen for more than a decade. [Read more](#)

FRANCE'S MARINE LE PEN URGES END TO RUSSIA SANCTIONS. Mr. Putin defended the meeting - a coup for Ms. Le Pen - saying that he was not seeking to influence France's election. Ms. Le Pen has garnered widespread support at home but her extreme views have deterred most foreign leaders. Russia was accused of meddling in the US election in support of Donald Trump. "Of course I know that the election campaign in France is actively developing," said Mr. Putin. [Read more](#)

TOP U.S. GENERAL IN EUROPE SAYS RUSSIA MAY BE SUPPLYING TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN. Russia may be influencing and supplying the Taliban in Afghanistan, the top U.S. general in Europe said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Thursday. Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, who also serves as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, told Senators that Russia's role in Afghanistan seemed to be growing, according to Reuters. [Read more](#)

MEXICO READY TO 'STEP AWAY FROM NAFTA' IF NEW DEAL ISN'T GOOD. "If what is on the table is something that is not good for Mexico, Mexico will step away from NAFTA," Mexico's foreign minister, Luis Videgaray, told Bloomberg TV Thursday in Acapulco, Mexico, referring to the trade agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico. [Read more](#)

ANTONIO GUTERRES: SALVA KIIR IS IGNORING FAMINE. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has accused [South Sudan's](#) government of ignoring the plight of 100,000 people suffering from [famine](#), 7.5 million in need of [humanitarian aid](#) and thousands more fleeing [fighting](#). Guterres' rebuke was delivered to the country's president, [Salva Kiir](#), on Thursday, mentioning "a refusal by the leadership to even acknowledge the crisis or to fulfill its responsibilities to end it". [Read more](#)

ADMINISTRATION

TRUMP VS. THE FREEDOM CAUCUS. The group that brought down Speaker John Boehner is headed for a momentous clash with President

Donald Trump on Friday. And it's anybody's guess who's going to win. The House Freedom Caucus has threatened to tank the House GOP Obamacare replacement bill unless they get what they want. But Trump is now calling their bluff. White House officials told members of the group on Thursday they have one shot. [Read more](#)

GOVERNMENT WATCHDOGS: GIVE IVANKA TRUMP OFFICIAL TITLE. A group of government watchdogs says the White House must give President Trump's daughter Ivanka an official title or risk conflicts of interest with her business ventures. "(Ivanka Trump's current role) created a middle space that does not exist," officials wrote in a Friday letter to White House counsel Don McGahn, according to the Associated Press. [Read more](#)

TRUMP INHERITS A SECRET CYBERWAR AGAINST NORTH KOREAN MISSILES. Three years ago, President [Barack Obama](#) ordered Pentagon officials to step up their cyber and electronic strikes against [North Korea's](#) missile program in hopes of sabotaging test launches in their opening seconds. Soon a large number of the North's military rockets began to explode, veer off course, disintegrate in midair and plunge into the sea. [Read more](#)

CONGRESS

SCHUMER CONFIDENT DEMOCRATS HAVE VOTES TO BLOCK GORSUCH. Chuck Schumer is prepared to push the Senate into a nuclear confrontation over the Supreme Court. In an extensive interview with POLITICO Thursday, the Senate minority leader made his most definitive statement to date that Democrats will deny Neil Gorsuch the 60 votes he needs to clear a Senate filibuster and ascend to the Supreme Court. [Read more](#)

DEM REP: RYAN MUST DECIDE WHETHER NUNES CAN CREDIBLY LEAD RUSSIA PROBE. Rep. Jim Himes (D-Conn.) is pressuring Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) to weigh in on Rep. Devin Nunes's (R-Calif.) recent actions, saying Ryan must decide whether Nunes can lead the House Intelligence Committee's probe of Russian interference in the election. "You know, at the end of the day, that's a decision that no one other than Speaker Ryan can make," Himes said Friday on CNN's "New Day". [Read more](#)

IRAN SANCTIONS BILL UNVEILED BY BIPARTISAN SENATE GROUP.

Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) on Thursday unveiled a bipartisan bill to slap Iran with new sanctions because of the country's ballistic missile development, support for U.S.-designated terrorist groups and human rights violations. [Read more](#)

POLITICS

MULVANEY: AMERICANS UPSET WITH CHANGES TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES SHOULD HELP 'CHANGE THE STATE THAT YOU LIVE IN'.

Americans upset that the Republican plan to repeal and replace Obamacare would cut requirements for so-called "essential services" like maternity care and addiction treatment should "figure out a way to change the state that you live in" if the bill ends up becoming law, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said Friday morning. [Read more](#)

DEMS INTRODUCE GUN TRAFFICKING BILL. House Democrats introduced a bill Wednesday intended to combat illegal arms trafficking to Mexico. The bill, penned by Rep. Norma Torres (D-Calif.) would make it a crime to carry or send two or more guns across state or international borders with the knowledge or suspicion that they could be used to commit a crime. "Trafficking illegal guns to and from Mexico is currently not a federal crime..." [Read more](#)

ICE RAMPING UP OPERATIONS IN SANCTUARY CITIES: REPORT.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is ramping up efforts in sanctuary cities across the country, hoping to force the jurisdictions to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement operations, CNN reported Friday. U.S. Magistrate Judge Andrew Austin revealed earlier this week that federal immigration officials had targeted Austin, Texas, in a series of mid-February immigration raids. [Read more](#)

DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

F-35 PROGRAM OFFICE CONCLUDES AFFORDABILITY REVIEW. A list of options to decrease costs on the F-35 is on the desk of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and awaiting action, the Pentagon's F-35 program chief said

Wednesday. “We’ve got a compendium of many kinds of initiatives that have already started or that we will start in the future. That compendium is up for review with the secretary of defense as we speak,” said Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, the F-35 joint program office (JPO) head. [Read more](#)

SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE MIGHT HURT DEFENSE INDUSTRY MORE THAN BREXIT. Scotland is heading for a possible second independence referendum, raising new uncertainties about the future of the British defense sector if the move to break away eventually succeeds. While the timing of any new referendum remains uncertain, and it’s possible it may never take place at all. [Read more](#)

EXPEDITIONARY CYBER FORCES FIGHTING DRONES ON THE FRONT LINES. Nonstate groups have been employing commercially available unmanned aerial systems for some time, but as many have feared, these small devices have now been weaponized. With previous reports of “flying improvised explosive devices,” which effectively turn these aircraft into onetime use kamikaze devices, the Islamic State group has begun dropping explosives on security forces. [Read more](#)

ECONOMY AND FINANCE

U.S. WORKERS FACE HIGHER RISK OF BEING REPLACED BY ROBOTS. HERE'S WHY. The budget [unveiled by the Trump administration on Thursday](#) would remake the United States -- vastly expanding national defense but cutting or gutting dozens of programs that touch the lives of Americans every day. Charter schools would get more money. But federal money would be eliminated for an agency that improves water and sewer systems in impoverished corners of Appalachia. [Read more](#)

OIL EDGES UP AS SAUDIS CUT SUPPLIES TO U.S., BUT GLOBAL GLUT REMAINS. Oil edged higher on Friday, boosted by hopes that an OPEC output cut was beginning to balance a long-oversupplied market, but benchmark prices were on track for weekly losses as concerns persisted over an excess of crude. Benchmark Brent crude futures were at \$50.72 per barrel at 1255 GMT, up 16 cents from their last close. [Read more](#)

AMERICANS AGREE ON PAID LEAVE, BUT NOT ON WHO SHOULD PAY.

Most people say workers should get paid leave to take care of a baby, a sick family member or themselves, according to two new surveys. But they disagree on the details: who should pay, and whether it should be mandatory or optional. The idea of a federal paid leave policy brings up issues that Americans have complicated feelings about — like government mandates for businesses and gender roles at home. [Read more](#)

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

AFTER SOME BUMBLING, A BEE BUZZES ONTO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST. Federal protections for the first bee species to be listed as “endangered” in the continental US are now in effect, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The news comes a little over a month after an executive order by President Donald Trump delayed the listing of the rusty patched bumblebee. [Read more](#)

WATCH ASTRONAUTS SPACEWALK TODAY TO GET THE STATION READY TO RECEIVE PRIVATE CREW VEHICLES. Over the next couple of weeks, the astronauts on board the International Space Station will get to stretch their legs during a series of strolls through the vacuum of space. The first of those three spacewalks gets underway this morning before 8AM ET, when NASA astronaut Shane Kimbrough and Thomas Pesquet of the European Space Agency are scheduled to exit the ISS. [Read more](#)

GLOBAL COAL PLANT DEVELOPMENT IN FREEFALL. On the heels of the [United States retiring its 250th coal-fired power plant](#) yesterday, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and CoalSwarm released our third annual survey of proposed coal plants worldwide, [Boom and Bust 2017: Tracking The Global Coal Plant Pipeline](#), and the results are staggering. Spoiler alert: if you are considering investing in coal, think again. [Read more](#)

TECHNOLOGY

WELLS FARGO WILL NOW LET CUSTOMERS WITHDRAW MONEY USING THEIR SMARTPHONES. Wells Fargo customers will soon be able to use their smartphones, rather than their cards, to withdraw money from the bank’s ATMs. The company announce that as of Monday next week, it was upgrading all 13,000 of its cash machines across the United States with

smartphone functionality, requiring that customers provide only their PIN and an eight-digit code. [Read more](#)

PHONE COMPANIES WILL SOON BANISH ROBOCALLS. FOR REAL THIS TIME. If Democrats, Republicans, and the telecommunications industry can agree on anything, it's that robocalls are the worst. That's why the Federal Communications Commission passed rules today that expand the authority of phone companies to block unwanted phone calls. [Read more](#)

WIKILEAKS REVEALS HOW THE CIA CAN HACK A MAC'S HIDDEN CODE. If the CIA wants inside your Mac, it may not be enough that you so carefully avoided those infected email attachments or maliciously crafted web sites designed to plant spyware on your machine. Based on new documents in [WikiLeaks' ongoing release of CIA hacking secrets](#), if Langley's hackers got physical access, they still could have infected the deepest, most hidden recesses of your laptop. [Read more](#)