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Donald Trump Gives Mitt Romney a Second Interview for Diplomatic Post

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Donald Trump and Mitt Romney will meet for a second time Tuesday amid a messy—and unusually public—debate over who should get the nation’s top diplomatic post as secretary of state in the Trump White House.

The president-elect also is preparing to announce his pick for Treasury secretary as early as the end of the week, a person close to the transition team said Monday, and deliberations are turning to candidates to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Finalists for the Treasury job include Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R., Texas), who heads the House Financial Services Committee; Steven Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs Group Inc. banker and prominent Trump campaign supporter; and John A. Allison IV, who built one of the largest regional banks, **BB&T**, a transition official said.

Mr. Allison arrived at Trump Tower in New York late Monday afternoon for a meeting with Mr. Trump.

The shift to the top economic posts, which have been overshadowed by the internal fight over who should be secretary of state, signals that the administration-in-waiting is seeking to get back on to its relatively brisk track.

“It’s going to be a busy week. Get ready. Buckle up,” Vice President-elect Mike Pence told reporters Monday morning in the lobby of Trump Tower, before getting into an elevator to head up to the transition’s New York hub. Late Monday, he said “there will be a number of very important announcements tomorrow.”

Mr. Romney’s return is a sign that he remains in serious contention for the plum cabinet post despite fierce resistance from Trump loyalists who haven’t forgiven him for his blistering attacks on Mr. Trump during the campaign.

He is due to speak to Mr. Trump on Tuesday, part of a procession of job candidates coming to Trump Tower. Also in the diplomatic mix is Rudy Giuliani, former New York mayor; David Petraeus, a retired four-star general; and Sen. Bob Corker (R., Tenn.), who heads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Petraeus met with the president-elect Monday, and Mr. Corker is scheduled to meet with him on Tuesday.

“I was with him for about an hour,” Mr. Petraeus told reporters after his meeting. “He basically walked us around the world, showed a great grasp of the variety of the challenges that are out there and some of the opportunities as well.”

Mr. Trump tweeted: “Just met with General Petraeus—was very impressed!”

Kellyanne Conway, who managed Mr. Trump’s campaign, has used **Twitter** and television appearances to make the case that Mr. Romney’s condemnation of Mr. Trump during the campaign should disqualify him from the coveted cabinet slot.

In March, when Mr. Trump was the front-runner for the GOP nomination, Mr. Romney said in a speech that Mr. Trump “is a phony, a fraud.”

Appearing on ABC’s “This Week” on Sunday, Ms. Conway said Mr. Romney “went way out of his way to hurt Donald Trump.”

People familiar with the matter said that Ms. Conway wasn’t freelancing in criticizing Mr. Romney, and that she wouldn’t make statements contrary to Mr. Trump’s wishes.

Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump’s son-in-law who is also a close confidant to the president-elect, is said to be an advocate for Mr. Romney. Mr. Pence is supportive of either Mr. Romney or Mr. Giuliani, one transition adviser said.

A complication for Mr. Petraeus is that last year he pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charge of mishandling classified information, in a case involving material he supplied to his former mistress and biographer. The secretary of state position requires Senate confirmation.

Ryan Williams, who was a spokesman for Mr. Romney’s 2012 presidential campaign, said Mr. Trump “deserves a lot of credit for even considering him for a job in his administration.”

“I’m not surprised to see that Mitt is staying above the fray and showing respect to the President-elect by allowing him reach his own decision and select the person he thinks would make the best Secretary of State,” Mr. Williams said.

While the team mulls their options for the nation’s top diplomat, Mr. Trump is set to announce additional cabinet choices this week, transition officials said.

Transition officials said that Mr. Trump could announce his treasury and commerce secretary nominations by weeks end.

Treasury finalist Mr. Allison is a former CEO of the libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute, who has in the past called for abolishing the Federal Reserve.

A selling point for Mr. Allison, one transition official said, is that when the federal government bailed out struggling banks amid the 2008 financial crisis, Mr. Allison as head of BB&T took the position that bad banks should fail.

BB&T took a loan from the government, something Mr. Allison attributed to government pressure.

For the Commerce Secretary position, the front-runner is billionaire investor Wilbur Ross Jr., a transition official said.

Mr. Trump is also actively considering candidates for head of Veterans Affairs. Rep. Jeff Miller (R., Fla.) is often mentioned as a candidate by lawmakers and veteran advocacy groups for the Department of Veterans Affairs job.

The congressman currently heads the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, where he has been an outspoken agitator for changes in the operation. He announced earlier this year he will not seek re-election and was an early supporter of Mr. Trump. He endorsed the New York businessman in April.

Mr. Miller has expressed interest in the VA job, saying in an interview months ago at the Republican National Convention that he would not refuse the position if offered it.

In addition, Pete Hegseth, former CEO of Concerned Veterans for America, a conservative veterans' interest group, will meet with Mr. Trump on Tuesday to discuss the position, according to people familiar with the matter.

Both the congressman and Mr. Hegseth have advocated for veterans to have more choice in healthcare providers and to more easily be allowed to go outside of the VA hospital system for care, something critics have said is a push toward privatization that would make the department an insurance provider.

Both have also vocally criticized the department for not firing underperforming employees, something the current VA Secretary Bob McDonald has said he is doing to the extent of his authority.

An aide to Mr. Miller said the congressman is currently focused on his job as congressman. Mr. Hegseth could not be reached for comment.