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Trump digs in on weapons sales, even as evidence undercuts Saudi claims on Khashoggi

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ERDOGAN FOR THE PROSECUTION: Like a prosecutor laying out his opening arguments, Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** this morning formally presented to members of his ruling party the evidence he believes shows that Saudi Arabia brazenly murdered Saudi journalist **Jamal Khashoggi**, and then lied repeatedly to cover it up. Turkey has already leaked much of the damning evidence to the media, including security camera video showing that the Saudis apparently brought in a man to serve as a body double hours before Khashoggi died, and then dressed him in Khashoggi's clothes to create the false impression that the Washington Post columnist left the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul alive.

But much of Erdogan's speech focused on unanswered questions, such as who specifically carried out the execution, and where is the body? He also accused the Saudis of plotting to murder Khashoggi days before his death, according to the [AP](#).

CIA Director **Gina Haspel** is now in Turkey to review the evidence and assist Turkey as it continues to probe the death.

DIGGING IN ON ARMS SALES: Even as **President Trump** seems to be coming around to the idea that his valued ally in the effort to counter Iran may have committed an egregious human rights abuse, he is showing no signs of giving up what he considers a signature achievement of his administration: securing an agreement last year for Saudi Arabia to buy \$110 billion worth of "defense capabilities."

In May of 2017, when [the deal was announced](#), the White House said it would expand opportunities for American companies *in the region*, and potentially create "tens of thousands of new jobs in the United States."

As evidence has mounted of Saudi Arabia's guilt in the Khashoggi case, the president's estimate of the value and jobs created by the deal has grown as well. 10 days ago Trump told reporters it would mean 450,000 jobs. Three days later it was 500,000 jobs. The next day it was 600,000 jobs. Now we're up to one million. And the dollar value deal has grown four-fold as well.

“I don’t want to lose all of that investment that’s being made in our country. I don’t want to lose a million jobs. I don’t want to lose a \$110 billion in terms of investment. But it’s really \$450 billion if you include other than military. So that’s very important,” Trump told reporters yesterday.

DEEP DIVE ON THE REAL DEAL: Sorting through the complex package of deals, some left over from the previous administration, some more a promise of future deals than a solid commitment, is no easy task. In this week’s *Washington Examiner* magazine, we take a closer look into what is known about Trump’s arms deal and what is at stake.

WHAT WE KNOW: The president described the Saudi deal as among the largest in history. But determining the status and details of arms sales is often “fiendishly complicated stuff,” according to **Richard Aboulafia**, the vice president of analysis at the Teal Group. Few details have been released on what U.S. weapons contracts the Saudis have signed or may sign. The U.S. is now working to finalize contracts on about \$14.5 billion for “helicopters, tanks, ships, weapons, and training.”

That is not yet near historic levels. The biggest single year for Saudi arms was 2012 with \$35 billion in agreements, according to the Pentagon. A total of about \$64 billion in deals was made during the Obama administration. Trump’s deal was from the beginning mostly aspirational. Only about \$24 billion of its total \$110 billion value was linked to concrete sales proposals floated previously by the Obama administration and already cleared through Congress. The rest was an understanding between Trump and the Saudis that future deals would happen.

LOCKHEED’S BIG STAKE: Among the six Obama holdover deals worth \$24 billion was a potential \$11 billion sale of Lockheed Martin Freedom-variant littoral combat ships to the kingdom. Trump’s State Department has since cleared nearly \$20 billion worth of additional Saudi arms proposals through Congress. Of those, the lion’s share could come from the \$15 billion sale of Lockheed Martin’s Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, to the kingdom, which was noticed to lawmakers a year ago. Lockheed declined to comment on the status of the THAAD or the littoral combat ship deals.

HAPPENING TODAY — DINNER WITH THE BRASS: Trump is scheduled to get a briefing from “senior military leaders” at 6 p.m. in the White House Cabinet Room, followed by a private dinner in the State Dining Room. Presumably, that includes members of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, but the White House has not published a guest list.

WAS MATTIS IN THE LOOP? Defense Secretary **Jim Mattis** was just landing at Joint Base Andrews after a 20-plus-hour non-stop flight back to Washington from Singapore when Trump announced Saturday night his intention to withdraw from the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia. This month in Brussels, Mattis said the U.S. was focused on pressuring Russia to come back into compliance with the 1987 treaty, which bans medium-range ground-launched missiles, but that the response to Russian violations would be the president’s call.

Yesterday the Pentagon couldn’t, or wouldn’t, say if Mattis was consulted or even informed of Trump’s decision ahead of his Saturday announcement to reporters in Nevada. Pentagon spokesman **Col. Rob Manning** read a pro forma statement yesterday insisting the secretary “is

completely aligned with the president” and “is in close contact with the president” before referring all question to the White House.

But Manning did not say whether Trump had spoken to Mattis last week while he was half a world away in Vietnam and Singapore. Nor did he say whether Mattis has weighed in on the decision to scrap the treaty, which took European allies by surprise.

‘YOU CAN’T PLAY THAT GAME ON ME’: Yesterday Trump said he’s willing to start a new arms race if that’s what it takes to bring other countries to their senses. “We have more money than anybody else, by far. We’ll build it up. Until they come to their senses,” Trump told reporters. when asked if he was prepared to build up the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Trump said he has not talked directly to Russian President **Vladimir Putin** about his decision. “I don’t have to speak to him. I don’t have to speak. I’m terminating the agreement because they violated the agreement. I’m terminating the agreement,” Trump said.

National security adviser **John Bolton** is in Moscow meeting with Russian officials, including an expected face-to-face with Putin. One big objection is that the treaty made with the former Soviet Union doesn’t include China, which has a vast arsenal of the kind of missiles that are banned for the U.S. and Russia. “China is not included in the agreement. They should be included in the agreement,” Trump said.

Trump says his withdrawal from the treaty is a warning that the U.S. will not be disadvantaged when it comes to military might. “It’s a threat to whoever you want. And it includes China, and it includes Russia, and it includes anybody else that wants to play that game. You can’t do that. You can’t play that game on me.”

CAN HE DO THAT? Can Trump abrogate the INF Treaty by presidential fiat? In a word, “yes.” Despite some outcry from **Sens. Bob Menendez** and **Rand Paul**, Congress has few options to stop the move, experts say. “Treaties are typically the purview of the executive, and thus Congress can do very little to stop the administration's plan to withdraw from the INF,” **Caroline Dorminey**, a policy analyst with Cato Institute’s defense and foreign policy studies department, wrote in an email.

In 2002, former **Rep. Dennis Kucinich**, an Ohio Democrat, and a group of House lawmakers sued President **George W. Bush** over his withdrawal from an anti-ballistic missile treaty originally signed with the Soviet Union. That case was thrown out of court. “Members of Congress who have tried to litigate their treaty policy differences with the president have been disappointed every time,” **Melanie Marlowe**, a fellow at Carnegie Mellon University’s Institute for Politics and Strategy, wrote in an email.

3Q EARNINGS: The top five major defense contractors release their third-quarter earnings this week. Lockheed Martin is today, followed by Northrop Grumman, Boeing and General Dynamics tomorrow, and ending with Raytheon on Thursday.

INSIDER ATTACK: A NATO coalition service member was killed and two other unidentified troops were wounded in Afghanistan on Monday in what appears to be an insider attack, the Pentagon said. The attack occurred in Herat province in western Afghanistan and initial reports indicate it was committed by a member of the Afghan security forces. The killing comes just

days after the Taliban claimed responsibility for an attack in Kandahar that wounded a U.S. one-star general and killed two senior Afghan officials.

NO, HE DIDN'T: The Pentagon said Monday that it has not received any orders to send more troops to the U.S.-Mexico border following a tweet by Trump declaring an approaching migrant caravan a national emergency. As of Monday morning, there was no change in the border deployment of 2,100 National Guard troops, which have been assisting the Department of Homeland Security since April, Manning said.

U.S. DEFENDS MOSQUE BOMBING: At that briefing yesterday, Manning defended a coalition airstrike that leveled a Syrian mosque near the Iraq border as U.S.-backed forces try to eliminate the last pocket of the Islamic State in Syria. Manning said the mosque lost its protected status as a religious sanctuary when ISIS turned it into a command-and-control center.

“This is the second attack in a week where ISIS’ misuse of a mosque violates the law of land warfare and made those mosques military targets,” Manning said. “Our in-depth monitoring of ISIS ... made us aware when only ISIS fighters would be present.”