

THE 'DEEP STATE' DOES IT EXIST?

President Donald Trump rails against it all the time. But what is it? And does it even exist?

Trump's latest salvo against the shadowy forces he sees as ranged against him came after The New York Times published an opinion piece by someone identified as a "senior administration official." The anonymous author claimed to be a member of the "Resistance" inside Trump's administration, "working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations."

"It may be a Deep State person that's been there a long time," Trump complained to the show "Fox and Friends," speculating on the identity of the author.

"The Deep State and the Left, and their vehicle, the Fake News Media, are going Crazy - & they don't know what to do," he tweeted, lumping his favorite villains together.

Like the "Deep State" itself, the origins of the term are shrouded in mystery.

Some political observers see the "Deep State" as the heir to the "military-industrial complex" warned about by former president Dwight D Eisenhower. Some have used the phrase to refer to the military power structures behind ostensibly democratic regimes in countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey.

For some, the "Deep State" is the thousands of federal government employees who soldier on through changes in administration.

"The Deep State is, in fact, a very real thing," geopolitical analyst George Friedman wrote in The Huffington Post. "It is, however, neither a secret nor nearly as glamorous as the concept might indicate."

"This entity is called the civil service, and it was created to limit the power of the president."

The anonymous author of the piece in The New York Times lent some credence to this explanation, seeking to reassure readers there are "adults in the room."

"This isn't the work of the so-called Deep State," he or she wrote. "It's the work of the steady state."

Writing in The Guardian in April, Jack Goldsmith, a law professor at Harvard, said the "Deep State," such as it is, is "national security bureaucrats who use secretly collected information to shape or curb the actions of elected officials."

If the "Deep State" does indeed exist, leaks to the press -- Trump's "enemy of the people" -- are its currency.

"Since Trump was elected, unusually sensitive leaks of intelligence information designed to discredit him and his senior leadership have poured forth from current and former intelligence officials in the Deep State," Goldsmith said. SOURCE: AFP



An Iraqi protester stands flashing the victory gesture outside the burning headquarters of the Iranian consulate in the southern city of Basra on Friday. Inset, An Iraqi protester sets an Iranian flag on fire during the violent demonstration. PHOTO: AFP



DAMNING ANONYMOUS OP-ED IN NYT

Trump demands criminal probe

Donald Trump on Friday urged his attorney general to investigate the anonymous author of a damning op-ed, escalating his long-running battles with the media and highlighting his suspicions that people are seeking to overthrow his presidency.

Trump, battling one of the deepest crises in his 20-month presidency, has raged about Wednesday's searing essay, branding its unidentified writer a "gutless" coward and accusing The New York Times of borderline treason for publishing it.

"I would say Jeff (Sessions) should be investigating who the author of that piece was because I really believe it's national security," Trump told reporters traveling with him in North Dakota.

"The Times should never have done that, because really what they've done is virtually, you know, it's treason," the president said in an interview with Fox News broadcast earlier Friday.

Asked on Air Force One whether action should be taken against the Times, Trump said "I'm looking at that right now."

Trump appeared to be calling for a criminal investigation despite there being no indication that the mystery author broke any laws by releasing his extraordinary column, which detailed how "unsung heroes" were quietly working within the administration to frustrate an amoral president's "worst inclinations."

Violent protests grip Iraq

Iraq vows action after Iran consulate burnt down, rocket fired at airport

Basra airport was targeted by rocket fire yesterday after a night of protests over perceived misrule by Iraq's political elite during which demonstrators torched the Iranian consulate and briefly took oilfield workers hostage.

Iraqi security sources said three Katyusha rockets fired by unknown assailants had hit the perimeter of the airport, although no damage or casualties had been reported.

An official at the Iraqi airport said there was no disruption to operations, and flights were taking off and landing as normal.

Basra, Iraq's second biggest city, has been roiled by five days of deadly demonstrations, in which government buildings have been ransacked and set alight by protesters angry over political corruption. Protests first erupted in July over poor government services, but intensified this week.

At least 13 protesters have died, some in clashes with security forces, since Monday and dozens more have

been wounded.

On Friday, protesters broke into the Iranian consulate, shouting condemnation of what many perceive as Iran's sway over Iraq's political affairs, and set it alight. Iran and Iraq both strongly condemned the move, raising fears of possible retribution.

Another group of protesters entered a water treatment facility linked to the

POOR PUBLIC SERVICES

Iraq parliament holds emergency talks/ PM describes unrest as 'political sabotage'

West Qurna 2 oilfield, held two Iraqi employees hostage for about an hour before leaving peacefully. Production was not disrupted, a manager at the oilfield said.

Parliament convened an emergency session to discuss the escalating crisis in Basra on yesterday afternoon, when Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi warned against the politicisation of

the crisis.

"Politics should be separated from security and services," he said, warning that the situation could descend into armed conflict.

At a cabinet meeting earlier yesterday, ministers agreed to send a delegation to Basra, and Abadi said he had ordered an investigation into the security forces "for not fulfilling their duties" in protecting government buildings and the Iranian consulate.

Meanwhile, two leading groups in Iraq's parliament yesterday called on Abadi to resign.

"We demand the government apologise to the people and resign immediately," said Hassan al-Aqouli, spokesman for the list of populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr which won the most seats in a May election.

Ahmed al-Assadi, spokesman for the second-largest Conquest Alliance list, denounced "the government's failure to resolve the crisis in Basra", a southern city where 12 protesters have been killed this week.

Syrian rebels planning imminent 'provocation'

Says Russia as US draws plan in case of chemical attack

Russia yesterday said it had "irrefutable information" Syrian rebels were planning an imminent "provocation" in Idlib province to justify Western intervention.

Moscow has long said anti-regime groups in the last major rebel bastion were planning an attack on civilians, as Russian and regime strikes on the province intensify.

"Those taking part in the staging of provocations should be fully ready by the evening of September 8," the Russian military's spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a statement.

He said Moscow had evidence leaders of "terrorist" groups had gathered in Idlib and were being aided by the White Helmets volunteer rescue service.

In April, the US, France and Britain launched joint missile strikes on Syrian targets in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack in the town of Douma that left scores of people dead.

Russia stuck by its ally Syria and angrily insisted the Douma attack was staged by the White Helmets.

The accusation came as America's top general yesterday said he was involved in "routine dialogue" with the White House about military options should Syria ignore US warnings against using chemical weapons in an expected assault on the enclave of Idlib.

Marine General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said no decision had been made by the United States to employ military force in response to a future chemical attack in Syria.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has massed his army and allied forces on the front lines in the northwest, and Russian planes have joined his bombardment of rebels there, in a prelude to a widely expected assault despite objections from Turkey.

This week, a top US envoy said there was "lots of evidence" that chemical weapons were being prepared by Syrian government forces in Idlib.

LOOMING BATTLE FOR IDLIB

US military investing \$2b for 'AI Next'

The Pentagon's research wing said Friday it was investing \$2 billion to develop a new generation of artificial intelligence with "human-like communication" skills.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, will use the money to fund around 20 existing projects over the next five years and launch new ones over the next 12 months seeking a higher level of machine learning, the agency's director Steven Walker told reporters near Washington.

"We are making multiple research investments aimed at transforming computers from specialized tools to partners in problem-solving," said Walker, referring to the new generation of machines as "AI Next."

The current generation of smart machines and robots cannot be easily updated when new technology appears, and researchers want them to learn to update themselves, he said.

The new smart machines will be designed to help speed up security clearance vetting or accelerated accreditation of software systems, the agency said.

Most of DARPA's research, which is entirely funded by the Pentagon, is focused on technologies that can be used in combat, such as drones that are becoming ever more autonomous.

Another use could be DARPA's Blackjack project, which aims to develop a constellation of low-orbit satellites that will communicate with one another and can continuously cover military operations.



People hold banners as they take part in a march yesterday in Marseille, southern France, as part of a global day of action "Rise For Climate." The United States, despite withdrawing from Paris Climate Accord aimed at curbing climate change, is stonewalling vital UN talks over how to fund poorer nations as they battle against global warming, multiple sources told AFP yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Ex-Trump campaign aide jailed

A former advisor to US President Donald Trump whose contacts with Russians set off the investigation into possible collusion with Moscow was jailed Friday for lying to the FBI.

US District Judge Randolph Moss sentenced foreign policy aide George Papadopoulos to 14 days in prison, acknowledging his guilty plea and his remorse, but noting that he "lied in an investigation that was important to national security."

Papadopoulos was the second person ordered to prison in the sprawling, 16-month Russia collusion investigation of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. It came just over two weeks after two former top Trump aides were convicted of felony crimes in cases that grew out of the probe.

Trump suggested the conviction was trivial for a probe that has cost millions since it launched in May 2017 -- while ignoring the 35 indictments, five guilty pleas and one trial conviction Mueller has racked up so far.

"14 days for \$28 MILLION - \$2 MILLION a day, No Collusion. A great day for America!" Trump tweeted.

Papadopoulos, 31, was an inexperienced London-based oil analyst when he joined the Trump campaign in March 2016 on the Republican candidate's national security advisory board.

Told the campaign's priority was to improve relations with Russia, within weeks Papadopoulos made contact with a mysterious professor, Joseph Mifsud, who touted links to the Kremlin.

Mifsud introduced him to others who ostensibly had connections to Russian President Vladimir Putin -- including a woman who claimed to be Putin's niece.

At a campaign meeting at the end of March 2016 Papadopoulos told Trump, then-senator and now Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and other campaign officials that he had connections in London that could set up a Trump-Putin meeting ahead of the November election.

Papadopoulos told CNN in a late Friday interview that Trump "gave me a sort of a nod" and "wasn't committed either way" at that meeting -- but that Sessions "was actually enthusiastic" about a Trump-Putin gathering.

He also said that Mifsud told him in April that the Russians had "thousands of emails" about Clinton -- which Papadopoulos described as a "momentous statement" but not a direct offer of assistance.

Weeks later, the stolen Clinton emails were posted online by what US intelligence chiefs now say were Russian intelligence actors.



RUSSIA PROBE

China not saddling Pakistan with debt

Says Beijing's top diplomat

The Chinese government's top diplomat defended Beijing's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative during a visit to Pakistan yesterday, rejecting criticism the project has saddled Pakistan with expensive debt.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Pakistan for a three-day visit in the first high-level meetings between the neighbours since new Prime Minister Imran Khan took office.

Beijing has pledged \$57 billion in loans for Pakistan as part of its vast Belt and Road initiative, deepening ties at a time when Islamabad's relations with Washington are fraying over how to deal with Islamist militants waging war in Afghanistan.

Whether China was overburdening Pakistan with debt has become a sore point for both nations, who both say the loans are sustainable, after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in July warned any potential International Monetary Fund bailout for Pakistan's troubled economy should not provide funds to pay off Chinese lenders.

Wang said the Pakistani portion of the Belt and Road initiative, known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has helped increase economic growth by 1-2 percent and has contributed 70,000 jobs.



US sends Iran messages 'every day' for talks: Rouhani

The United States constantly sends messages to Iran to begin negotiations, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday in a speech broadcast on state television.

Tensions ramped up between Iran and the United States after President Donald Trump pulled out of a landmark nuclear deal with Iran in May and reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic last month.

Trump has said he would meet Iran's leaders.

"From one side they try to pressure the people of Iran, on another side they send us messages every day through various methods that we should come and negotiate together," Rouhani said.

He added, "[They say] we should negotiate here, we should negotiate there. We want to resolve the issues... should we see your message?... or should we see your brutish actions?"

Washington aims to force Tehran to end its nuclear program and its support of militant groups in Syria and Iraq.

US sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector are scheduled to be reimposed in November.

Iran is facing an "economic, psychological and propaganda war", Rouhani said Saturday, pointing to America and Israel as the Islamic Republic's main enemies.

NEWSIN brief

Trump says expecting 'positive' Kim letter
AFP, Fargo

US President Donald Trump said Friday he was expecting a "positive" new letter from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, indicating that negotiations on denuclearizing the peninsula remain alive after weeks of apparent deadlock. Kim on Thursday renewed his commitment to the goal of denuclearization.

Yemen talks falter
AFP, Geneva

Long awaited UN-backed talks between Yemen's warring parties sputtered out yesterday before ever truly starting, after the Huthi rebels refused to travel to Geneva and fresh fighting broke out on the ground. Nearly 10,000 people have been killed in the conflict since Saudi Arabia and its allies intervened in Yemen in 2015.

Japan quake toll rises to 35
AFP, Tokyo

The death toll from a powerful quake that triggered landslides in northern Japan rose to 35 yesterday, as tens of thousands of rescue workers raked through the mud for survivors. Public broadcaster NHK said five people were still unaccounted for.

5 killed in Nepal chopper crash
AFP, Kathmandu

A helicopter crashed into a hillside in central Nepal yesterday, killing five on board, including a Japanese tourist, officials said. One woman survived the crash with injuries but another passenger is still missing. The single-pilot Kathmandu-bound took off with 6 passengers from the central district of