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Celebrities flock to Austin for 2018 South By Southwest Film Festival

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Southern DAILY

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Trump fires Tillerson, a moderate; replaces him with hawkish spy chief Pompeo

LWASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday after a series of public rifts over policy on North Korea, Russia and Iran, replacing his chief diplomat with loyalist CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

The biggest shakeup of Trump's Cabinet since he took office in January 2017 was announced by the president on Twitter as his administration works toward a potential meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un after months of harsh rhetoric and rising tensions on Pyongyang's nuclear program.

The rare firing of the United States' top diplomat capped months of friction between the Republican president and the 65-year-old former Exxon Mobil Corp chief executive. The tensions peaked last fall amid reports Tillerson had called Trump a "moron" and considered resigning. Tillerson never denied using the word.

Critics expressed dismay at the decision to swap out top diplomats so soon before the unprecedented meeting and worried that Pompeo would encourage Trump to scrap the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and be hawkish on North Korea.

Critics said the move would sow more instability in the volatile Trump administration and marks the departure of another moderate who sought to emphasize the United States' strong ties to its allies amid Trump's criticism.

Trump announced the changes in a morning Twitter post and later told reporters more about why he removed Tillerson. "We got along actually quite well but we disagreed on things," Trump said. "When you look at the Iran deal: I think it's terrible, I guess he thinks it was OK. I wanted to break it or do something, and he felt a little bit differently."

At the State Department, a visibly emotional Tillerson said Trump called him around noon from Air Force One, hours after he was summarily dismissed via Twitter. Tillerson also spoke with White House Chief of Staff John Kelly.

He said his tenure ends on March 31 but he would delegate his responsibilities to John Sullivan, deputy secretary of state, at the end of Tuesday.

"What is most important is to ensure an orderly and smooth transition during a time that the country continues to face significant policy and national security challenges," Tillerson, whose voice quivered at times, told reporters in a packed briefing room.

He pointedly declined to thank Trump personally or praise him, as he has done

on previous occasions, but emphasized his strong relationship with Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis. Together, the two were seen as a moderating influence on some of Trump's policies.

However, Tillerson, also presided over a State Department which saw its role vastly diminished, with several high-profile posts unoccupied and many allies questioning the efficacy of dealing with a diplomat they suspected never had Trump's ear.

In contrast, Trump said he and Pompeo have "a similar thought process."

Pompeo, a former Army officer who represented a Kansas district in the House of Representatives before taking the Central Intelligence Agency job, is seen as a Trump loyalist who has enjoyed a less hostile relationship with career spies than Tillerson had with career diplomats.

Trump chose the CIA's deputy director, Gina Haspel, to replace Pompeo there. A veteran CIA clandestine officer, Haspel is backed by many in the U.S. intelligence community but is regarded warily by some in Congress for her involvement in the agency's "black site" detention facilities.

Senior White House officials said Trump wanted his new team in place before any summit with Kim, who invited the U.S. president to meet by May after months of escalating tensions over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

Tillerson listed several foreign policy objectives Washington was working on and singled out Russia for its "troubling behavior and actions."

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson speaks to the media at the U.S. State Department after being fired by President Donald Trump in Washington, U.S. March 13, 2018. REUTERS/Leah

Stocks were lower in the afternoon, shaking off early gains on data showing slowing consumer price inflation, on uncertainty about Tillerson's dismissal and replacement by Pompeo.

"Pompeo is known to be a real hawk on trade and foreign policy," said Jim Awad, senior managing director at Hartland & Co in New York. "There's nobody to be a check and balance on Trump. It's been unsettling to the market within the context of what we see now in the economy, which is a favorable backdrop."

Tillerson's imminent departure had been rumored for several months, and Trump said he and Tillerson had discussed the move. State Department officials said Tillerson did not know why he was being pushed out and had intended to stay. One of them, Steven Golstein, was fired later on Tuesday, after he contradicted the White House's version.

Foreign policy experts from Republican and Democratic administrations also ques-



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson speaks to the media at the U.S. State Department after being fired by President Donald Trump in Washington

tioned Trump's timing and choice, noting that Pompeo was known as a political partisan with hawkish views.

Evans Revere, a former senior U.S. diplomat who dealt with North Korea under President George W. Bush, said Trump's move sends "a bad signal about the role of diplomacy."

"Tillerson's replacement by ... Pompeo, who is known as a political partisan and an opponent of the Iran agreement, raises the prospect of the collapse of that deal, and increases the possibility that the administration might soon face not one, but two nuclear crises," he said.

Senior White House officials said Chief of Staff Kelly had asked Tillerson to step down on Friday but did not want to make it public while he was on a trip to Africa. Trump's Twitter announcement came only a few hours after Tillerson, who cut his trip to Africa short, landed in Washington.

Tillerson appeared to be caught by surprise last week when Trump announced he had accepted Kim's invitation to meet.

Tillerson joined a long list of senior officials who have either resigned or been fired since Trump took office.

Trump publicly undercut Tillerson's diplomatic initiatives numerous times.

Last year Tillerson said the United States was directly communicating with North Korea but that Pyongyang had shown no interest in dialogue. Trump contradicted Tillerson's efforts a day later.

"I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man," Trump wrote on Twitter, using a pejorative nickname for Kim.

Tillerson and Mattis had pressed a skeptical Trump to stick with the nuclear agreement with Iran and other world powers, and Tillerson has taken a more hawkish view than Trump on Russia.

Tillerson had emerged as a vocal critic on Russia - for its role in the annexation of Crimea, support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and alleged meddling in the U.S. election. He also singled out Russia for its apparent role in the Soviet-era nerve weapon used to poison a former Russian double agent in Britain - a position that initially diverged from the White House.

If confirmed by the U.S. Senate after an April committee hearing, Pompeo will be taking over a State Department shaken by the departures of many senior diplomats and embittered by proposed budget cuts.

Lawmakers from both major parties have criticized those cuts and the administration's failure to fill dozens of open jobs there. But over time, many lawmakers grew to appreciate Tillerson as a relatively steady hand in the chaotic Trump administration.

"I've talked to the president many, many times and I know Secretary Tillerson. I'm very aware of the relationship," said Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker, a Republican. "And as I've mentioned publicly, I thought there was a reprieve that was under way since about the beginning of December, but, look."

Tillerson said he would now return to private life.

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U.S. drillers boost oil hedging to guarantee 2018 shale surge

By Collin Eaton

U.S. shale drillers have locked in higher prices for almost half of the oil they plan to pump this year, with oil hedges climbing above the historical average as producers take advantage of \$60 a barrel oil. After the fourth quarter, U.S. oil companies increased their 2018 oil hedges to 48 percent, up from 30 percent after the third quarter, Goldman Sachs said in a new report. The bank said the increased protection on

future production will mean these drillers can boost their output and avoid spending more cash than they're generating, one major goal investors have set for the U.S. shale industry this year. "We believe the continued rise in 2018 producer hedging facilitates (oil companies') plans for capital discipline, reducing cash flow volatility," Goldman analysts wrote in the note to clients. Most U.S. shale oil companies, Goldman said, have hedged more than 50 percent of their 2018 oil production. U.S. oil prices dropped 61 cents in early trading Tuesday to \$60.75 a barrel.



Celebrities flock to Austin for 2018 South By Southwest Film Festival

Austin's annual South by Southwest (SXSW) kicked off Friday, March 9 and welcomed a slew of big-name celebrities for various screenings, debuts and panels. The festival opened its 31st year with big premieres of films "The Last O.G." and "Blockers." Big names such as Matthew McConaughey, Mandy Moore, Olivia Wilde, Hugh Jackman, Mark Hamill, and Emily Blunt were spotted at the festival. SXSW also hosted interviews with Gordon Ramsay, Andrew Zimmern, Elon Musk and Bernie Sanders. At the start of the SXSW festival, Emily Blunt arrived for her premiere debut in the latest horror project 'A Quiet Place'. She talks about the monsters in the film as well as what she thinks its really about. Check it out. SXSW is scheduled to end March 18, which means Texas can expect to see many other celebrities over the course of the event. at the Harvard Club, a private social club in Boston. This year, attendees came from 70 countries and featured 500 speakers.



Actors Matthew McConaughey and Ashton Kutcher pose for a photo at the the Sound Ventures Tech Competition, PerfectPitch, at SXSW at Hotel Van Zandt on March 10, 2018 in Austin, Texas.

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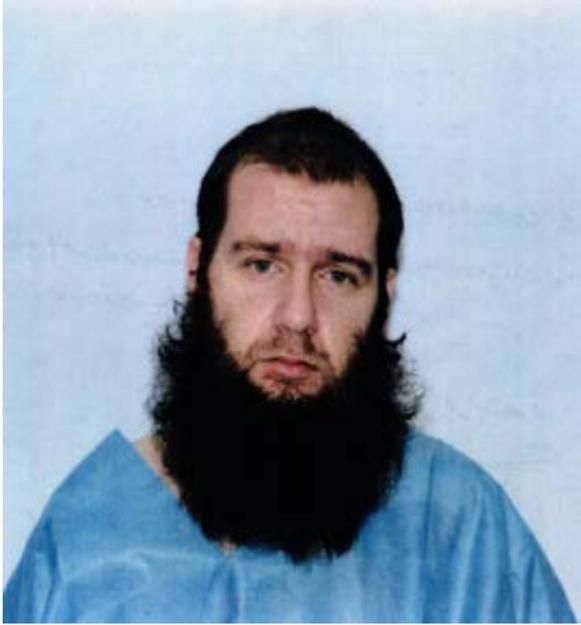
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A Snapshot Of The World



FILE PHOTO: Muhanad Mahmoud Al-Farekh, an American citizen, is pictured in this handout photo obtained by Reuters September 29, 2017. U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York/Handout via REUTERS



Boeing celebrates the 10,000th 737 to come off the production line in Renton



FILE PHOTO: UNHAS members evacuate bodies of three aid workers, who were killed during an attack in the town of Rann, at Maiduguri Airport



U.S. President Trump participates in a tour of U.S.-Mexico border wall prototypes near Otay Mesa Port of Entry in San Diego, California



Republican candidate Saccone casts his vote in Pennsylvania's 18th U.S. congressional district special election in McKeesport



People hold signs during a protest while standing in front of the current border fence and near the prototypes of U.S. President Donald Trump's border wall, in Tijuana



Horse Racing - Cheltenham Festival - Cheltenham Racecourse, Cheltenham, Britain - March 13, 2018 Racegoers during the Cheltenham Festival REUTERS



U.S. President Trump arrives at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, California.



Newly married bride and groom stand on East 42nd street in Manhattan in New York City



“A lot of people are eating seafood all the time, and fish are eating plastic all the time, so I think that’s a problem,” says a marine toxicologist.

We’ve long known that the fish we eat are exposed to toxic chemicals in the rivers, bays and oceans they inhabit. The substance that’s gotten the most attention — because it has shown up at disturbingly high levels in some fish — is mercury. But mercury is just one of a slew of synthetic and organic pollutants that fish can ingest and absorb into their tissue. Sometimes it’s because we’re dumping chemicals right into the ocean. But as a study published recently in *Nature*, Scientific Reports helps illuminate, sometimes fish get chemicals from the plastic debris they ingest.

“The ocean is basically a toilet bowl for all of our chemical pollutants and waste in general,” says Chelsea Rochman, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis, who authored the study. “Eventually, we start to see those contaminants high up in the food chain, in seafood and wildlife.”

For many years, scientists have known that chemicals will move up the food chain as predators absorb the chemicals consumed by their prey. That’s why the biggest, fattiest fish, like tuna and swordfish, tend to have the

How Plastic In The Ocean Is Contaminating America’s Seafood

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

highest levels of mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other dioxins. (And that’s concerning, given that canned tuna was the second most popular fish consumed in the U.S. in 2012, according to the National Fisheries Institute.)

What scientists didn’t know was exactly what role plastics played in transferring these chemicals into the food chain. To find out, Rochman and her co-authors fed medaka, a fish species often used in experiments, three different diets.

One group of medaka got regular fish food, one group got a diet that was 10 percent “clean” plastic (with no pollutants) and a third group got a diet with 10 percent plastic that had been soaking in the San Diego Bay for several months. When they tested the fish two months later, they found that the ones on the marine plastic diet had much higher levels of persistent organic pollutants.

food counter has consumed this much plastic, Rochman’s findings do have implications for human health, she notes. “A lot of people are eating seafood all the time, and fish are eating plastic all the time, so I think that’s a problem.”

And there’s a lot of plastic out there in the open ocean. As Edward Humes, author of *Garbology*, told Fresh Air’s Terry Gross in 2012, the weight of plastic finding its way into the sea each year is estimated to be equivalent to the weight of 40 aircraft carriers.

be of concern.

The Environmental Protection Agency does put out advisories to warn consumers when fish get contaminated with chemicals in local U.S. waters. But a lot of our seafood now comes from foreign waters, which the EPA does not monitor. Just a tiny fraction of imported fish get tested for contaminants.

As for Rochman, she says her research in marine toxicology has persuaded her to eat seafood no more than twice per week. And she now avoids



swordfish altogether. (Courtesy <https://www.npr.org/sections>)



Top items found in the “Great Pacific Garbage Patch.”

Consider the five massive gyres of trash particles swirling around in the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific oceans alone. Those gyres, Hume told Gross, contain “plastic that has been weathered and broken down by the elements into these little bits, and it’s getting into the food chain.”

One of those gyres is the infamous Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Fish could encounter the plastic in those gyres, but also much closer to shore, says Rochman. Even so, the consensus in the public health community still seems to be that the benefits of eating fish — because of their omega-3 fatty acids, among other assets — exceed the potential risks. And many researchers advocating for Americans to increase their fish consumption argue that the levels of dioxins, PCBs and other toxic chemicals in fish are generally too low to



Seafood in grocery stores may have been caught in parts of the polluted ocean.

“Plastics — when they end up in the ocean — are a sponge for chemicals already out there,” says Rochman. “We found that when the plastic interacts with the juices in the [fish’s] stomach, the chemicals come off of plastic and are transferred into the bloodstream or tissue.”

The fish on the marine plastic diet were also more likely to have tumors and liver problems.

While it’s impossible to know whether any given fish you buy at the sea-

Professor David Suzuki

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Chinese President Xi Jinping Will Lead China Into The Future

China's parliament voted to repeal presidential term limits, allowing President Xi Jinping to keep power indefinitely in a formal break from succession rules set up after Mao Zedong's turbulent rule.

All but five of the almost 3,000 National People's Congress deputies present Sunday supported the measure to strike a constitutional provision barring the president from serving more than two consecutive terms.

The vote -- never in doubt -- gives Xi more time to enact plans to centralize party control, increase global clout and curb financial and environmental risks.

Before Sunday's vote in Beijing, U.S. President Donald Trump had joked that Xi was "now president for life."

Delegates stand in line to cast their ballots.

"In the long run, the change may bring some uncertainties, like 'key man' risk," Yanmei Xie, a China policy analyst for Gavel Dragonomics in Beijing, said before the vote.

China has cracked down on online criticism of Xi's power play, even as shares of companies with "king" or "emperor" in their names surged after the amendment was unveiled.

Chinese Constitution Was Revised In The Parliamentary Session

China Scraps Presidential Term Limits Clearing Way for Xi's Indefinite Rule

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

hai Composite Index has declined 1 percent since then, compared with a 1.9 percent decline in the MSCI Asia-Pacific Index. The move to repeal the 36-year-old term limits provision is part of a package of amendments to China's constitution. They include: Inserting Xi's name alongside Mao's and Deng's

People Daily newspaper said in a commentary published Wednesday, citing the lesson of the Soviet Union's collapse. Neither of Xi's other two main titles -- party leader and commander-in-chief of the military -- come with term limits.

to rule in this way; they have needed to balance power interests and continually watch rivals over their shoulders. The way recent leaders have been selected, too, has been through a process of waiting in line while balancing rivalries within the community of the super-elite.



Xi when he was a young student in China.

Xi Jinping, son of Xi Zhongxun, a confederate of Mao, is a "princeling" of the bluest blood, but shows no particular sign of intellectual acumen. He found himself at the top in China at a time when the country was facing crisis on many fronts.

Understandingly, but unimaginatively, he turned toward ideal formulas of his father's generation of Communists: frugal living, egalitarianism and personal rule by "good" people.

In more recent times, anti-corruption drives in China have been used to pursue two kinds of quick pay-off: they attract popular support and they are a way to take down a political rival.

exactly this kind of demagoguery.



Xi as a university student.

But the notion that an anti-corruption campaign -- and a broader return to the roots of the revolution -- can be a way out of the crises that China faces today shows only Xi's intellectual weakness.

One can only wonder, too, at Xi Jinping's grasp of history. The corrupt people and businesses that the Communist Party was targeting when its selfless ideology was taking shape were the Party's political adversaries.



Xi winning approval of the members of the Chinese government.

more could rock the stability of the regime, and annihilation of the entire corrupt elite would mean self-annihilation. (Xi's own family, as revealed by Bloomberg News in 2012, is worth hundreds of millions of dollars.)

Xi Jinping is no Mao, and China should be grateful for that. One Mao was enough. But what might unfold from a modestly gifted man who thinks he can be a Mao is also cause for considerable apprehension.



A screen showing the result of a vote to repeal presidential term limits.

Sunday's result was even more lopsided. There were only three abstentions and two "no" votes out of 2,964 votes cast, meaning that 99.8 percent supported the measures.

Rare Dissent

Still, the proposal to repeal term limits prompted unusually open expressions of dissent. Li Datong, a former senior editor at the official China Youth Daily newspaper, wrote a public letter urging legislators to oppose the move.

The leadership defended the move, with Xi telling a group of delegates from the southern province of Guangdong that the constitutional amendments reflected "the common will of the party and people."

Is Xi Jinping China's New Mao-Like Strongman?



Hong Kong -- Xi Jinping and his associates at the top levels of the Chinese government have been on the move. They have been pushing a society-wide anti-corruption campaign, targeting in particular some high-ranking rivals.

Mao Zedong is the best model for all of this, but Xi Jinping is no Mao, and how things will actually end up is anyone's guess.

Both Mao and his first successor, Deng Xiaoping, were shrewd and powerful men who could dictate ideas and then either force or manipulate others into obedience.

Advertisement for 雲天燒腊麵食家 (Yun Tian BBQ Noodle House) featuring various dishes and prices.

Advertisement for 中美酒樓 (Chinese American Restaurant) featuring a menu with various dishes and prices.

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