

Iranian officials downplay damage

Trump administration questions assessment from intercepted call

BY JOHN HUDSON AND WARREN P. STROBEL

The United States obtained intercepted communication between senior Iranian officials discussing this month's U.S. military strikes on Iran's nuclear program and remarking that the attack was less devastating than they had expected, said four people familiar with the classified intelligence circulating within the U.S. government.

The communication, intended to be private, included Iranian government officials speculating as to why the strikes directed by President Donald Trump were not as destructive and extensive as they had anticipated, these people said. Like some others, they spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

The intercepted signals intelligence is the latest preliminary information offering a more complicated picture than the one conveyed by the president, who has said the operation "completely and totally obliterated" Iran's nuclear program.

The Trump administration did not dispute the existence of the intercepted communication, which has not been previously reported, but strenuously disagreed with the Iranians' conclusions and cast doubt on their ability to assess the damage at the three nuclear facilities targeted in the U.S. operation.

"It's shameful that The Washington Post is publishing this information," a senior administration official said. "It's a disservice to the American people and to the Iranian people." SEE IRAN ON A7



MATT MCCLAIN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) goes to his office after being on the Senate floor on Sunday. He is working to pass the GOP tax and immigration bill through both congressional chambers by President Donald Trump's self-imposed deadline of July 4.

GOP plan would deliver big cut to U.S. safety net

BY JEFF STEIN

The Senate Republican tax bill speeding to passage includes the biggest reduction of funding for the federal safety net since at least the 1990s, targeting more than \$1 trillion in social spending.

Although the legislation is still estimated to cost more than \$3 trillion over the next decade, the Senate GOP tax bill partially pays for its large price tag by slashing spending on Medicaid and food stamps, which congressional Republicans maintain are rife with fraud.

The tax bill centers on making permanent large tax cuts for individual taxpayers, extending the cuts that Republicans first enacted under President Donald Trump's first term. The bill includes an increase to the standard deduction claimed by most taxpayers, rate reductions for most U.S. households, and a partial version of Trump's plan to end taxes on tipped wages, among many other provisions.

But it offsets these expensive tax cuts in part through what several experts said may prove to be the most dramatic reductions in safety net spending in modern U.S. history. While last-minute changes to the bill text make precise estimates impossible, the legislation appears on track to cut Medicaid by about 18 percent and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by roughly 20 percent, according to estimates based on projections from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

Previously, the biggest recent cut to food stamps was a roughly 14 percent cut approved by Congress during President Bill Clinton's administration in the 1990s, according to Bobby Kogan, a senior policy analyst at the Center for American Progress, a cent-

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SEE SAFETY NET ON A4

Christmas in June is on schedule for 9-year-old

Neighbors go all out for Md. girl with cancer

BY MARISSA J. LANG AND AFIA BARRIE

Kelley Zocks doesn't usually go all out for Christmas. She might hang some twinkly lights, maybe put up a wreath on the red door of her home.

But on the last Saturday in June, following a week of dangerously hot temperatures in the D.C. region, Zocks dotted her walkway with glowing luminaria, set up a red inflatable shopfront announcing "cookies for Santa" outside of her home, propped open lawn chairs and put on a Mrs. Claus costume and wig before loading up a cooler with dozens of chocolate ice pops. Frozen hot cocoa, if you will.

SEE CHRISTMAS ON A16

Hers was one of hundreds of households that signed up to celebrate Christmas in June for a little girl with cancer who might not make it to December. For miles, in the thick heat and humidity, neighbors dressed in holiday apparel gathered to watch the girl and her family wind through streets alight and glowing, like a scene out of a Christmas card.

At a time when crises, global and local, feel constant and far beyond any one person's control, several community members said they felt grateful to be able to do something tangible to help one family find a moment of happiness in the face of certain tragedy.

SEE CHRISTMAS ON A16



ALLISON ROBERT/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Kasey Zachmann, 9, talks with Santa in front of her home in Bethesda on Saturday.

Senate race is on for tax bill

DEBATE CONTINUES AS COST TOPS \$3T

Cuts to Medicaid are a sticking point in GOP

BY JACOB BOGAGE AND THEODORIC MEYER

Senate Republicans spent Sunday marshaling support for the centerpiece of President Donald Trump's second-term agenda, a sprawling tax and immigration package, working to prevent defections after a near-revolt over the weekend.

The GOP is racing to push the mammoth budget proposal across Trump's desk by a self-imposed July 4 deadline, but fissures remain within the party over the cuts to social benefit and anti-poverty programs and the bill's growing price tag.

Lawmakers were debating the measure on the Senate floor through the evening before an onslaught of Democratic amendments was expected starting Monday morning.

The legislation's vulnerabilities began to appear throughout the day. Sen. Thom Tillis (R-North Carolina) announced he would not seek reelection after he could not win changes to the bill to spare his state's rural hospitals from funding cuts. And in the House, a key bloc of conservatives signaled opposition to the bill because it did not reduce federal spending enough.

Still, leaders in the GOP were optimistic about getting the bill passed.

SEE BILL ON A4

Sen. Tillis, who opposes tax bill, won't seek reelection

BY THEODORIC MEYER, LIZ GOODWIN, MARIANA ALFARO AND HANNAH KNOWLES

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis said Sunday that he will not seek reelection next year, less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump threatened him with a primary challenge for opposing Trump's massive tax and immigration bill.

Tillis's decision not to run for a third term scrambles the Senate race in North Carolina. It injects fresh uncertainty into Republicans' push to pass the proposed One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Trump's top legislative priority, by their July 4 deadline. And it underscores the perils for Republicans of defying Trump in a second term in which his grip on the party is stronger than ever.

Tillis, 64, was one of two Republican senators who voted Saturday evening against starting debate on the bill, which he said could cause hundreds of thousands of his constituents to lose Medicaid coverage.

Trump savaged Tillis hours later, calling him a "talker and complainer" who is even worse than Sen. Rand Paul (Kentucky), the other Republican who voted against starting debate.

"Numerous people have come forward wanting to run in the

SEE TILLIS ON A6

Walkinshaw would forge future informed by legacy of his former boss, Connolly

BY TEO ARMUS

In the crowded primary to replace Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Virginia) in Congress, there was only one Democrat who could claim much of a link to the late longtime congressman: Fairfax County Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw.

As the popular lawmaker's chief of staff for a decade, Walkinshaw, 42, had long been seen as a likely successor in Virginia's 11th Congressional District — even well before Connolly's death opened up this seat in the D.C. suburbs. With support from Connolly and the broad political coalition he had built across Fairfax, Walkinshaw managed to win almost 60 percent of the vote in Saturday's election against nine other candidates.

The Braddock District supervisor said he won so convincingly by pitching himself as a "pragmatic progressive" who would protect the district's federal employees from President Donald Trump's cuts while advancing wonky policy changes with broad support.

It was an approach, he said, imparted by his former boss.

"He really felt — and I feel like — the way that you build trust with the people you represent is by being hyperresponsive to them and solving problems for them whenever possible," Walkinshaw said in an interview

Sunday afternoon. "I want to make big change. But I'm willing to accept incremental change if that's what we can win today, and come back and fight for more tomorrow."

The Sept. 9 special election will pit Walkinshaw against Stewart Whitson, a lawyer at a conservative think tank whom Republicans picked as their nominee Saturday. About 40 percent of people who voted in the GOP primary cast their ballots for Whitson, an Army veteran and former FBI staffer.

Yet the starkly different vote totals in the two nominating contests seem to signal an easy road ahead for Walkinshaw: A record-breaking 37,000 Democrats cast ballots in the party's special primary, compared with about 2,600 Republicans. The deep-blue district, which covers all of Fairfax City and most of Fairfax County outside the Belt-

SEE WALKINSHAW ON A5

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