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Date: 12/23/2018 5:53:10 AM  
Subject: Saul's News - Weekly Review December 23rd, 2018

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Saul's News - Weekly Review  
December 23rd, 2018

Merry Christmas: In good humor...

To My Democrat/Liberal Friends...

Take a deep breath, have a cocktail...yes, it is now official...Donald Trump IS still the President of the United States. He is Making America Great Again by riling up so many of my liberal friends.

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, our best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low-stress, non-addictive, gender-neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasion and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all.

We also wish you a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling and medically uncomplicated recognition of the generally accepted calendar year 2019, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped Make America Great Again.

Not to imply that America is necessarily greater than any other country nor the only America in the Western Hemisphere. And without regard to the race, creed, color, age, physical ability, religious faith or sexual preference of the wishes.

Since there appears to have been NO Russian collusion, we wish you a joyous internationally celebrated happy holidays!

By accepting these greetings you are accepting these terms. This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for herself or himself or others, and is void where prohibited by law and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher. This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.

To My Republican/Conservative friends...

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!!

Doha Forum 2018: I had the opportunity to attend this years Doha Forum and meet with political, intellectual and business leaders from around the world. It was very interesting and the cultural exchange and opportunity to get some exposure to so many new things was great.

Here are a few things I learned about Qatar that I didn't know:

Qatar hosts the Al-Udeid Airbase, the largest U.S. overseas airbase and the forward headquarters of U.S. CENTCOM. There are over 10,000 U.S. troops plus more U.S. support civilians stationed there. A strong ally of the U.S.

Qatar is the only country in the Gulf to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the U.S. outlining future efforts to fortify its fight against terrorism and actively address terrorism funding issues. Qatar coordinates regularly with the U.S. Treasury, Department of Justice, FBI, and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and has a strong legal framework to prevent terrorism financing that includes travel bans and asset freezes on those accused of financing terrorism.

Qatar has built an Education City which is home to six major American universities: Carnegie-Mellon University – specializing in Business; Weill Cornell University – specializing in Medicine; Georgetown University – specializing in International Relations; Northwestern University – specializing in Journalism; Texas A&M University – specializing in Engineering; Virginia Commonwealth University – specializing in Art and Design. The Universities currently host over 1,300 students of 85 different nationalities.

Not what I was expecting. (...but I still like Lithuanian food better:)

-Saul Anuzis

## Mattis resigning as Pentagon chief after clashes with Trump

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned Thursday after clashing with President Donald Trump over the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria and after two years of deep disagreements over America's role in the world.

Mattis, perhaps the most respected foreign policy official in Trump's administration, will leave by the end of February after two tumultuous years struggling to soften and moderate the president's hardline and sometimes sharply changing policies. He told Trump in a letter that he was leaving because "you have a right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours."

Mattis went to the White House with his resignation letter in hand to meet with the president and spoke to Trump for about 45 minutes, according to a senior U.S. official familiar with the incident but speaking on conditions of

anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

There was no confrontation between the two men, the official said, and there was no one issue that caused the resignation. However, the official said, Syria likely was the last straw for Mattis.

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## Secret Experiment in Alabama Senate Race Imitated Russian Tactics

As Russia's online election machinations came to light last year, a group of Democratic tech experts decided to try out similarly deceptive tactics in the fiercely contested Alabama Senate race, according to people familiar with the effort and a report on its results.

The secret project, carried out on Facebook and Twitter, was likely too small to have a significant effect on the race, in which the Democratic candidate it was designed to help, Doug Jones, edged out the Republican, Roy S. Moore. But it was a sign that American political operatives of both parties have paid close attention to the Russian methods, which some fear may come to taint elections in the United States.

One participant in the Alabama project, Jonathon Morgan, is the chief executive of New Knowledge, a small cyber security firm that wrote a scathing account of Russia's social media operations in the 2016 election that was released this week by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

An internal report on the Alabama effort, obtained by The New York Times, says explicitly that it "experimented with many of the tactics now understood to have influenced the 2016 elections."

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## Trump's Ex-Lawyer Didn't Violate Campaign Finance Laws, and Neither Did the President

President Donald Trump's former attorney, Michael Cohen, may have been convinced by the Office of the U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York to plead guilty to a supposed violation of campaign finance law, but that doesn't mean that what happened is actually a federal crime.

In fact, neither the Federal Election Commission—which is the independent agency tasked with enforcing the

Federal Election Campaign Act—nor its former commissioners would likely agree with the overaggressive view that the Southern District is taking. Indeed, the Southern District's aggressive stance on this issue might have violated the Justice Department's own policy.

Robert Khuzami, the acting U.S. attorney standing in for Geoffrey Berman, who has recused himself from the Cohen case, says in the government's sentencing memorandum that Cohen committed a campaign finance violation by arranging payments from corporations to two women—Woman-1 and Woman-2 (Karen McDougal and Stormy Daniels, respectively), who claimed they had affairs with Trump—in order to buy their silence. Cohen eventually invoiced the Trump Organization for the Daniels payment.

Khuzami asserts these were illegal corporate contributions to the Trump campaign because they were made with “the intent to influence the 2016 presidential election.” Thus, he claims, they were campaign-related expenses and all of the rules governing federal campaigns apply to the payments.

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## The Federal Judge Overseeing Michael Flynn's Sentencing Just Dropped A Major Bombshell

On Tuesday, attorneys for Michael Flynn filed a sentencing memorandum and letters of support for the former Army lieutenant general in federal court. The sentencing memorandum reveals for the first time concrete evidence that the FBI created multiple 302 interview summaries of Flynn's questioning by now-former FBI agent Peter Strzok and a second unnamed agent, reported to be FBI Special Agent Joe Pientka.

Further revelations may be forthcoming soon following an order entered late yesterday by presiding judge Emmet Sullivan, directing the special counsel's office to file with the court any 302s or memorandum relevant to Flynn's interview.

Flynn, who served briefly as President Donald Trump's national security advisor, pleaded guilty more than a year ago to making false statements to federal investigators during a January 24, 2017 interview. During that interview, Strzok and (presumably) Pientka questioned Flynn about a telephone conversation the Trump advisor had with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak. While Flynn's sentencing memorandum methodically laid out the case for a low-level sentence of one-year

probation, footnote 23 dropped a bomb, revealing that the agents' 302 summary of his interview was dated August 22, 2017. As others have already noted, the August 22, 2017 date is a "striking detail" because that puts the 302 report "nearly seven months after the Flynn interview." When added to facts already known, this revelation takes on a much greater significance.

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## Foreign naval vessels can use Northern Sea Route only with Russia's advance approval, Moscow says

As of next year, foreign military vessels will be allowed to traverse the Northern Sea Route only after Moscow gives them approval in advance, the head of Russia's National Center for Defense Administration, says, yet another case of Moscow's efforts to project its control into the Arctic far beyond its coastal waters or economic exclusion zones.

Mikhail Mizintsev says that this notification requirement, which will go into effect at the start of next year's navigation season, has been developed by an inter-agency working group committed to "liquidating a legal vacuum" concerning the use of the route by foreign navies.

At one level, what Moscow is proposing is both reasonable and proper. Notification is likely necessary to ensure that there aren't too many vessels in one part of the route at any one time and to comply with passage through Russia's territorial waters or economic exclusion zones.

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## How many wake up calls about Putin do we need?

History brims with examples of strong leadership. Contemporaries used to call the former Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito, a "benevolent dictator", as Yugoslavia under his rule appeared a quiet and peaceful place. Yet, the Balkans, immersed in unprecedented bloodshed following the collapse of Communist rule, to this day reminds us of the perils of taking the imagined for real.

The Romanian communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, was also sometimes celebrated as "brave" for his decisions to ease press censorship and to condemn the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. But in the end, he too turned out to be just a paranoid dictator who sent armed forces against his own people. He was ultimately overthrown and shot dead in a violent revolution.

Dictatorships claim to bring stability. But their stability is often confused with stagnation, which is of no value in

itself. On the contrary, dictatorships are extremely fragile and once they fail – and sooner or later they always fail – they risk the lives of thousands, if not millions, of innocent people.

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## Trump's Important New Africa Strategy

President Donald Trump continues to take bold steps, recapturing America's exceptionalism at home and leadership abroad.

These important developments are too often getting drowned out by relentless noise in Washington, where the media obsess over many issues concerning this president except those most relevant to his job -- his performance leading the nation to excellence.

A good example is the superlative new initiative just announced by National Security Advisor John Bolton establishing a new Africa strategy.

The initiative echoes the foreign policy vision Donald Trump articulated in his inaugural address.

That is, that America's relationship with the nations of the world should be defined first by our national interests. "We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone," he said, "but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow."

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## GoFundMe campaign for border wall aims for a billion (at least)

President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to shut down the government over funding for his border wall. But as the question of money for his campaign proposal once again roils Congress, one man thinks he may have found a solution: Crowd-funding.

Brian Kolfage, a 37-year-old Florida resident who was severely wounded in the Iraq war, has started a GoFundMe campaign to complete Trump's signature pledge. The campaign has raised over \$1.5 million in the three days since it started, with an overall goal of \$1 billion.

Trump initially told congressional leaders that he would accept nothing less than \$5 billion for his wall in a bill to keep most of the federal government open. Estimates for the total costs of a wall have varied — Trump has even changed his mind on an original vision for a continuous stretch across the entire border — but it usually fall somewhere in the \$12 billion to 20 billion range. A staff report written for Senate Democrats argued that the price could be as high as \$70 billion.

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## In a war with Russia, both sides could focus on this 60-mile stretch

There are a number of potential vulnerabilities in NATO territory if the Cold War ever goes live, but three countries are especially scared of an attack to close the Suwalki Gap, a spot where NATO territory is only 60 miles wide with Belarus on one side, Russia's Kaliningrad Enclave on the other, and relatively flat ground with little forest or natural defenses in the middle.

If Russian tanks and other forces quickly span the gap and dig in, they could cut Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia off from the rest of Europe and NATO for easy digestion, leaving the rest of NATO to decide whether its worth it to risk their own troops re-securing them.

These sorts of geographic and political choke points aren't new. Cold War weapons development was heavily influenced by the Fulda Gap, one of Soviet Russia's most likely routes of advance if they invaded western Europe. And in World War II, France fell so quickly partially because it had counted on holding Germany at the Albert Canal and River Meuse in Belgium, but Germany had gotten Belgium to rescind its alliances with France before the invasion.

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## There's No Coherent Argument Against Texas GOP Official Shahid Shafi

In the worldview of Shafi's critics, everyone who likes and supports him staying in this role is a gullible sucker, including notable softies and squishes such as Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Senator Ted Cruz, Texas House Speaker Joe Straus, Travis County Republican party Chairman Matt Mackowiak, the state Republican party, and the gang at The Federalist.

Appearing on CNN, Shafi said that he's "always been welcomed with open arms" by Republicans. When anchor Jim Sciutto asked, "Do you think the president's sometimes critical, sometimes bigoted, some have said, language about Muslims, rhetoric about Muslims — do you think that has given license to people like you've encountered here, who are expressing this bigotry about your faith?" Shafi did not blame the president. Instead, he succinctly encapsulated what was at stake here, and why his broad spectrum of supporters are standing by him:

"Look, I believe in freedom of speech. I believe in freedom of expression and I think diversity of opinion within any group is good for the group, is good for the party. But

what we cannot do and what we don't do is discriminate against a specific person based on their religion, caste, creed, color, ethnicity, or country of origin. Our party has very specific rules that prohibit religious discrimination. Our country has specific rules and our Constitution prohibits it. So when this controversy arose because of a small number of people at the fringes of our party ... it's really been very — they're doing a disservice to our party. That's not what the Republican Party is about. That is not what I have encountered. Some of my biggest supporters within the party are pastors and military veterans. And the reason they always tell me, especially the military veterans, that they are supporting me in my role, is because number one, they put their life on the line to protect the Constitution. And our Constitution defends religious freedom, and they cannot see that being violated in our own country. And the second reason is, quite frankly, that these are veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. They have served overseas with hundreds of thousands of Muslim soldiers and civilians in those countries, who have helped America and who have helped our soldiers perform their duties."

Who in their right mind would want to get rid of this guy?

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