

NEWS ANALYSIS

Senate Faces  
Decisive Test  
Of Its Power

Trump Aims to Blunt  
Its Constitutional Job

By CARL HULSE

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald J. Trump’s determination to crash over traditional governmental guardrails will present a fundamental test of whether the Republican-controlled Senate can maintain its constitutional role as an independent institution and a check on presidential power.

With Mr. Trump putting forward a raft of contentious prospective nominees and threatening to challenge congressional authority in other ways, Republicans who will hold the majority come January could find themselves in the precarious position of having to choose between standing up for their institution or bowing to a president dismissive of government norms.

The clearest and most immediate point of tension is likely to be Mr. Trump’s efforts to skip the Senate’s traditional confirmation process to install loyalists, including some with checkered backgrounds, in his cabinet. But the president-elect has also signaled he expects Republicans on Capitol Hill to accede to his wishes on policy, even if that means ceding Congress’s control over federal spending. Both are powers explicitly given to the legislative branch in the Constitution.

Lawmakers and analysts say allowing Mr. Trump to erode the Senate’s authority to pass judgment on nominees by sidestepping it through recess appointments or watered-down background checks could do permanent damage to the Senate and undermine the constitutional system.

“It is the central pillar in the checks-and-balances system,” said Ira Shapiro, a former longtime Senate staffer and author of three books on the institution. “There is nothing more central to the Senate’s role than the advice

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**PARTY UNREST** Some Democrats want to oust their leaders on key House committees. PAGE A16



MAURICIO LIMA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ukraine’s 126th Territorial Defense Brigade, formed from volunteers, got some of its training from British special operations forces.

Some Allies Back Trump’s Pick  
Of F.B.I. Chief Bent on Revenge

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — Several Republican lawmakers fell in line on Sunday behind President-elect Donald J. Trump’s plan to choose Kash Patel to lead the F.B.I., defending the incoming president’s right to install a loyalist who has vowed to use the position to exact revenge on Mr. Trump’s adversaries.

Mr. Trump’s announcement on Saturday that he intends to replace Christopher A. Wray, the current F.B.I. director, who still has three years left on his 10-year term, with Mr. Patel has stunned Democrats and many in the national security establishment. Mr. Patel has said he would launch a sweeping campaign of retribution against F.B.I. agents, journalists and others.

F.B.I. directors are confirmed by the Senate, and Mr. Patel is likely to face tough questions at his confirmation hearings about whether the agency would remain free from political interference.

Several G.O.P. Senators  
Supporting Patel, but  
Leaders Are Quiet

While Republican Senate leaders remained quiet on Sunday, other senators in Mr. Trump’s party expressed their support.

Senator Bill Hagerty, Republican of Tennessee, said he had encouraged Mr. Trump to appoint Mr. Patel.

“There are serious problems at the F.B.I.,” Mr. Hagerty said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “The American public knows it. They expect to see sweeping change, and Kash Patel is just the type of person to do it.”

Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, called Mr. Patel “a very strong nominee” to take on what he and other allies of Mr. Trump claim has been partisanship inside the F.B.I. because of its investigation of Mr. Trump.

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Valor and Anguish for a Brigade  
Taking the Fight Across a River

By CARLOTTA GALL and OLEKSANDR CHUBKO

KHERSON REGION, Ukraine — Late at night, half a dozen Ukrainian infantrymen leaned over a map spread on wooden pallets inside a building. Within an hour they would embark on one of the most dangerous deployments of the war, a nighttime operation across the Dnipro River.

Vyshyty, a company commander, was issuing orders last May. The unit would be providing support for assault troops, he told them. “If they retreat, you hold positions, give them covering fire and evacuate the heavily wounded,” he said.

The men of 126th Territorial Defense Brigade are among the elite forces of the Ukrainian Army. Trained by British special operations forces, among others, they have been conducting cross-river operations, alongside marine infantry brigades and special intelligence units, against Russian troops in the southern region of

Ukrainians’ Elite Team  
Mounts Assaults on  
Russian Positions

Kherson for the best part of two years.

Over several weeks this spring, commanders and soldiers of the brigade allowed a team of reporters to accompany them on operations. They also described some of their earlier operations that had not been previously reported. Because of security restrictions, some details and locations have been withheld, and soldiers are identified only by first names or call signs.

For months the Dnipro River has been a brutal battlefield as Ukraine has attempted a show of force with an amphibious assault against Russia’s western flank. The Ukrainians took untold casualties as they clung to tenuous positions.

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FIGHT INTENSIFIES  
AS SYRIA’S REBELS  
SEIZE MORE LAND

ALEPPO AIRPORT TAKEN

Forces Loyal to al-Assad  
Seeking to Push Back  
Sudden Uprising

By MUHAMMAD HAJ KADOUR and VIVIAN YEE

ALEPPO, Syria — Rebel forces advanced in Syria on Sunday amid fierce fighting, capturing the airport and military academy of the major city of Aleppo and attacking the outskirts of the western city of Hama, according to rebel officials and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Government troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad were trying to repel them, rushing reinforcements to the battle and launching airstrikes on Aleppo, the Observatory said.

The rebels had captured much of Aleppo a day earlier in a surprise offensive. They now control a broad stretch of land across the provinces of Hama, Idlib and Aleppo, in the west and northwest of Syria, according to information from officials from the rebel-linked administration and the Observatory, a Britain-based war monitor.

In a further sign of growing strength, the rebels also said they now controlled all of Idlib and issued a demand for Kurdish forces in Aleppo to leave with their weapons for the northeast.

The New York Times observed rebels in control of parts of Hama Province as well as neighborhoods in the east of the city of Aleppo and parts of the countryside beyond it that government forces had held only days earlier.

Outside the city of Hama, Syrian government military vehicles could be seen all over the roads, apparently abandoned by fleeing government troops after they ran out of fuel.

The Observatory said that government troops were battling to defend Hama from being overrun and that reinforcements had arrived to man defensive lines around the city and several nearby cities and villages. Syrian government warplanes were also bombing territory now held by the rebels, including targets across the city of Aleppo, causing dozens of casualties.

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How Home to Musk’s Starbase  
Voted Trump After Blue Streak

By JAZMINE ULLOA

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — The story of the political transformation of Cameron County, a majority-Hispanic border community at the southernmost tip of Texas, began with the arrival of a billionaire.

His name wasn’t Donald J. Trump. It was Elon Musk.

More than a decade ago, Mr. Musk brought his private space company, SpaceX, to Cameron County, where the blasts from his rocket testing and launching site on Boca Chica Beach rattle homes for miles. His mark is now everywhere. And his face, too.

Downtown, in the county seat of Brownsville, the old culture — part Mexican, part American, part Tejano — clashes with the new. Images of space, astronauts and Mr. Musk adorn buildings that date to the early 1900s, blocks from the southern border. Along the Gulf Coast marshes on the road to his Starbase launch site, a giant bust of Mr. Musk keeps watch over Cameron County’s nearly 430,000 residents and the occasional wayward hog, the world’s richest man honored like a



CALLAGHAN O'HARE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Near the SpaceX launch site, Starbase, in Boca Chica, Texas.

king in one of the poorest counties in America.

Such a tribute would be a mere curiosity were it not for what happened here on Nov. 5.

Mr. Trump did something no Republican has done in 20 years: He flipped Cameron County. Mr. Trump won the county with 53 percent of the vote, the first time a Republican presidential candidate claimed victory here since George W. Bush, the former Texas governor and then the president, in 2004. It was one of a string of

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When Form Follows Function, a Mail Truck Looks Like a Duck

By MICHAEL LEVENSON

For 19 years, Richard Burton, a letter carrier in Athens, Ga., drove the classic boxy mail truck, with only a fan on the dashboard to keep the cabin cool in the sweltering summer months. A second fan plugged into the cigarette lighter didn’t make much of a difference, he said.

But about two months ago, Mr. Burton, 46, became one of the first letter carriers in the United States to get a long-awaited upgrade: a new electric mail truck with air conditioning, a 360-degree camera and a sliding cargo door on the side that allows the unloading of packages directly onto the sidewalk.

“It makes the job easier to do because you’re not sweating bullets out there,” he said. “And in Georgia, you can imagine how hot it gets.”

The new mail trucks — 10 years in the making — have started rolling into American neighborhoods, and the early reviews from letter carriers are positive. Many have complained for years that the mail trucks they have been driving, which were introduced in the 1980s, break down frequently and are stiflingly hot, as climate change pushes temperatures to



DAVID WALTER BANKS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The new trucks seem odd, but they get “the job done,” said Richard Burton, a carrier in Georgia.

greater extremes. The rear cargo space is so small, they say, that they have to crouch inside to grab packages.

The Next Generation Delivery Vehicle, as the new truck is called,

promises some long-overdue relief. But its appearance has not been universally applauded. It has a giant windshield and a low-slung hood designed to allow drivers of almost any height to see the

road. One car enthusiast on YouTube called it “ugly by design.” Ezra Dyer, a columnist for Car and Driver, described the truck as a “visual abomination.”

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**Taxing Burps on the Farm**

A new tax in Denmark is targeting the planet-warming methane that cows and pigs produce. PAGE B1

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Retailers that are installing the devices for public use are reporting increases in foot traffic and sales. PAGE B1

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Comments by Moshe Yaalon, a former defense minister, were swiftly condemned by Netanyahu allies. PAGE A6

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Known for his colorful court-side image, Lou Carnesecca guided the school to basketball glory. He was 99. PAGE B6



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A salute to the compelling careers of the 14 newcomers on this year’s National Baseball Hall of Fame ballot. PAGE D4

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The father of Jordan Neely and other supporters have steeled themselves to watch harrowing video footage of his final struggles at the manslaughter trial of Daniel Penny each day. PAGE A17

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**Preserving What Matters Most**

What do we mean when we designate something a landmark? It’s a trickier question than you might think. Above, the Stonewall site in 1997. PAGE C1

