

In impeachment crisis, Trump continues fascistic appeals, Democrats promote warmonger John Bolton

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As the Senate impeachment trial of President Donald Trump headed into what could be its final three days, following the completion Tuesday of the White House defense team's presentation, the proceedings increasingly underscored the reactionary character of both warring factions within the ruling class.

The Democrats have allied themselves ever more directly with the notorious war criminal John Bolton, centering their efforts in the Senate on demands that he be allowed to testify in the trial of Trump. On Sunday night, on the eve of the White House lawyers' main defense presentation, the *New York Times* published an article citing leaks from Bolton's upcoming book in which Trump's former national security adviser reveals that Trump rejected appeals that he lift his hold on \$391 million in military aid to Ukraine and said he intended to hold the aid until the Ukrainian government announced a corruption investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

This first-person revelation from Bolton, who left the Trump administration last September after clashing with the president on Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Venezuela and Ukraine, contradicts White House denials of a "quid pro quo" linking a Ukrainian investigation of Biden, deemed at the time Trump's likely opponent in the 2020 election, and release of the military aid. The Democrats have made this charge the center of their impeachment drive, accusing Trump of undermining US national security, jeopardizing an ally "at war" with Russia, and soliciting foreign interference in the 2020 election.

Trump tweeted angry denials of Bolton's claim and Trump allies on the right such as *Brietbart News* denounced Bolton as a disgruntled former officeholder seeking to build up sales of his book, scheduled to be published in March.

On all of the disputed issues, Bolton opposed Trump for being insufficiently aggressive. He objected when Trump pulled back at the last minute in the summer from a missile attack on Iran, opposed Trump's diplomatic maneuvers with

North Korea, fought against the opening of peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan, pushed for a military intervention to overthrow the elected government in Venezuela, and pressed to reverse Trump's temporary hold of weapons to the right-wing, anti-Russian regime in Kiev.

The bitter character of the political warfare in Washington, and the sharpness of the conflict within the state and even among current and former members of the Trump administration, was expressed not only in Bolton's de facto lining up behind the Democrats' impeachment drive, but also the statement yesterday by Trump's former chief of staff Gen. John Kelly that he believed Bolton's account.

Kelly threw his support behind Democratic demands that the Republican-controlled Senate call Bolton and perhaps other witnesses to testify in the Senate trial. Speaking at an event in Florida, he said, "So I think there are people that could contribute to this, either innocence of guilt... I think they should be heard."

The White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell are seeking to block witness testimony and the submission of documents requested by the Democratic House managers and wrap up the trial by the end of the week. Following a closed-door meeting Tuesday afternoon of the Republican caucus in the Senate, it was not clear whether the Democrats would succeed in winning the four Republican votes they need to secure a majority for calling Bolton and perhaps other witnesses.

The current schedule calls for two eight-hour sessions, Wednesday and Thursday, during which the senators will submit written questions to Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, who is presiding over the Senate trial. Roberts will read out the questions, directed to either the White House defense or the House prosecution. The two days of questions will be followed Friday by four hours of debate on whether or not to subpoena witnesses and documents, followed by a vote on the question.

If the Democrats fail to gain a majority of 51 votes, the

Senate will proceed to vote on Trump's conviction and removal from office, or acquittal. Given the fact that a two-thirds vote is required to convict, the outcome does not seem to be in doubt.

Bolton is so notorious a proponent of war and regime change that President George W. Bush had to install him as US ambassador to the United Nations in 2005 while Congress was in recess, because Bolton was unlikely to win confirmation in the then Democratic-controlled Senate. Fifteen years later, his incendiary foreign policy has been largely adopted by the Democratic Party.

An architect of the 2003 invasion of Iraq as director of the Project for the New American Century, Bolton has advocated wars for regime change in Iran, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, Cuba, Yemen and North Korea. He opposed financial reparations to Japanese Americans held in World War II concentration camps, was implicated in the 1980s Iran-Contra affair, and was a protégé of the fascistic North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms.

In the face of a crisis of bourgeois rule without precedent since the Civil War, driven in large part by the growth of working-class resistance both in the US and internationally, Trump, the personification of the financial oligarchy, is seeking to whip up far-right and fascistic forces entirely outside of the constitutional framework. On Tuesday night, he gave the latest in a series of campaign speeches, this one in Wildwood, New Jersey, in which he invokes fascistic slogans and tropes and, in some cases, directly incites violence against his political opponents.

Just last Sunday, Trump denounced the lead House manager, Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, tweeting, “Shifty Adam Schiff is a CORRUPT POLITICIAN, and probably a very sick man. He has not paid the price, yet, for what he has done to our Country!”

On Tuesday night, after claiming that American workers are enjoying the bounties of the best economy in US history, Trump boasted of assassinating ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Iranian Gen. Qassem Suleimani. Turning to the impeachment drive, he declared, “While we are creating jobs and killing terrorists, the congressional Democrats are obsessed with demented hoaxes, crazy witch hunts and deranged partisan crusades.”

He proceeded to denounce “globalist politicians” for “stealing” American jobs; attacked the Democrats as “far-left radicals” and “socialists;” baited the “fake news” media; lavished praise on the military, the police and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) anti-immigrant enforcers; boasted of having allocated over \$2 trillion for the military (passed with the votes of a large majority of Democrats) and secured a new anti-Chinese trade war pact with Mexico and Canada (also backed by the

Democrats); attacked abortion; bragged of securing funds (provided by the Democrats) to build his border wall with Mexico; lauded gun rights activists (including thousands of armed militia members who paraded last week in Virginia); and hailed “school choice,” a code phrase for the dismantling of public education.

As usual, he reserved his most violent rhetoric for attacks on immigrants. On Friday, in advance of Trump's appearance in New Jersey, the Justice Department joined a lawsuit brought by two counties in the state seeking to overthrow a year-old state directive limiting the cooperation of local law enforcement with federal immigration agencies. Both counties are in the district of Representative Jeff Van Drew, a right-wing freshman congressman who was elected as a Democrat but recently switched to the Republican Party after voting last month against impeaching Trump.

Trump paraded Van Drew on the stage Tuesday night and presented his defection as a preview of a Republican takeover of the House in the November elections.

“Washington Democrats have thoroughly betrayed the American people on the issue of immigration,” Trump declared, denouncing “radical” Democrats for supporting so-called sanctuary cities, which he characterized as a scheme to allow criminal immigrants to prey on American citizens. “Once set loose these criminal aliens are free to kill innocent Americans,” he said. He went on to praise ICE thugs for dealing with immigrant “packs,” saying they “go right into a pack and start swinging.”

Alongside this extraconstitutional, fascistic appeal, Trump's lawyers in the Senate trial are advancing a legal case for a virtually unlimited expansion of presidential powers, free of any real restraints by Congress or the courts. On Monday night, Harvard law professor and Trump ally Alan Dershowitz argued that the two articles of impeachment passed by the Democratic-controlled House were invalid on their face because, he claimed, there is no constitutional basis for impeaching a president for abuse or power or obstruction of Congress.



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