

Headlines:

- Iran Protests
- Trump Impeachment
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Details:

Iran Protests

As protests continue to grow in Iran, Iranian state television has been forced to acknowledge security forces shot and killed what it described as "rioters" in multiple cities amid recent protests over the spike in government-set petrol prices. It was the first time authorities offered any sort of accounting for the violence used to put down the deadly demonstrations. The acknowledgement came in a television report on Tuesday 3 Dec that criticised international Persian-language channels for their reporting on the crisis, which began on November 15. The state TV report described the killings in four categories, alleging some of those killed were "rioters who have attacked sensitive or military centres with firearms or knives, or have taken hostages in some areas". In one case, the report said security forces confronted a separatist group in the city of Mahshahr armed with "semi-heavy weapons". "For hours, armed rioters had waged an armed struggle," the report said. "In such circumstances, security forces took action to save the lives of Mahshahr's people." Mahshahr in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province was believed to be hard-hit in the crackdown.

Trump Impeachment

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence made the Trump-Ukraine Impeachment Inquiry Report public on Tuesday, December 3rd. It concludes that its inquiry "uncovered a months-long effort by President Trump to use the powers of his office to solicit foreign interference on his behalf in the 2020 election". President Trump's scheme subverted US foreign policy toward Ukraine and undermined our national security in favour of two politically-motivated investigations that would help his presidential re-election campaign," it says. "The president demanded that the newly-elected Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, publicly announce investigations into a political rival that he apparently feared the most, former Vice-President Joe Biden, and into a discredited theory that it was Ukraine, not Russia, that interfered in the 2016 presidential election."

Evidence of misconduct is overwhelming "and so too is the evidence of his obstruction of Congress," the report says. Within the 300-page document, were some striking new details.

The telecommunications company AT&T provided committee investigators with Rudy Giuliani's mobile phone records - and those records shed new light on the timing and breadth of the communications Donald Trump's personal lawyer had with the White House. Starting in April of this year, Giuliani had multiple phone conversations with numbers listed for the White House and, in particular, the Office of Management and Budget - the government agency ultimately responsible for putting a hold on the congressionally authorised US military aid to Ukraine. While the details of these communications aren't known, their simple existence undercuts the contention of some presidential defenders that Giuliani was operating independently of senior administration officials.

Multiple witnesses, including US Ambassador to the EU Gordan Sondland, have testified that Giuliani was directing them, at the behest of the president, to pressure Ukrainian officials to open investigations that would be politically advantageous for Mr Trump.

NATO Tit-For-Tat

US President Donald Trump and French leader Emmanuel Macron have set out opposing views ahead of a NATO summit. In an occasionally tense press conference, the two politicians sparred over NATO's role, Turkey, and Islamic State group (IS) fighters. Trump had described Mr Macron's comments about NATO as "nasty", but Mr Macron said he stood by his words. World leaders are in London to mark the Western military alliance's 70th anniversary. Strained relations between Turkey and other member states have already marked the summit. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he will oppose NATO's plan for the defence of the Baltic region if it does not back Turkey over its fight against Kurdish groups it considers terrorists. Three decades since the Cold war ended NATO is struggling to justify its existence. Although Trump derided NATO in his election campaign, he has failed to get other NATO members to pay up and that's why this tit-for-tat skirmish is taking place.