

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy
Sent: Tue 6/27/2017 9:45:20 AM
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by Exelon: What's new for Energy Week? — Zinke takes Montana — Pruitt returns to Capitol Hill

By Ben Lefebvre | 06/27/2017 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon Alex Guillen and Eric Wolff

ENERGY WEEK ROLLS ON: We've heard the rah-rah but ME is still wondering if and when something substantive may come. So far it's been hinted that Interior Secretary may have something new to say when he speaks in Montana today (more below), but at first blush Energy Week may shape up to be old hydrocarbons in new barrels.

Enticing India with LNG: Following a meeting at the White House with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, Trump played up the possibility of selling more liquefied natural gas to India, which is trying to bring electricity to more of its population, Pro Trade's Doug Palmer reports. Trump said oil and gas contracts are "right now being negotiated and we will sign them. We're trying to get the price up a little bit." But India has been in the market for U.S. gas at least since 2011, when its state-owned gas company, GAIL India, was among the first customers to sign a 20-year contract with then-fledgling Cheniere Energy. India has said it will increase its oil and gas purchases from the U.S., but the country is notorious for being price-sensitive. GAIL earlier this year reached a deal with Swiss trading company Guvnor to save on shipping costs by swapping some of its Cheniere cargoes for closer supplies.

Wait 'til tax reform: When it comes to questions of new policy, Energy Secretary Rick Perry mostly sidestepped questions when he briefed reporters on energy week plans earlier Monday. But he said answers would likely come in the president's tax plan. "I don't think the administration is going to be wildly supportive of government subsidies for sectors of the energy industry," Perry said when asked whether to expect continued federal support for renewable energy research. He then added: "Whenever we get this healthcare bill passed and we get into tax reform, at that particular point in time we'll have a good healthy conversation on the energy sector and tax subsidies."

Nuclear happens: Perry did say the White House is keenly aware that nuclear power operators are facing an increased threat of bankruptcy because of competition from cheap natural gas and renewables. "There's a lot of reasons we need to have the conversation about keeping our nuclear industry viable...whether it's Gen 4 plant or modular reactors," he said. Perry did not weigh in on specific issues such as the fate of a nuclear energy tax credit extension being debated in Congress or programs aimed at propping up existing reactors in states like New York and Illinois, but he warned that the U.S. risked losing ground to competitors like China and Russia in developing the next generation of nuclear technology. "Most Americans will say nuclear energy will occur," Perry continued. "Who controls it and is most supportive, I'm sure that will be America."

If you'd like to hear more from Perry, he's up for the keynote address at the 8:30 a.m. plenary

session today at [EIA's Energy Conference](#) at the Washington Hilton. He also is tentatively scheduled to talk at 9:45 a.m. today with Piyush Goyal, of India's ministry of power, coal, new and renewable energy and mines at [U.S.-India Business Council's 42nd Annual Leadership Summit](#).

Going local: One possible new avenue the administration may follow may come when President Donald Trump will meet tribal leaders on Wednesday to discuss local energy. This is in line with the administration's line that wouldn't mind for Native American tribes to get in on the oil boom. Energy and Interior department officials [met with tribes](#) in May to discuss energy development, and the topic popped up in Senate subcommittee hearings on Interior's budget.

GOOD MORNING, MORNING ENERGY! I'm your host, Ben Lefebvre, filling in for Anthony Adragna, who is away on matrimony. No applause — just throw tips and comments to blefebvre@politico.com, please. Anthony will be back Wednesday. You can find him at aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@bjlefebvre](#), [@aadragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

THE DOI ABIDES: Zinke is slated to speak at the Western Governors' Association today in Whitefish, Mont., his old stomping grounds. While there, he'll make a "bigly onshore energy announcement," a department source tells ME. The WGA, which is giving the secretary of the Interior [twin billing](#) with actor and hometown hero Jeff Bridges, will not stream Zinke's speech. They do promise to live-Tweet it at #WGA17.

Say what you want about the tenets of national monuments: Whatever Zinke may have his sleeve, it's his Trump-ordered review of national monuments that seems to be getting the most attention from locals in Whitefish, where Zinke served as state lawmaker from 2009 to 2011 (he also tried to [open](#) a bed and breakfast and brewery there around the same time). Whitefish Mayor John Muhlfeld has joined environmentalists and sportsmen in the area calling on Zinke to resist the urge to eliminate or shrink national monuments under his review. "As a friend of Ryan Zinke, I urge him to respect and protect America's public lands, in Montana and across the country," Muhlfeld says in a press release sent by the Center for Western Priorities.

PILT paychecks: Zinke was in Nevada Monday, where he announced that nearly \$465 million is headed to local governments as part of the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program. PILT payments compensate jurisdictions that are home to large swaths of federal land they cannot tax. Details on who's getting how much [here](#).

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ROUND 2 FOR PRUITT ON BUDGET: EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is on the Hill today to testify for the second time on the administration's proposal to massively slash his agency's funding, and if his [first hearing](#) is any guide, Pruitt is in for some tough questions from both parties.

What to expect today: Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#), who chairs the Senate's Interior-EPA spending panel, is already on the record as not being a big fan of EPA's proposed cuts. She's noted before that recent years have already seen Congress significantly reduce EPA's budget and personnel, and she's likely to raise objections to the administration's proposal to zero out a water infrastructure program aimed at Alaska Native villages. Expect one or more senators, including possibly [Steve Daines](#), to complain about the proposed Superfund cuts. The hearing starts at 9:30 a.m. in Dirksen 124.

Hands across the Capitol: The Sierra Club, Union for Concerned Scientists and more than a dozen other environmental groups plan to protest the 31 percent cut to the EPA that Trump's budget calls for. They'll meet at Lower Senate Park ahead of the hearing.

Coincidentally: Today marks the end of the 60-day stay on the Clean Power Plan lawsuits put in place in April by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. The court took comment on whether to remand the rule to EPA (as environmentalists wanted) or keep the lawsuit in abeyance indefinitely while EPA works on its review, as advocated for by the agency and the rule's challengers. Click for a [refresher](#) on who wanted what and why. It's not clear what exactly might happen today, if anything; the court could decide on the remand-versus-abeyance issue today, or extend its stay and decide later.

SCIENTIST SPEAKS UP: Look for Pruitt to also face questions today about his agency's treatment of independent science advisers, especially in the wake of Monday night's [New York Times report](#) that his chief of staff pressured one of them to alter her testimony to a separate congressional committee last month. EPA Chief of Staff Ryan Jackson asked Deborah Swackhamer, who chairs EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors, to stick to the agency's "talking points" about why board members were not being reappointed before she testified to the House Science Committee, according to the paper, which cited emails she had shared with committee Democrats. Science Chairman Lamar Smith told the Times that Democrats are "politicizing" an attempt by EPA to make sure her testimony was accurate. Swackhamer was testifying as a private citizen and not on behalf of EPA, and it does not appear that she changed her [written testimony](#). In it, she warns that changes to the board "may lead to the perception that science is being politicized and marginalized within EPA."

NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM AND RGGI FILLS A SPOTLIGHT: The nine-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative meets today to discuss whether to modify its carbon cap, whether and how to link with other cap programs, and how to manage new participants. Emissions reductions from the northeastern states have gone faster than expected, and green groups hope to see some carbon cap tightening from the meeting. If you go: It's at 1 p.m. at Jerome Greene Hall Room 701, Columbia Law School, in New York. You can also stream it [here](#).

Be! Aggressive! B! E! Aggressive!: Emissions reductions have come faster than expected, so green groups are looking for deeper reduction requirements. The Natural Resources Defense Council and 50 other green groups have [asked](#) the program to set caps lower to push for more carbon reductions, and to raise the price floor so as to ensure that there's a cost to emissions.

ON HER WAY OUT: FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable plans to leave the agency Friday, Pro's Darius Dixon reports. She will formally announce the news today when she speaks to the EIA conference. That will leave acting Chairwoman Cheryl LaFleur as the only remaining commissioner, meaning both of Trump's pending nominees will have to be confirmed before FERC can conduct any major business again. Honorable tells ME she doesn't have a job lined up but "I have some irons in the fire."

THE ROAD TO RECLAIM: The RECLAIM Act is going before the House Natural Resources Committee for markup today. The bill as currently written would take money from the Abandoned Mine Land Fund to pay laid-off coal miners to work cleaning up abandoned mines.

EPW HEARING ON HOLD: A Senate EPW subcommittee meeting that had been scheduled for 2:45 p.m. today on clean energy technologies has been postponed. A committee spokeswoman tells us no new date planned yet.

NOMS ON PARADE: Two more former George W. Bush appointees are in line to return to the Interior Department, the White House said Monday. Trump plans to nominate Brenda Burman as commissioner of reclamation. She was the deputy commissioner for reclamation and assistant secretary for water and science under Bush; now she is the director of water strategy at the Salt River Project. Douglas W. Domenech, a senior adviser to Zinke, will be nominated as assistant Interior secretary for insular affairs. His positions in the Bush administration included deputy assistant Interior secretary for insular affairs and White House liaison.

SVINICKI SECURES SENATE NOD: The Senate voted 88-9 Monday to confirm Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki to a third term at the agency, just days before her tenure had been set to expire. Nevada Sen. Dean Heller was the only Republican to vote against Svinicki; fellow dissenters included Sens. Catherine Cortez Masto, Kirsten Gillibrand, Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, among others.

CALLING CARTER PAGE: The FBI interviewed Carter Page, an energy consultant who traveled to Moscow last year while advising the Trump campaign, Pro's Austin Wright reports. The interviews occurred in May and were part of the FBI's investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 Presidential election, Page said in a statement.

WATCHDOG TAKES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFF THE HOOK: The unlikely spat between the National Park Service and Trump may have broken toward the NPS, POLITICO's Matthew Nussbaum reports. Interior's Inspector General said Monday that NPS employees did not alter crowd size records, which Trump complained had low-balled the number of people attending his inauguration. The IG also said NPS wasn't the one who leaked info about a phone call in which Trump allegedly ordered the acting NPS director to release additional photos of the crowd. Will this end the feud? ME will keep an eye on a certain Twitter account in the coming days.

CRUDE HACK: Those "dipping donkey" pump jacks that dot the Texas and Oklahoma oil field landscape are a great entryway for hackers looking to disrupt America's fuel production, Deloitte

says in a new study. Cyber-attacks on oil and gas companies are growing in frequency, sophistication, and impact, the study finds, and the production part of the business is the most vulnerable to attack and the most potentially damaging if exploited. "Thus, the consequence of a cyber-attack on oil and gas production could be severe, promptly affecting both the top and bottom lines," Deloitte says in its [report](#).

COUNTDOWN FOR KEYSTONE: A judge in the U.S. District Court in Montana will hear arguments on Aug. 31 whether to dismiss the case the Northern Plains Resource Council and other environmental groups brought against the Keystone XL pipeline, according to a new court filing. White House lawyers argued earlier that the case should be thrown out as the plaintiffs don't have standing to challenge the executive branch's authority in granting permits for pipeline border crossings.

SUNIVA DISPUTES GTM'S SOLAR IMPACT REPORT: Suniva is disputing GTM Research's findings Monday that the trade tariffs the company seeks for imported solar panels and cells could wipe out nearly two-thirds of U.S. solar projects slated to be built by 2022. "GTM's conclusions are based on faulty and unsupported assumptions, and demonstrate a fundamental misunderstanding" of what Suniva seeks, the company said in a press release.

MOVER/SHAKER: Washington lawyer Dennis Lee Forsgren has been named EPA's deputy assistant administrator in the Office of Water, a job that does not require Senate confirmation but gives him a significant role in the agency's efforts to rewind the Waters of the U.S. rule and other key regulations. Forsgren's appointment was revealed in a [blog post](#) from the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators. Forsgren most recently was a lawyer at HBW Resources, where his lobbying clients since 2011 have included GE and a subsidiary of the nuclear company Babcock & Wilcox.

QUICK HITS:

- Federal agencies greenlight proposed delta tunnel project, [Los Angeles Times](#).
- Trump's Anti-Nafta Stance Is on a Collision Course with Natural Gas, [New York Times](#).
- Trump Has China to Thank for Recent Coal Industry Spike, [Time](#).
- Swearengin prepares for campaign fight against Manchin, [MetroNews](#).
- Microbe Mystery Solved: What Happened to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Plume, [Berkley Lab](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

7:30 a.m. — Exelon 2017 Innovation Expo, Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

8:30 a.m. — [EIA Energy Conference](#), Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue NW,

8:45 a.m. — [FERC conference on software and market efficiency](#), 888 First St. NE

9 a.m. — [Environmental Law Institute conference on chemical safety](#), feat. Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.), Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University, 950 New Hampshire Ave., NW

9:30 a.m. — [FY2018 budget request for the Environmental Protection Agency](#), feat. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Senate Appropriations Committee, Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Dirksen 124

9:45 a.m. — DOE Secretary Rick Perry talks with Piyush Goyal, India minister of state with independent charge, ministry of power, coal, new and renewable energy and mines at [U.S.-India Business Council's 42nd Annual Leadership Summit](#), Mellon Auditorium, 1301 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.

10 a.m. — [Full committee markup](#), incl. the RECLAIM Act and a bill to advance King Cove Road, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth 1324

THAT'S ALL FOR ME! I'll be back tomorrow, after which Anthony will take charge.

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<http://bit.ly/2szvZN4> **

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<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/06/whats-new-for-energy-week-023494>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump, India's Modi pledge to work together to boost and balance trade [Back](#)

By Doug Palmer | 06/26/2017 06:46 PM EDT

President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged today to work together to boost — and balance — bilateral trade, including through sales of U.S. liquefied natural gas currently being negotiated.

"I look forward to working with you, Mr. Prime Minister, to create jobs in our countries, to grow our economy and create a trading relationship that is fair and reciprocal," Trump said during a Rose Garden appearance with Modi, where neither leader took any questions. "It is important

that barriers be removed to the export of U.S. good into your markets and that we reduce our trade deficit with your country."

Although trade between the United States and India has grown rapidly in recent years, it still remains below what many experts believe is its long-term potential, partly because of a range of longstanding regulatory and structural barriers on the Indian side. The United States ran a trade a \$24 billion trade deficit with India last year. That has attracted White House attention, although it's far below the \$347 billion trade deficit U.S. ran with China.

Trump hailed a recent purchase by an Indian airline to buy 100 American planes, an apparent reference to a \$22 billion deal announced earlier this year between the no-frills, low-fare carrier Spicejet and Boeing.

"We're also looking forward to exporting more American energy to India as your economy grows, including major long-term contracts to purchase American natural gas," Trump said. Those are "right now being negotiated and we will sign them. We're trying to get the price up a little bit," he joked.

For his part, Modi said India was committed to pursuing a "bilateral architecture that will take our strategic partnership to new heights" — an apparent nod to Trump's preference for bilateral deals, over regional pacts.

"One of our common priorities will be the development of trade, commerce and investment links," Modi said, emphasizing more cooperation in the technology, innovation and knowledge economy sectors. "Towards this end, we shall take steps to further strengthen our successful digital partnership," he said.

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[Back](#)

GOP tells Pruitt he will get bigger budget than requested [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/15/2017 02:42 PM EDT

Republican lawmakers made it clear today that EPA is not going to get the budget it asked for — it's going to get a whole lot more.

Multiple GOP members of the Appropriations committee overseeing EPA said they will not come close to enacting the administration's proposed 31 percent cut.

"I can assure you you're going to be the first EPA administrator that's come before this committee in eight years that actually gets more money than they asked for," Rep. [Tom Cole](#) (R-Okla.) told EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "That doesn't mean you'll get as much as you've had, but you'll do better than you asked for."

Rep. [Mark Amodei](#) (R-Nev.) noted that Congress has already cut EPA's budget by more than \$2 billion since 2010. "No one's standing on the rooftops begging for dirty air and dirty water," he said in calling for no more than moderate spending reductions.

Other Republicans on the panel made sure to defend specific programs they favor.

House Appropriations Chairman [Rodney Frelinghuysen](#) (R-N.J.) told Pruitt that his state is home to more than 100 of the nation's 1,300 Superfund sites. "I think it's good to move with precaution before you take too many dramatic steps," he warned about EPA's 31 percent cut to that program.

Subcommittee chairman [Ken Calvert](#) (R-Calif.) criticized steep cuts to a popular diesel engine refit program and lamented the complete deletion of targeted air shed grants.

And Rep. [Dave Joyce](#) (R-Ohio) criticized the budget for killing the \$300 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

WHAT'S NEXT: Appropriators will write EPA's spending bill for next year, expected to be released later this summer.

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[Back](#)

Trump EPA urges court to keep climate rule lawsuit on hold [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/15/2017 05:02 PM EDT

The Trump administration and the states and companies seeking to quash the Obama EPA's Clean Power Plan told a federal court Monday they want to keep the lawsuit over that landmark climate rule on hold indefinitely.

They argue a freeze would be preferable to a court decision to send the rule back to EPA without deciding on the whether the power plant carbon regulations violated the Clean Air Act. And they say that remanding the rule to the agency to review would just lead to headache-inducing quagmires for EPA and the court.

If the court remands the rule, its opponents might file new lawsuits to preserve their legal claims, while environmentalists could challenge any EPA attempt to set new compliance deadlines.

Keeping the case on hold would also allow EPA to finish its review of the rule more quickly because it would not have to divert resources to addressing those new legal issues, the administration added.

"These consequences can be — and manifestly should be — avoided by continuing to hold this litigation in abeyance," EPA wrote in its brief.

EPA received back-up from the Clean Power Plan's opponents, who made similar arguments in their own brief.

When the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals issued its 60-day stay last month, the judges asked all sides to weigh in on whether to keep the case on ice indefinitely — which could be a long time given the years that are likely needed to repeal the Clean Power Plan and resolve subsequent litigation — or send the rule back to EPA right now, without rendering a decision on its legality.

The rule's supporters, however, would prefer a third path.

Environmentalists, states that support the Clean Power Plan, clean energy groups and several utilities noted their first choice would actually be for the court to issue its ruling.

Those groups were likely buoyed by EPA's strong showing at oral arguments last year. After watching seven hours of arguments, many observers predicted EPA would prevail on most of the legal issues, though a win for the Clean Power Plan was not guaranteed.

Plus, green groups argue, there are several major legal questions the courts likely will need to answer at some point no matter what the Trump administration does now. That includes whether EPA can achieve emissions reductions through "fuel switching," also known as EPA's "beyond the fence line" approach. The court could also weigh in on the so-called 112 Exclusion, which the rule's challengers argued should prevent EPA from regulating in this manner, no matter the details.

But the court's order seeking opinions on remand versus abeyance indicate that the judges are no longer interested in issuing a ruling.

In that case, environmental groups argued, keeping the Supreme Court stay in place would "convert temporary enforcement relief pending judicial review into a long-term suspension of the Clean Power Plan, without any court having issued a decision on its legal merits and without following the administrative steps necessary to amend, suspend or withdraw a regulation."

Meanwhile, EPA and its challengers made similar arguments urging the court to maintain its hold on lawsuits over the Clean Power Plan's sister regulation that sets emissions limits for future power plants, also known as the 111(b) rule or the new source performance standard.

That case was on a slower judicial track than the CPP. All sides had completed briefing, but last month the Trump administration convinced the court to delay arguments.

Meanwhile, environmental groups, supportive states and pro-rule utilities said they would like to see this case continued through arguments and a decision by the court, but that in lieu of that they have no preference over remand versus abeyance.

Although the Clean Power Plan was stayed, the future plant rule has been in effect since it was released in 2015, and neither option would hurt its "effectiveness during any period of review by the new administration," environmentalists argued.

The court has no strict deadline to decide what to do. It has paused the lawsuits challenging both rules through June 27, but is under no obligation to act before then.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

FERC's Honorable to step down Friday [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 06/26/2017 08:13 PM EDT

FERC Commissioner Colette Honorable plans to leave the agency Friday, she has told POLITICO.

The move will bring the commission down to just one member, acting Chairwoman Cheryl LaFleur, meaning the Senate will have to confirm both of President Donald Trump's pending nominees before it can conduct most major business again. FERC has been operating without a quorum since former Chairman Norman Bay stepped down in February.

Honorable said she will formally announce her plans in a speech Tuesday to the Energy Information Administration conference in Washington.

Honorable said she plans to stay in D.C. but doesn't have her next job lined up.

WHAT'S NEXT: Trump's FERC nominees, Senate aide Neil Chatterjee and Pennsylvania regulator Robert Powelson, have cleared the Energy and Natural Resources Committee but are still waiting for a vote to be scheduled before the full Senate.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Carter Page says he's been interviewed by the FBI [Back](#)

By Austin Wright | 06/26/2017 06:24 PM EDT

Carter Page, a former Donald Trump campaign foreign policy adviser, said Monday he's been interviewed by the FBI as part of its investigation into Russia's election meddling.

The interviews, which he called "extensive discussions," came prior to James Comey's firing as

FBI director in May, Page said. Page, an energy consultant who traveled to Moscow last summer to deliver a speech while advising the Trump campaign, has become a target of the FBI investigation, along with the probes being pursued by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, which are all looking into the possibility of collusion between Moscow and the Trump campaign.

"During my extensive discussions with the FBI agents just weeks before Comey's departure, they acknowledged that I'm a loyal American veteran but indicated that their 'management' was concerned that I did not believe the conclusions of the fake January 6 intelligence report," Page said in a statement, referring to the public assessment by U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia sought to sway the presidential election in Trump's favor.

"I told them that I learned the lessons from the intelligence failures of the original Dodgy Dossier from 2003 which cost this country thousands of service members lives and over a trillion dollars," he continued. "Our frank and open conversations gave me confidence that there are still logical, honest individuals at the Bureau who respect civil rights and the Constitution, despite the recent devastating impact on our democracy by self-centered politicians at the top of the Clinton-Obama-Comey regime."

Page has previously claimed to be the victim of a civil-rights conspiracy because of possible government surveillance of his communications.

The Washington Post [first reported](#) that he had been interviewed by the FBI.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Park Service behaved appropriately regarding Trump crowd reports, watchdog finds [Back](#)

By Matthew Nussbaum | 06/26/2017 06:14 PM EDT

The feud between the National Park Service and the Trump White House appeared to ease on Monday after a watchdog found that NPS officials did not alter inauguration crowd size estimates and that public affairs officials did not leak information about a phone call between President Donald Trump and the agency's acting director.

The NPS was wrapped up in the controversy that overwhelmed the first days of Trump's administration after the president and his aides claimed record crowds at his inauguration and railed against those who cast doubt on the claim.

One day after the inauguration, White House press secretary Sean Spicer lambasted reporters in the briefing room and said, falsely, that Trump's inaugural had drawn the "largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period."

The Park Service became the target of Trump's ire after its Twitter account retweeted side-by-side images that appeared to show a paltry crowd for Trump's inauguration compared to former President Barack Obama.

The feud deepened when reports leaked of a phone call Trump placed the day after the inauguration to Acting NPS Director Michael Reynolds in which the president allegedly ordered the agency to produce images to help prove his claims of crowd size.

But a report from the Department of the Interior Inspector General released on Monday found that NPS employees did not alter crowd size records and the NPS public affairs officials did not leak information to the press about the phone call.

The report does not make clear who requested the investigation, which was initiated in February.

The watchdog explores whether an official with the NPS National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA) had inappropriately asked employees to scrub attendance records when responding to requests from both the media and the White House about the crowd size.

"We found no evidence to substantiate the allegation that the NAMA official asked staff to alter crowd size information," the IG report said. "The official told us that she instructed the staff not to include crowd size estimates in the reports because she wanted to make sure that the reports did not contain nonfactual references to crowd size. She explained that the NPS did not have the necessary methodology in place to do an accurate crowd count and, since the Million Man March in 1995, had made it a practice not to collect or provide any crowd size information for events held at the National Mall."

A second point the IG dug into was whether a public affairs employee had leaked information about a call between Reynolds and Trump, in which Trump allegedly ordered the acting NPS director to release additional photos of the crowd and apparently vented about the agency's Twitter account posting the side-by-side photos.

The complaint, apparently from another NPS employee to the IG, was made after an NPS employee allegedly commented about the need to "refute" Spicer's Jan. 21 claims and said he disagreed with Spicer's characterization. The IG's report concluded that neither that employee, or other members of the public affairs team had disclosed information about the phone call and that "Reynolds stated that he did not consider his conversation with the President protected information."

The employee who was accused acknowledged that he took issue with three of Spicer's comments that he considered false: that the inauguration was the first time protective grass coverings had been used; that the crowd extended from the steps of the Capitol to the Washington monument; and that the crowd was the biggest ever at an inauguration.

"The public affairs employee recalled thinking that NPS would need to prepare a response to address Spicer's statements; he explained that based on his experience, he expected the NPS to get questions about them from the media," the report found. "Soon after the press conference

ended, the employee said, NPS prepared a written response to Spicer's statements, which was vetted through the NPS and DOI Offices of Communications, so that public affairs staff would be ready for any media inquiries. We confirmed the employee's account with an NPS communications official."

The report confirmed that Trump did in fact contact Reynolds by phone on Jan. 21 and "request photographs of the inauguration." The NPS sent six pictures to the White House, the report found.

The White House later hung a different picture of the inauguration crowd in the area near the press room. The picture is incorrectly dated Jan. 21, 2017.

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[Back](#)

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