



A banner of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was killed in a Saudi consulate. Republicans and Democrats in Congress flatly accuse the Saudi prince of being responsible.

Trump alone defends prince

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The president's defense of the prince is reminiscent of the way he deflects questions about Russia's interference in the 2016 election by saying that President Vladimir V. Putin always denies it when he asks.

As with Russia, those statements have become increasingly unpersuasive. "He's showing that they're desperate," said Bruce O. Riedel, an expert on Saudi Arabia who is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "They're now staring at the fact that they're not going to be able to deny Mohammed bin Salman's culpability."

Mr. Trump's stand is creating an American foreign policy that is becoming increasingly isolated in its position. The European Union has demanded "full clarity" from the Saudis about the killing of Mr. Khashoggi, who lived in Virginia and was a contributor to The Washington Post. Even other countries like Israel, with strategic ties to Saudi Arabia, are not vocally defending Prince Mohammed.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress flatly accuse the prince of being responsible and say they will push for much stronger action against Saudi Arabia. On Saturday, Senator Bob Corker, the Tennessee Republican who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, tweeted, "Everything

points to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, MbS, ordering @washingtonpost journalist Jamal #Khashoggi's killing." The United Arab Emirates, one of Saudi Arabia's neighbors, is eager to wind down Prince Mohammed's marquee foreign policy project, the war in Yemen, where Saudi and Emirati-backed forces are battling Houthi rebels backed by Iran. The war, which has killed thousands of civilians, is a primary target of American lawmakers.

Mr. Trump refused to listen to an audio recording of the killing.

Mr. Trump's national security adviser, John R. Bolton, met the crown prince of the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed bin Zayed, last week in Abu Dhabi, and the two discussed ways to hasten an end to the war.

During that trip, Mr. Bolton told reporters that the Turkish audio recording "does not, in any way, link the crown prince to the killing." Mr. Trump did not say whether it shed light on Prince Mohammed's role, but he contended that he would not learn anything from listening to it.

"I've been fully briefed on it," Mr. Trump told Chris Wallace of Fox News. "In fact, I said to the people, 'Should I?"

They said: 'You really shouldn't. There's no reason.'"

Mr. Trump noted that the Treasury Department had imposed "massive" human rights sanctions on 17 Saudis involved in the crime, some of whom are close associates of the prince.

The list included Saud al-Qahatani, a top adviser to Prince Mohammed, but it did not include Ahmed al-Assiri, a former deputy head of the Saudi intelligence service, whom Saudi officials said masterminded the plot to confront Mr. Khashoggi in the consulate on Oct. 2.

"At the same time," Mr. Trump said, "we do have an ally and I want to stick with an ally that in many ways has been very good."

He emphasizes the jobs created by Saudi Arabia's pledge to buy \$110 billion worth of American weapons. But defense analysts have calculated only \$14.5 billion in booked sales, and the real number might be lower than that. The Saudis have not concluded a single major new arms deal since Mr. Trump took office, according to Mr. Riedel.

Saudi Arabia is a linchpin of the American strategy to isolate Iran. The kingdom agreed to increase oil production to offset the loss of oil from Iran after Mr. Trump reimposed sanctions on Iran's energy and banking system this month.

But in recent weeks, with the United States having eased the pressure on the

market by granting waivers to several major importers of Iranian oil, Saudi Arabia is considering cutting production.

Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, cultivated Prince Mohammed and views him as critical to his efforts to broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The prince did help by modulating Saudi Arabia's response to Mr. Trump's decision to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem last year.

But the prince's father, King Salman, has since made clear that the Saudis will not force the Palestinians to accept a deal with Israel — and Mr. Kushner's peacemaking efforts look stymied.

Given the passions generated on Capitol Hill by the Yemen war, the White House is likely to use the Khashoggi affair as leverage to force Prince Mohammed to wind down the conflict as quickly as possible. But Saudi experts warn that this will be difficult, since an abrupt Saudi retreat would further tarnish the prince's image inside the kingdom.

"It's very clear that what the administration wants is to buy off Congress with Yemen," Mr. Riedel said. "But it doesn't solve the underlying problem, which is that Mohammed bin Salman is a destabilizing force in the region."

David E. Sanger contributed reporting.

Inmate firefighters learn a hard lesson

California welcomes help from prisoners, but not so much from ex-convicts

BY MIHIR ZAVERI

As smoke from the Camp Fire drifted over the San Francisco Bay Area, clouding the air around Amika Mota's home in Oakland, she was reminded of her time in prison.

While serving a sentence for vehicular manslaughter, Ms. Mota, 41, began putting out car, structure and wildfires in Central California in 2012, one of roughly 4,000 inmate firefighters in the state. Through firefighting, the state tries to rehabilitate prisoners while providing a critical — and cost-effective — line of defense against a growing threat of natural disaster.

Ms. Mota found it to be a "transformative" experience that was a welcome and productive reprieve from prison's widespread drugs, violence and abuse. She said she would have "loved" to make firefighting her career.

Yet she remembers one lesson that was drilled into her head: After you are released, do not expect to be a firefighter anymore — criminals will not get hired. So when she was released on parole several years ago, she did not apply.

"It had been really ingrained in me by the folks that trained me that it was not possible," Ms. Mota said.

She is one of many former inmates who volunteered to help defend the state from perennial fires for little pay, in some cases risking their lives, but who now find fire departments unwilling to hire them.

As the Camp Fire rages in Northern California, the deadliest and most destructive in state history, and wildfires scorch western Los Angeles, about 1,500 inmates have been deployed to help fight active fires, out of a firefighter total of roughly 9,400, according to California state officials.

Ms. Mota does believe she learned invaluable skills in the program that she has translated into a career helping other former prisoners at the Young Women's Freedom Center, a nonprofit group in San Francisco.

But since she was released from prison, Ms. Mota said, she also thinks about how, year after year, the wildfires seem to grow stronger. She thinks about how, on average, inmate firefighters are paid \$2 per day, and another \$1 per hour when fighting active fires. She thinks about how six inmate firefighters have died since 1983, according to the state, and how, ultimately, she hears about so many who, like her, are discouraged from applying or are barred from being firefighters because of their criminal records.

"I also begin to really look at the injustice of what it looks like to be this massive labor force for the state of California that's getting paid pennies on the dollar," she said. "We should be doing a lot more to make sure that folks are re-entering in a positive way."

California relies on prisoners to fight wildfires more than any other state. In 1946, the state opened Camp Rainbow in Fallbrook, which housed inmates to fight fires. Over the decades, the program would grow.

Today, 3,700 inmates work at 44 fire camps across the state, said Alexandra Powell, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, which helps run the fire camp program.

Men, women and youths can volunteer for the program, under certain restrictions. For example, they must have five years or less remaining on their sentences. Those convicted of rape or arson are disqualified, Ms. Powell said. Those who volunteer can receive time off their sentence, she added.

"Through rehabilitation, and programs like the fire camp program, inmates learn useful skills that can help them on the outside," Ms. Powell said. "These firefighters are working hard to help the people of California in their time of need. They are repaying their debt to society in a productive way."

Ms. Mota, despite her concerns, said she was a champion of the program and wanted it to be available for others.

The program has increasingly drawn scrutiny from criminal justice reform advocates, who have called it one of the most striking examples of undercompensated prison labor.

It also illustrates how convictions can have lasting impacts on people's lives, said Angela Hanks, the director of the Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success at the Center for Law and Social Policy, a Washington-based nonprofit group that promotes policies that help low-income Americans.

Ms. Hanks said that incentives given to prisoners to join the fire camps, such as reduced sentences, might draw some who would otherwise not want to join the program.

"It is such a dangerous job," she said. "At a minimum, people should be paid a fair wage."

Once they are released from prison, inmates find it difficult to join the ranks of professional firefighters, said Katherine Katcher, the founder and executive director of Root and Rebound, a nonprofit group that helps people with criminal histories re-enter society. Some former inmates, like Ms. Mota, don't bother applying, Ms. Katcher said. Some fire departments also bar people with certain criminal backgrounds from becoming firefighters, she said.

"It had been really ingrained in me by the folks that trained me that it was not possible" to be hired as a professional firefighter.

For example, the fire department in Bakersfield, a city of more than 380,000 people in Southern California, said it disqualified applicants who have been convicted of a felony. In the Los Angeles County Fire Department, felonies and some misdemeanors are grounds for disqualification, said Capt. Tony Imbrenda, a department spokesman.

"I can tell you that someone who has been incarcerated and part of an inmate hand crew has no chance of employment with this agency," he said.

Various counties also have restrictions on who can get a license to be an emergency medical technician, or E.M.T., which is required by many fire departments in California, Ms. Katcher said. State law directs local emergency medical service agencies to deny an E.M.T. certification if the person has been convicted of two or more felonies, or has been convicted of any theft-related misdemeanor in the preceding five years, among other possible factors.

This year, California legislators debated a bill that would have directed local agencies to, in some cases, not let criminal history be a reason to deny certification. Instead, legislators scaled it down, deciding to pass a bill that would collect data on people's being denied.

California is looking for other ways to help inmate firefighters get jobs. Ms. Powell said the state was opening a training and certification program in Ventura County that is intended "to create a pathway for former offenders to compete for entry-level firefighting jobs with the state."

For Ms. Katcher, the initiatives are not enough.

"Our state has the opportunity to improve its laws to do better," she said. "It's not just about saying a program is rehabilitative. That's just a word. Do the right thing."



About 1,500 inmates have been deployed to help battle active blazes across California, which relies more than any other state on prisoners to fight wildfires.

A Democratic sweep on unlikely ground

Party's concerted push takes all 4 House seats in birthplace of conservatism

BY ADAM NAGOURNEY

California Democrats have completed their sweep of the congressional delegation in Orange County, as Gil Cisneros defeated Young Kim, a Republican, to capture a seat in what had once been one of the most conservative Republican bastions in the nation.

The victory by Mr. Cisneros, a philanthropist, was declared on Saturday by The Associated Press. It completes what has amounted to a Democratic rout in California this year: Democrats set out to capture seven Republican-held seats where Hillary Clinton defeated President Trump in 2016, including four in Orange County. They won six of them.

Representative David Valadao, from the Central Valley, is the only Republican who appears to have survived the Democratic onslaught in those seven districts, according to The Associated Press. His margin has shrunk as mail-in votes have continued to be counted. The deadline for counting those votes in California is Dec. 7.

With Mr. Cisneros's victory, Democrats now control all the House seats that represent Orange County — the birthplace of Richard M. Nixon and modern-day conservatism. The party also won supermajorities in the California Assembly and Senate, while the party's candidate for governor — Gavin Newsom, the lieutenant governor — easily turned back a Republican challenge. Democrats control every statewide elected position in California.

Before this election, the 53-member California congressional delegation included 39 Democrats and 14 Republicans. Assuming Mr. Valadao keeps his lead, after this year's midterms it will be



Gil Cisneros, a Democrat and former Navy officer who became a millionaire after winning the California lottery, defeated Young Kim for a seat in the House.

45 Democrats and eight Republicans.

Mr. Cisneros and Ms. Kim were competing for the seat left open after Representative Ed Royce, who has represented the area since 1993, decided not to seek re-election. Mr. Cisneros won by about 3,500 votes, receiving 50.8 percent of the votes cast.

Mr. Cisneros is a former Navy officer who became a millionaire after winning the California state lottery in 2010. He and his wife turned to philanthropy after that. He is a former Republican who left the party in 2008 to become a Democrat.

Another Republican, Representative Darrell Issa, who represented San Diego and Orange Counties, also decided not to seek re-election in what clearly was a challenging political environment for Republicans, given Mr. Trump's unpopularity and demographic shifts in Southern California.

Democrats easily captured Mr. Issa's seat as Mike Levin, an environmental

lawyer, defeated Diane Harkey, a Republican and former member of the Assembly.

The changing political tides in Orange County were captured in the ethnic dynamics of the race to succeed Mr. Royce. Ms. Kim was seeking to become the first Korean-American woman in Congress, but faced a challenge from Mr. Cisneros, a Latino in a state where Latino voters have become an increasingly powerful force.

Aides to Mr. Cisneros said they were aggressively seeking support from Asian-American voters — they dispatched campaign workers who spoke Korean and Mandarin.

The results were a setback for the House majority leader, Kevin McCarthy, a Bakersfield Republican who had invested energy and money into trying to salvage his delegation. Mr. McCarthy, who will be the minority leader in the next Congress, after Democrats seized

control of the House, helped champion a ballot initiative that would overturn a gasoline tax passed by the Legislature last year to pay for road repair. The initiative was intended to bring Republicans out to vote in these endangered Republican districts.

The initiative was defeated, and political analysts said the results suggested that any increase in Republican turnout caused by the gas tax was overwhelmed by turnout among Democratic voters. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee had seized on California as a leading front of its battle to take back Congress, opening an office there in 2017, and flooding the state with money and workers.

The idea of making such an effort in Orange County — and in districts with a Republican registration edge — would have seemed unthinkable not long ago. But the area has been becoming Democratic in recent years, as it has become younger and more ethnically diverse.

Mrs. Clinton defeated Mr. Trump by more than four million votes in California and won in Orange County. Republicans said the president's continued attacks on California since the election — along with his advocating tough immigration measures in the final weeks of the campaign — had created obstacles for Republican candidates already in a tough political environment.

California Republicans have seen their enrollment in steady decline over the past 20 years. Some party members — led by Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former governor — have sought to push the party to moderate its positions on issues like immigration, in an effort to appeal to more voters.

But those efforts have largely been rebuffed; many of the Republican candidates for Congress in California this year — in particular, Representatives Dana Rohrabacher and Mimi Walters — stood by Mr. Trump through the election process. Both of them lost their seats to Democratic challengers.

CORRECTIONS

• Because of an editing error, an article on Thursday about the crash of a Boeing 737 Max 8 jetliner off Indonesia misstated the source of reports that Boeing had not adequately informed airlines about changes to the aircraft's emergency system. Flying Lessons, an industry blog by Christine Negroni, was

among the initial reporters of the development, not The Wall Street Journal.

• An article Nov. 9 about visiting recently burned areas at Yosemite National Park misstated how the Ferguson fire affected access to the park. Much of Yosemite was closed, but not all of it.