
International Briefs

Steele Told FBI, ‘I Went with Hillary Clinton Rather Than the FBI’

A recently released FBI interview with British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) agent Christopher Steele (and his Orbis Business Intelligence co-founder Christopher Burrows) is covered by John Solomon in his “Just the News,” January 20, which includes links to the FBI reports and interviews.

The interview with Steele took place after the FBI fired him for leaking to the press, which they had forbidden. When they asked him why he did it, he responded that he had been “riding two horses,” getting paid by both the FBI and Fusion GPS (which was hired by Hillary Clinton to gather dirt on Trump), but after Comey reopened the investigation into Secretary Clinton’s illegal use of her private servers for classified information, Steele decided to go with the one horse—Clinton.

Steele also said, the FBI wrote, that President Donald Trump was “their ‘main opponent’ and indicated that they were fearful about how Trump’s presidency negatively impacted the historical U.S.-U.K. alliance and the U.S.-U.K. special relationship.”

Prince Charles and Atlantic Council Push ‘Terra Carta’

At a January 19-21 premiere event sponsored by the Atlantic Council’s Global Energy Forum, rabid Malthusian environmentalist Prince Charles presented his newly

launched initiative, the “Terra Carta”—or Earth Charter, imitating the Latin of the Norman oligarchy’s infamous Magna Carta—and its “Sustainable Markets Initiative” to “bring CEOs together” to “drive a just energy transition.”

Introduced in gushing terms by Atlantic Council President Frederick Kempe, Prince Charles spoke of the “interconnection” between human health (COVID) and “planetary health.” We must move beyond good intentions, he said, to a “practical effort to mobilize financial resources.... I have been challenging leaders of nations and CEOs of corporations to take action.”

Growing Unrest over Brazil’s COVID-19 Crisis

The disastrous COVID-19 crisis in the Brazilian city of Manaus (Amazonas state) is not letting up, despite the announcement that the Brazilian Air Force is flying up to 1,500 patients out of the city to other locations, as the collapsed local healthcare system has no beds. Oxygen continues to be scarce, despite emergency supplies flown in from other parts of Brazil and other countries. One desperate epidemiologist, Jassem Orellana, declared that “Manaus is lost,” and called for a mission of international observers to be sent to the state as, in her view, nothing the local authorities do can be relied on.

The political unrest in the country is palpable, and is particularly aimed at President Jair Bolsonaro, whose handling of the pandemic has been incompetent and negligent at best. Calls for Bolsonaro’s impeachment are increasing, as seen most recently in car

caravans organized in January demanding his ouster. His Foreign Minister, Ernesto Araújo, a Steve Bannon acolyte who hates China, is also on the hotseat for having sabotaged negotiations with China that would have allowed the importation of inputs from that country needed to produce the Sinopharm vaccine domestically.

Ramaphosa: Rich Countries Hoarding Vaccines Will Prolong Pandemic

Making his Special Address to the January 25-29 Davos Agenda 2021 conference of the World Economic Forum (WEF) on January 25, South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa warned rich nations who have bought and hoarded more COVID-19 vaccines than they need, that they risk prolonging the pandemic. Stressing the need for global cooperation in tackling challenges from COVID-19, Ramaphosa said, “We are all not safe if some countries are vaccinating their people and other countries are not vaccinating.”

Ramaphosa, now finishing his term as AU chairman, thereby endorsed, and brought before the WEF, the message of WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who told his board Jan. 18, “I need to be blunt. The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure—and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world’s poorest countries.” He said the “me-first approach” would be self-defeating, because the richer countries would remain at risk if they ignored needs of the world’s poorest.

Cuba To Make 100 Million Doses of Its COVID Vaccine for Cuba and Ibero-America

Dr. Vicente Vérez, director of Cuba's leading scientific institution, the Finlay Vaccine Institute, has announced that the Institute intends to produce 100 million doses of the Soberana-2 COVID vaccine, one of four vaccines currently being developed in Cuba to vaccinate its population of 11.2 million people by the end of this year.

Cuba has also indicated that the vaccines it produces will be made available to Ibero-American and other interested nations. Dr. Vérez told Xinhua that the marketing of the vaccine "is a combination of humanity and [having] an impact on world health. We're not a multinational where the financial goal is the top priority. Our goal is to create greater health."

The Soberana-2 vaccine will enter Phase-3 clinical trials in March. Once its use is authorized, it will be the first such vaccine developed and produced in Ibero-America. The Trump administration repeatedly intensified economic warfare against Cuba, including in January 2021, and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo boasted publicly that he intended to "asphyxiate" the Cuban economy. The Biden administration said Jan. 28 that it would "review U.S. policy on Cuba."

U.S./NATO Makes Naval Show of Force in the Black Sea

The change of administrations in Washington has so far had no effect on the nature of the military standoff between the U.S. and its NATO allies on the one side, and Russia on the other.

On January 23, the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook passed through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea for what the U.S. Sixth Fleet said was a joint maritime and air training mission that also involved a P-8A maritime patrol aircraft and a NATO E-3 AWACS aircraft. A day later, the *Donald Cook* was joined by the fleet oiler *USNS Laramie*. "*Laramie*'s arrival in the Black Sea helps promote stability in the region by its ability to replenish ships at sea. *Laramie*'s refueling capabilities allow *Donald Cook* extended time on station to continue operations without having to go to port," the Navy said in a January 24 news release.

ILO: Pandemic Has Caused Job Losses Equal to 255 Million Full-Time Jobs

A January 25 report by the UN's International Labor Organization (ILO) states: "In 2020, 8.8% of global working hours were lost relative to the fourth quarter of 2019, equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs." This contraction is four times that which was reported for the financial crisis of 2009.

For the current year, the ILO forecasts a loss of the equivalent of between 90 and 130 million full-time jobs—but the potential effects of the fourth and fifth wave of pandemic are not yet factored into this expectation. Nor are those job losses reported that are not officially registered by ILO member states, i.e., seasonal and shadow workers.

Argentine President To Visit China, Join Belt & Road, in May

Assuming the coronavirus pandemic permits it, Argentine President Alberto Fernández's May 5 trip

to China will be of strategic importance to Argentina's future. He is expected to meet with President Xi Jinping twice and sign a memorandum of understanding to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), along with several other agreements.

The two presidents already enjoy a warm relationship and have communicated with each other frequently over the recent period. While Fernández has said he seeks a friendly and hopefully cooperative relationship with the Biden administration, particularly as this relates to negotiations with the IMF, he is looking to the relationship with China to help make major strides in his nation's economic and scientific development.

China Completes High-Speed Rail Line To Its Northeast

China completed construction of a high-speed rail line from Beijing to the northeastern city of Harbin on January 22. The route passes through Changchun and Shenyang and covers a distance of 1,198 km (744 miles). It cuts the travel time from seven hours to less than five. The line will use the new Fuxing Alpine EMU (Electrical Multi-Unit) train sets. Temperatures in Harbin in January, the coldest month, have an average low of -3.6°F. The flaming red train has been dubbed the "Fire Phoenix" and is one of the most technically advanced trains of its type; it can operate at -40°F. The new EMU adopts technology such as chrome-molybdenum alloy steel bolts and nuts, low-temperature control switches, automatic anti-freezing function brakes, and water supply and drainage pipes covered with cold-proof materials.