

Trump starts chopping heads at White House

Pushes out senior advisor Mira Ricardel at the start of reshuffle

● The biggest name on the chopping block is chief of staff John Kelly

● Melania Trump was angry that Kelly had refused to promote some of her aides

AFP | Washington, United States

An angry Donald Trump pushed out a senior advisor Wednesday after First Lady Melania Trump demanded her sacking, with more heads set to roll in a White House reshuffle triggered by infighting and setbacks in the midterm elections.

Melania Trump made the extremely rare demand for deputy national security advisor Mira Ricardel to be fired on Tuesday, saying "she no longer deserves the honour of serving in this White House."

The protocol-busting move followed a falling out that press leaks say was partly linked to a dispute over seating arrangements on the plane that took the first lady for a tour of African countries in October. Ricardel was also reportedly blamed for negative news coverage of Melania Trump.

The first lady at least partially got her way Wednesday when presidential spokeswoman Sarah Sanders announced that Ricardel "departs the White House to transition to a new role within the Administration."

The start to the second half of Donald Trump's first term is enveloped in gloom as the president surveys the damage from the midterms, tension with some of America's closest allies, and now turmoil inside the administration.

On Wednesday, he was quot-



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump depart the White House for Paris (file)

ed by right-wing website The Daily Caller saying that a wider reshuffle is coming.

"A lot of people want to come in, a lot of politicians who have had very successful careers want to come in," he said.

'Adult in the room'

The biggest name on the chopping block, according to multiple US media reports, is chief of staff

John Kelly.

A retired Marine Corps general, he has often been referred to as "the adult in the room" during Trump's drama-prone administration, even if critics say he has done little to temper the president's most damaging outbursts.

Now Kelly's days are numbered, according to the unconfirmed but mounting leaks to



Mira Ricardel, deputy national security advisor



John Kelly, White House chief of staff

US media.

His position, tenuous for months, has been undermined further by reports that he also clashed with Melania Trump -- a relatively backstage first lady who has rarely made her influence so obviously felt as this week.

Melania Trump was angry that Kelly had refused to promote some of her aides, reports say.

Nick Ayers, a 36-year-old chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence and renowned political consultant, is reportedly high on the list to replace Kelly.

Another expected reshuffle casualty is Homeland Security

Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, a Kelly ally who oversees the politically sensitive task of carrying out Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration.

Trump told The Daily Caller he'll make "a decision on homeland shortly."

Among Nielsen's critics has been National Security Adviser John Bolton, who last month was widely reported to have erupted in a shouting match with Kelly right outside the Oval Office over her performance.

Clouds gather over Trump

Donald Trump has been in a funk since last week's midterms

which saw Democrats seize control of the House of Representatives, ending the Republicans' dominance of both chambers of Congress.

While the Republicans held their Senate majority, the Democratic win means the president will for the first time face an opposition that has teeth.

Democrats vow to use their control of powerful House oversight committees to go after Trump's nebulous personal finances and to protect an explosive probe into whether his 2016 election campaign colluded with Russian agents.

Pressure is mounting from the probe, as the special counsel Robert Mueller digs ever more deeply into the president's inner circle.

When Trump suddenly replaced his attorney general Jeff Sessions last week with a fierce critic of the Russia investigation, Matthew Whitaker, critics accused him of violating the constitution.

The Department of Justice ruled on Wednesday that Whitaker's appointment is in fact constitutional, but this will do little to calm claims that Trump's real goal is to defang the Russia probe, which he describes as "a witch hunt."

Abroad, there's no respite for the real estate billionaire either.

A weekend trip to Paris for World War I commemorations was marred by a row with President Emmanuel Macron. Trump mocking referred to Germany's invasions of France during the two world wars, while also berating America's European allies in NATO over their defense spending.

The other main takeaway from Trump's trip was a PR blunder when the White House canceled his plan to visit an American military cemetery due to rain grounding the presidential helicopter.

Lost film showing Mickey Mouse's predecessor found

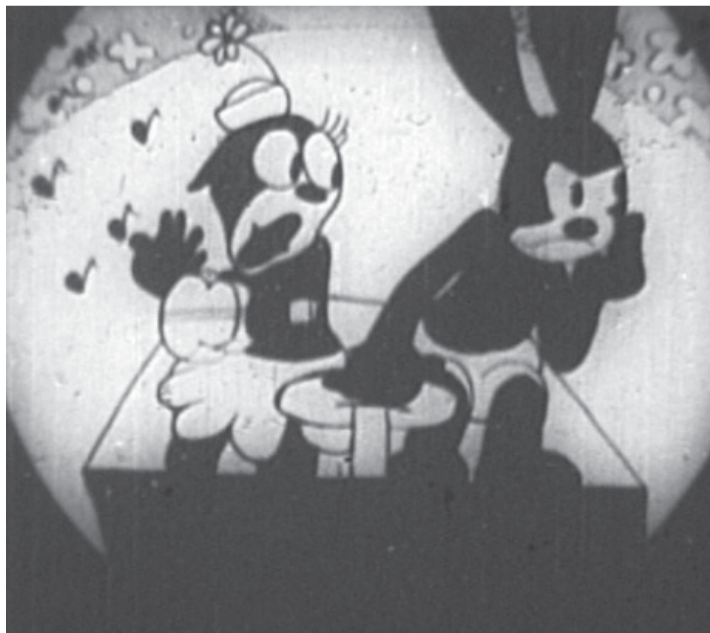
Tokyo, Japan

When Yasushi Watanabe bought a cartoon film decades ago as a high school student in the Japanese city of Osaka, he had no idea he was purchasing animation history.

But the modest reel he bought for just 500 yen (\$4.40 in today's money) has been revealed as a rare lost cartoon produced by Walt Disney featuring a character that led to the creation of Mickey Mouse.

The discovery was reported by Japan's Asahi Shimbun daily, which Watanabe contacted after reading a book about the history of "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit", the character Disney created in the 1920s.

The book said seven of the 26 short films featuring Oswald that Walt Disney produced were



Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, right, is the protagonist in the short animation film "Neck 'n' Neck" (1928).



While Disney created the character, complete with oversized ears and a button nose, he lost the rights to another company, prompting him to develop a new cartoon figure: Mickey Mouse.

missing, and Watanabe remembered his childhood reel.

It was labelled in Japanese

"Mickey Manga Spide" -- Mickey Cartoon Speedy in English -- and featured a dog policeman on a motorbike chasing Oswald and his girlfriend in a car.

As the trio speed around valleys and along roads, the characters and the vehicles stretched and shrank, the Asahi reported, using a technique that later featured commonly in Disney works.

The newspaper contacted the author of the book and the Walt Disney Archives and confirmed that the reel was indeed one of the missing films, originally titled "Neck 'n' Neck."

"We're absolutely delighted to learn that a copy of the lost film exists," Becky Cline, director of the archives, told the newspaper.

"As I've been a Disney fan for many years, I'm happy I was able to play a role (in the discovery,"

added Watanabe, an anime history researcher who is now 84.

His childhood purchase is now housed at the Kobe Planet Film Archive, and another film showing 50 seconds of the same cartoon has also been unearthed at the Toy Film Museum in Kyoto, the newspaper said.

In 2014, Norway's National Library announced it had discovered a copy of a Walt Disney cartoon featuring Oswald, which had been thought lost.

The cartoon, titled "Empty Socks," was the first Christmas film made by the US entertainment giant and was discovered during an inventory at the library's facility near the Arctic Circle.

A year later, another short film featuring Oswald was uncovered in Britain and screened for the first time in 87 years.