

BREAKING: Steve Bannon Out as Chief Strategist

President Donald Trump on Friday fired Stephen Bannon as his chief strategist in the latest high-level White House shake-up, removing a powerful and controversial figure known for far-right political views, two people familiar with the matter said.

Bannon's ouster comes with the president increasingly isolated over his comments in the aftermath of white supremacist violence in the Virginia college town of Charlottesville.

A champion of economic nationalism and a political provocateur, Bannon, 63, is a former U.S. Navy officer, Goldman Sachs investment banker and Hollywood movie producer.

Trump said on Tuesday the anti-racist demonstrators were as responsible for the violence as the neo-Nazis and white supremacists who instigated the protests. On Thursday, he decried the removal in numerous cities of "beautiful" monuments to the pro-slavery Civil War Confederacy.

Those remarks sparked rebukes from fellow Republicans, top corporate executives and some close allies. Some supporters, including vice president Mike Pence, stood by Trump.

Under pressure from moderate Republicans to fire Bannon, Trump declined to publicly back him on Tuesday, although he left his options open. "We'll see what happens with Mr. Bannon," he told reporters at Trump Tower in New York.

Bannon had been in a precarious position before but Trump opted to keep him, in part because his chief strategist played a major role in his 2016 election victory and is backed by many of the president's most loyal rank-and-file supporters.

On July 28, Trump replaced his beleaguered White House chief of staff, Reince Priebus, installing retired General John Kelly in his place in a major shake-up of his top team. Trump then ousted White House communications chief Anthony Scaramucci on July 31 over an obscene tirade just 10 days after the president named him to the post. Scaramucci's hiring had prompted Sean Spicer, a Priebus ally, to abruptly resign as press secretary.