

# Donald Trump: Defective Thought Process

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## Introduction

This webpage documents some of the false statements by U.S. President Donald Trump and the exposure of the Truth by journalists at respected news organizations, such as *The Washington Post*, the Associated Press, and *The New York Times*. Some of these false statements by Trump might euphemistically be described as exaggerations, but I believe these false statements show either (1) Trump's disdain for learning the Truth or (2) a narcissistic

character flaw that leads Trump to delusions about how many people support him.

Trump himself, together with Trump's supporters, have a delusional opinion that the liberal newsmedia (e.g., *The New York Times*) are "dishonest", and are *not* reporting major events. As my citations below show, many of Trump's false statements contradict facts reported by authoritative U.S. Government websites. This is *not* some alleged conspiracy by liberal journalists against Trump.

In writing this essay, I hope to explain to students how Trump's defective thought process created a crisis in the U.S. Government. I document details — with many citations — that I hope will assist future historians in understanding the turmoil in 2017.

I also include some instances of alleged misconduct in this essay, to show poor judgment by Trump and/or his appointees.

I avoid mentioning Trump's policies, some of which may be unconstitutional or ill-conceived, even harmful to the interests of the USA. Disagreements about policy are disputable or controversial, a matter of subjective opinion. On the other hand, Trump's false statements of fact have been shown by journalists to be objectively *false*.

This document is marked "preliminary draft" at the bottom of each page, to indicate that it is a work-in-progress. I intend to post another preliminary edition, perhaps in October 2017. The final version will be posted at my personal website after Trump is no longer president and after all of the investigations are finished.

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## **Before the Election in Nov 2016**

### **Trump's Delusion about Obama's Birthplace**

In the best-known pre-election bizarre behavior by Trump, Trump claimed that Obama was born in Kenya, and therefore *not* eligible to be president of the USA.

In June 2008, Obama's campaign released his short-form birth certificate, which legally proved that he was born in Hawaii. [LA Times](#).

As early as 17 March 2011, Trump was publicly expressing his opinion that Obama was not born in the USA. See, e.g., [CNN](#).

On 27 April 2011, Obama attempted to end the controversy by publicly posting at the White House website a copy of his long-form birth certificate issued by Hawaii. [White House](#); [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#). Trump immediately took credit for forcing Obama to release his long-form birth certificate. [NY Times](#).

But Trump continued to believe that Obama was born outside of the USA until about 15 Sep 2016. Trump's spokesman said on 15 Sep that Trump now believed Obama was born in the USA, and Trump himself said the same thing at his new hotel in Washington DC on 16 Sep

2016. [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#). Note that Trump himself did *not* admit his error, and Trump did not apologize to Obama. [Washington Post](#).

And when Trump abandoned his claim that Obama was born in Kenya, Trump espoused a new falsehood that Hillary Clinton began the controversy over whether Obama was born in the USA! [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

This example displays Trump's inability to engage in critical thinking and reject false statements. This is a failure of Trump's education.

It is an axiom of propaganda that a false statement that is repeated often will convince some people it is true. In February 2011, [Politico](#) cites an opinion poll that half of Republicans believe Obama was *not* born in the USA.

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### Trump says he is “smart”

Trump attended college for only four years: two years of college at Fordham University and two final years of college at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Trump's highest educational credential is a bachelor's degree in economics.

That makes Trump's academic credentials inferior to Bill and Hillary Clinton (Yale Law School graduates), Obama (Harvard Law School graduate), and George W. Bush (MBA from Harvard Business School).

Despite Trump's ordinary academic credentials, Trump often boasts about how smart he is. See, e.g.,

1. "A transcript of Donald Trump's meeting with The Washington Post editorial board," [Washington Post](#), 21 Mar 2016. (“... I went to a great school, I was a good student and all. I am an intelligent person. My uncle, I would say my uncle was one of the brilliant people. He was at MIT for 35 years. As a great scientist and engineer, actually more than anything else. Dr. John Trump, a great guy. I'm an intelligent person. I understand what is going on.”)
2. Jeremy W. Peters, "Donald Trump's Appeal? G.O.P. Is Puzzled, but His Fans Aren't," [NY Times](#), 17 July 2015. (“ ‘I'm really smart,’ he boasted in Phoenix last weekend before rattling off his résumé highlights. ‘Went to the Wharton School of Finance. Even then, a long time ago, like the hardest, or one of the hardest, schools to get into.’ ”)
3. Jenna Johnson & Jose A. DelReal, "25 quotes capturing Donald Trump's final pitch to South Carolina," [Washington Post](#), 19 Feb 2016. (Trump: "I went to the Wharton School of Finance, the best school in the world... You've got to be really smart to get in, okay?")
4. On 21 Jan 2017, in a speech at the CIA headquarters, Trump said: “.... I'm a person

that very strongly believes in academics. In fact, every time I say I had an uncle who was a great professor at MIT for 35 years who did a fantastic job in so many different ways, academically — was an academic genius — and then they say, is Donald Trump an intellectual? Trust me, I'm like a smart persona.”

[White House](#).

These boasts are particularly hollow, given Trump's defective thought process that involves either false "facts" or *no* facts, as documented in this essay.

Trump is correct that it is difficult for stupid people to be admitted to prestigious private universities (e.g., Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, University of Pennsylvania, etc.). But it is snobbish for Trump to boast of having attended the University of Pennsylvania. There are students who are smart enough to be admitted to a prestigious private university, but do *not* have a wealthy parent who can afford to pay the expensive tuition at a private university, and so those smart students go to a less expensive state university. Other smart students may choose to attend a state university that has a research program in some specialized academic area that interests the student.

Academic degrees are really important for young people who are beginning their professional career. But for a person who has been practicing a profession for more than ten years, what really matters is a person's record of publications in scholarly journals, authorship of books, patents naming them as inventors, and other evidence of original intellectual accomplishment. In that context note that Trump's most famous book, *The Art of the Deal*, was co-authored (ghostwritten?) by Tony Schwartz.

Finally, if a person is really intelligent and knowledgeable, it will be obvious from their accomplishments and reputation. There is *no* need for anyone to boast of their intelligence.

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## Narcissism

On 4 August 2016, Dr. Krauthammer — a board-certified psychiatrist, a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and a political commentator for *The Washington Post* — warned Americans about a character flaw in Donald Trump, who was then the Republican candidate for U.S. President.

.... [Trump's] governing rule in life is to strike back when attacked, disrespected or even slighted. To understand Trump, you have to grasp the General Theory: He judges every action, every pronouncement, every person by a single criterion — whether or not it/he is “nice” to Trump.

....

Of course we all try to protect our own dignity and command respect. But Trump's hypersensitivity and unedited, untempered Pavlovian responses are, shall we say, unusual in both ferocity and predictability.

This is beyond narcissism. I used to think Trump was an 11-year-old, an undeveloped

schoolyard bully. I was off by about 10 years. His needs are more primitive, an infantile hunger for approval and praise, a craving that can never be satisfied. He lives in a cocoon of solipsism where the world outside himself has value — indeed exists — only insofar as it sustains and inflates him.

Most politicians seek approval. But Trump lives for the adoration. He doesn't even try to hide it, boasting incessantly about his crowds, his standing ovations, his TV ratings, his poll numbers, his primary victories. The latter are most prized because they offer empirical evidence of how loved and admired he is.

Charles Krauthammer, "Donald Trump and the fitness threshold," [Washington Post](#), 4 August 2016.

Krauthammer's opinion was reprinted in many newspapers, including [Chicago Tribune](#); [Philadelphia Inquirer](#); [Portland Oregonian](#).

Krauthammer clearly explained *why* Trump is obsessed with making false statements to show the huge number of people who support Trump.

A retired physician writing in *The Globe & Mail* began an article by saying:

The consensus as to Donald Trump's psychiatric issues is nearly unanimous. "Textbook narcissistic personality disorder," according to clinical psychologist Ben Michaelis, quoted in *Vanity Fair*. He is just one of many who have reached the same conclusion.

Gabor Maté, "Donald Trump, narcissism and diagnosis as political sport," [Globe & Mail](#), 14 Oct 2016, updated 20 Jan 2017.

If you do not like the "narcissistic" label for Trump, perhaps you will prefer what [The Guardian](#) newspaper in England said: "It is hard to imagine anyone more different from the cerebral, discreet 'no drama' Obama, 55, than the blowhard, rabble-rousing 70-year-old Trump, who pushed the notion that [Obama] was actually born in Kenya."

The American Psychiatric Association has a rule that prohibits psychiatrists from publicly diagnosing people who they have not personally interviewed. And if a psychiatrist has personally interviewed a patient, then physician-patient confidentiality prohibits the psychiatrist from disclosing the diagnosis, unless the patient consents. See, e.g., [NY Times](#). But the issue is not so simple. Physician-patient and psychotherapist-patient confidentiality has an exception for warning people who might be physically harmed by a patient. See, e.g., *Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California*, 551 P.2d 334 (Calif. 1976). Obviously, a president's decisions can harm many more people than one homicidal patient. The public statements of a candidate for high political office may contain adequate information for a psychiatrist or psychologist to credibly observe character flaws in the candidate's public persona. In this Internet era, one can find not only a transcript of statements, but also video that shows clues in facial expression and tone of voice.

On 6 August 2016 during a campaign speech in Windham, New Hampshire, Trump fired a barrage of accusations that Hillary Clinton has mental problems:

- "She took a little short-circuit in the brain, she has problems."

- “Unstable Hillary, she lacks the judgment, temperament and moral character to lead this country.”
- “She is a totally unhinged person. She's unbalanced.”

[Politico](#); [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#); [NBC News](#).

These statements by Trump arguably make the mental health of *both* candidates a legitimate political issue.

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## Examples of Bizarre Behavior

### Exaggerated Size of Inaugural Crowd

At the inaugural ceremonies on 20 Jan 2017, journalists noted that the size of the Trump's crowd was much smaller than presidential inaugurations in the recent past. There are three facts that support this conclusion:

1. Photographs of the crowd. *The New York Times* reports that Trump's crowd was about 1/3 the size of Obama's crowd in 2009.
2. Number of riders on the Washington, DC subway system (i.e., Metro). (There is a lack of parking in downtown Washington, so most people park at a suburban Metro station and take a train to downtown Washington.) At 11:00 on Obama's inauguration in 2009 there were 513,000 trips, compared with 193,000 at the same time for Trump's inauguration.
3. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "Hotels across the District of Columbia reported vacancies, a rarity for an event as large as a presidential inauguration."

See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 21 Jan 2017, the morning after Trump's inauguration, Trump went to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency to give a speech to mollify the intelligence community. Here is part of what Trump said:

And the reason you're my first stop is that, as you know, I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on Earth. (Laughter and applause.) And they sort of made it sound like I had a feud with the intelligence community. And I just want to let you know, the reason you're the number-one stop is exactly the opposite — exactly. And they understand that, too.

And I was explaining about the numbers. We did a thing yesterday at the speech. Did everybody like the speech? (Applause.) I've been given good reviews. But we had a massive field of people. You saw them. Packed. I get up this morning, I turn on one of the networks, and they show an empty field. I say, wait a minute, I made a speech. I looked out, the field was — it looked like a million, million and a half people. They

showed a field where there were practically nobody standing there. And they said, Donald Trump did not draw well. I said, it was almost raining, the rain should have scared them away, but God looked down and he said, we're not going to let it rain on your speech.

In fact, when I first started, I said, oh, no. The first line, I got hit by a couple of drops. And I said, oh, this is too bad, but we'll go right through it. But the truth is that it stopped immediately. It was amazing. And then it became really sunny. And then I walked off and it poured right after I left. It poured. But, you know, we have something that's amazing because we had — it looked — honestly, it looked like a million and a half people. Whatever it was, it was. But it went all the way back to the Washington Monument. And I turn on — and by mistake I get this network, and it showed an empty field. And it said we drew 250,000 people. Now, that's not bad, but it's a lie. We had 250,000 people literally around — you know, in the little bowl that we constructed. That was 250,000 people. The rest of the 20-block area, all the way back to the Washington Monument, was packed. So we caught them, and we caught them in a beauty. And I think they're going to pay a big price.

"Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence at CIA Headquarters," [White House](#), 21 Jan 2017.

*The Washington Post* reported:

What Trump delivered Saturday [21 Jan] was a campaign-style, stream-of-consciousness airing of grievances — at the Senate for delaying confirmation of his nominees; at critics for questioning whether he is smart and vigorous; and at journalists, whom he called “the most dishonest human beings on earth” and accused of lying about the size of his inauguration crowd.

Trump claimed falsely that the crowd for his swearing-in stretched down the National Mall to the Washington Monument and totaled more than 1 million people. It did not. Trump accused television networks of showing “an empty field” and reporting that he drew just 250,000 people to witness Friday’s ceremony.

“It looked like a million, a million and a half people,” Trump said, falsely claiming that his crowd “went all the way back to the Washington Monument.”

During his 2009 inaugural address, President Obama’s crowd extended that far, and photos from that day show a crowd clearly much larger than the one that showed up for Trump.

....

Trump also misrepresented what happened to the weather during his swearing in. He said he felt a few drops of rain as he started delivering his address, but then, “God looked down and, and he said we’re not going to let it rain on your speech. . . . The truth is it stopped immediately.”

Light rain continued to fall through the first few minutes of the speech — and VIP’s at the dais took out ponchos, including former president George W. Bush — and then



quit. Trump said there was a downpour right after he finished, which did not occur.

Speaking from the lobby of CIA headquarters in Langley, before a wall of stars honoring intelligence officers who died in service, Trump declared, "I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on earth, right?"

....

"That was one of the more disconcerting speeches I've seen," said a senior U.S. intelligence official who was not present for the Trump speech but watched it by video. "He could have kept it very simple and said, 'I'm here to build some bridges.' But he spent 10 seconds on that and the rest was on the crowd size," the official said, referring to Trump's repeated complaints that the media had undercounted the turnout for his inauguration.

Philip Rucker, John Wagner & Greg Miller, "Trump, in CIA visit, attacks media for coverage of his inaugural crowds," [Washington Post](#), 16:38 EST, 21 Jan 2017.

Later on 21 January 2017, *The Washington Post* reported:

Trump claimed that the crowd for his swearing-in stretched down the Mall to the Washington Monument. It did not. Trump accused television networks of showing "an empty field" and reporting that he drew just 250,000 people to witness Friday's [20 Jan] ceremony.

"It looked like a million, a million and a half people," Trump said. "It's a lie. We caught [the media]. We caught them in a beauty."

Philip Rucker, John Wagner & Greg Miller, "Trump wages war against the media as demonstrators protest his presidency," [Washington Post](#), 20:26 EST, 21 Jan 2017.

The above-quoted 20:26 article in *The Washington Post* also reports factually wrong statements by Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, in his first briefing to journalists at the White House. The [Washington Post](#) later criticized Spicer's wrong statements. I am ignoring Spicer's problems, in order to focus on Trump.

The Associated Press reported on Trump's misstatements:

TRUMP: "I made a speech. I looked out. The field was — it looked like a million, a million and a half people."

The president went on to say that one network "said we drew 250,000 people. Now that's not bad. But it's a lie." He then claimed that were 250,000 right by the stage and the "rest of the, you know, 20-block area, all the way back to the Washington Monument was packed."

"So we caught them," said Trump. "And we caught them in a beauty. And I think they're going to pay a big price."

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong. Photos of the National Mall from his inauguration make clear that the crowd did not extend to the Washington Monument. Large swaths of empty space are visible on the Mall.



Thin crowds and partially empty bleachers also dotted the inaugural parade route. Hotels across the District of Columbia reported vacancies, a rarity for an event as large as a presidential inauguration.

And ridership on the Washington's Metro system didn't match that of recent inaugurations.

Jonathan Lemire & Jill Colvin, "FACT CHECK: Trump overstates crowd size at inaugural," [Associated Press](#), 20:40 EST, 21 Jan 2017.

On 22 January 2017, Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to President Trump, appeared on NBC's Meet the Press. She famously claimed that Trump's press secretary had "alternative facts" that showed large attendance at Trump's inauguration. NBC's host, Chuck Todd, retorted: "Look, alternative facts are not facts. They're falsehoods." [NBC News](#)(transcript); [Washington Post](#).

### What's wrong?

1. Trump exaggerated the size of his crowd by a factor of six (i.e., 250,000 estimated vs. 1,500,000 according to Trump). Trump simply invented false numbers to enhance his stature.
2. Trump threatened journalists: "... they're going to pay a big price."
3. Trump alleged God stopped the rain during Trump's speech, which implies that God chose to neither inconvenience nor disrespect Trump.
4. The CIA headquarters was the wrong venue to boast about the size of the crowd at Trump's inauguration. Additionally, Trump should *not* be boasting anywhere about the size of the crowd at his inauguration.
5. One hopes that this is the last time we will hear euphemisms about "alternative facts" from the Trump's White House staff. Trump and his staff need to distinguish between delusions and facts.

The number of people attending the women's protest of Trump in Washington DC on 21 January 2017 was approximately twice the number who attended Trump's inauguration on 20 January. [Associated Press](#)(11:30 on 22 Jan); [Washington Post](#); [CBC](#); [CBS News](#). This fact would surely anger Trump.

In an interview with [ABC News](#) on 25 January, Trump characterized his 21 January speech at CIA headquarters as "a total home run". Trump said: "In terms of a total audience including television and everything else that you have we had supposedly the biggest crowd in history. .... They say I had the biggest crowd in the history of inaugural speeches." Trump later asserted: "... we had the biggest audience in the history of inaugural speeches."

Trump now appears to be combining the people who were physically present at the inauguration with the people who watched the inauguration on television. But this slight-of-

hand does *not* rescue Trump from his continuing false statement. The Nielsen ratings show that Obama's 2009 inauguration had 7 million more television viewers than Trump's inauguration. And the Nielsen ratings show that Reagan's 1981 inauguration had 11 million more television viewers than Trump's inauguration. [WSJ](#); [Bloomberg](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#). These Nielsen ratings were reported on 21 Jan, but four days later Trump continued to spew false statements.

The [Washington Post](#) commented on Trump's interview with ABC News: "[The lengthy interview] revealed a man who is obsessed with his own popularity and eager to provide evidence of his likability, even if that information doesn't match reality." The *Post* also said: "The interview revealed just how preoccupied Trump is with two variables that are gumming up his claim of being widely beloved: Losing the popular vote to Clinton and hosting an inauguration crowd that was smaller than in previous years."

On 27 January 2017 another problem was revealed with Trump's interview with ABC News. Trump claimed that during Obama's 10 January farewell speech in Chicago, "two people were shot and killed". Trump used that "fact" to justify possibly sending federal agents to Chicago to stop the violence caused by gangs of black people. But the [Chicago Tribune](#) and the [Associated Press](#) reported that there were *no* fatal shootings in Chicago on 10 Jan, and *no* shootings during Obama's speech. I comment that normally people proceed from facts to opinions, but Trump creates an opinion first, then invents fictitious "facts" to support his opinion.

On 6 March 2017, the National Park Service released official photographs of Trump's inauguration, which definitely show that more people attended Obama's inaugural than attended Trump's inaugural. [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#). By the time journalists received the photographs under a Freedom of Information Act request, Trump had made many more false statements, and the number of people attending Trump's inaugural was old news. Nonetheless, for the record, Trump lied about the number of people who attended his inaugural.

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## Fictitious Voter Fraud

No reasonable person doubts that Donald Trump is the president of the USA. But on 23 January 2017, the third full day of his presidency, Trump alleged — without any supporting evidence — that he lost the popular vote because of between 3 million and 5 million illegal immigrants voted for Hillary Clinton. See, e.g.,

- "Without evidence, Trump tells lawmakers 3 million to 5 million illegal ballots cost him the popular vote," [Washington Post](#), 20:05 EST, 23 Jan 2017.
- "Trump Repeats Lie About Popular Vote in Meeting With Lawmakers," [NY Times](#), 23 Jan 2017.
- "The Latest: Trump repeats unproven claim of illegal votes," [Associated Press](#), 21:05 EST, 23 Jan 2017.

- "Trump wrongly tells congressional leaders that millions of 'illegals' cost him the popular vote," [LA Times](#), 21:12 EST, 23 Jan 2017.
- "What Happens When a President Can't Handle Bad News?," [NBC News](#), 08:42 EST, 24 Jan 2017.

Not only is the popular vote irrelevant to who wins the presidency, but also Trump is still stuck back on 8 November 2016, more than two months ago. Apparently, Trump is not satisfied at having decisively won the presidency, he also wants to win the popular vote. And Trump is willing to invent fictitious numbers to win the popular vote that his ego craves.

### **Trump began his false claims of voter fraud on 27 Nov 2016**

Trump's unsupported claims of voter fraud is a repeat of an old falsehood by Trump, that "millions" of fraudulent votes were cast for Clinton. On 27 Nov 2016 at 12:30, Trump [tweeted](#): "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally". Four hours later on 27 Nov 2016 at 16:31, Trump [tweeted](#): "Serious voter fraud in Virginia, New Hampshire and California — so why isn't the media reporting on this? Serious bias — big problem!" Trump's baseless claims were exposed as false by [The Washington Post](#) and [Politico](#) on 27 November 2016. Trump is a slow learner, when he continues to make the same mistake two months later.

### **24 Jan 2017: more allegations of voter fraud**

On 24 Jan 2017, the White House Press Secretary had another ignominious performance that degraded his credibility, when he tried to justify Trump's claim of millions of illegal immigrants voting for Clinton. Professional journalists quickly debunked the White House claims of voter fraud:

- "Recidivism Watch: Spicer uses repeatedly debunked citations for Trump's voter fraud claims," [Washington Post](#), 14:33 EST, 24 Jan 2017.
- "White House says Trump's false claim of voter fraud is his 'long-standing belief'," [Washington Post](#), 18:48 EST, 24 Jan 2017.
- "FACT CHECK: Miscues on voter fraud and election results," [Associated Press](#), 18:53 EST, 24 Jan 2017.
- "Trump Won't Back Down From His Voting Fraud Lie. Here Are the Facts." [NY Times](#), 24 Jan 2017.
- "President Trump's first seven days of false claims, inaccurate statements and exaggerations," [Washington Post](#), 03:00 EST, 27 Jan 2017.

An article in The Washington Post explained *why* Trumps wants to win the popular vote:

Trump's focus on numbers is a holdover from his decades as a marketer and businessman, when he would toss around figures for his personal wealth or the value of his buildings or the ratings of his television shows as validations of the power of his brand.

"It's a combination of ego and a successful track record of always marketing everything he's done in his business as 'the biggest,' 'the best,' 'the superlative,' " [Ari] Fleischer [, a White House press secretary under President George W. Bush,] said. "It's just ingrained in him."

Philip Rucker & Sean Sullivan, "White House says Trump's false claim of voter fraud is his 'long-standing belief'," [Washington Post](#), 18:48 EST, 24 Jan 2017.

The reason it is "ingrained" in Trump to use superlatives about himself is that Trump is narcissistic.

### 5 Feb 2017: interview with Bill O'Reilly

Bill O'Reilly of Fox News interviewed Trump. Here is a transcript of part of that interview, which was broadcast on 5 Feb 2017:

O'Reilly: Is there any validity to the criticism of you that you say things you can't back up factually, and as the president, if you say, for example, that there are 3 million illegal aliens who voted and then you don't have the data to back it up, some people are gonna say that it's irresponsible for a president to say that. Is there any validity to that?

Trump: Many people have come out and said I'm right. You know that.

O'Reilly: I know, but you've gotta have *data* to back that up.

Trump: Let me just tell you. And it doesn't have to do with the vote, although that's the end result. It has to do with the registration. And when you look at the registration and you see dead people that have voted, when you see people that are registered in two states that voted in two states, when you see other things, when you see illegals, people that are not citizens, and they're on the registration rolls. Look, Bill, we can be babies, but you take a look at the registration, you have illegals, you have dead people, you have this. It's really a bad situation. It's really bad.

O'Reilly: So you think you're gonna be proven correct in that statement?

Trump: Well, I think I already have. A lot of people have come out and said that I am correct.

O'Reilly: But the data has to show that 3 million illegals voted.

Trump: Forget that. Forget all of that. Just take a look at the registration, and we're gonna do it, and I'm gonna set up a commission, to be headed by Vice President Mike Pence, and we're gonna look at it very, very carefully.

"Donald Trump Super Bowl interview transcript with Fox News' Bill O'Reilly," [sbnation](#),

16:05 EST, 5 Feb 2017.

Callum Borchers, writing in the [Washington Post](#), suggests that when Trump said "forget that" about his past claims that 3 million illegal immigrants voted for Hillary Clinton, Trump is attempting to abandon his past claims. Trump's focus on 5 Feb 2017 seems to be on removing from lists of registered voters dead people, illegal immigrants, and people who have moved.

But on 10 Feb 2017, Trump again mentioned voter fraud, see the following paragraphs.

### **10 Feb 2017: more allegations of voter fraud**

On 10 February 2017, Trump *again* alleged voter fraud as the reason he lost the popular vote. *Again* Trump made unsupported allegations, with *no* evidence. The occasion was a meeting between Trump and senators from both parties to discuss Trump's nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court. Kelly Ayotte — an attorney and a former U.S. Senator from New Hampshire who lost her re-election bid in Nov 2016 — is shepherding Trump's nominee through the confirmation process. Ayotte's presence in the meeting may have inspired Trump to go off on an irrelevant diatribe about Trump losing the popular vote. Politico reported:

The president claimed that he and Ayotte both would have been victorious in the Granite State [NH] if not for the “thousands” of people who were “brought in on buses” from neighboring Massachusetts to “illegally” vote in New Hampshire.

According to one participant who described the meeting, “an uncomfortable silence” momentarily overtook the room.

Hillary Clinton narrowly won New Hampshire’s four electoral votes over Trump by nearly 3,000 votes. Ayotte’s margin of defeat was even slimmer: 743 votes.

....

Just days after taking office last month, Trump tweeted a claim that as many as 3 million to 5 million people voted illegally in the November election, enough to account for his popular vote deficit. He has not followed through on his vow to oversee a federal voter-fraud investigation.

Republicans and Democrats who oversee elections at the state level have repeatedly said there is little evidence of fraud and no need for such an investigation.

Eli Stokols, "Trump brings up vote fraud again, this time in meeting with senators," [Politico](#), 14:35 EST, updated 17:30 EST, 10 Feb 2017.

Not to quibble, but Clinton had 2732 more votes than Trump in New Hampshire. The New Hampshire state government only reports results by county, not a total for the entire state, so I rely on the total at [WMUR](#).

*The Washington Post* quoted the Politico article and then observed:

By the way, busing in thousands of people is harder than it seems. A charter bus holds

about 55 people. So that's 50 buses that would have had to make the trip into New Hampshire to hand Clinton the victory. If you've got any photos of that caravan, please do share.

It's all nonsense. It's all rationalization and insecurity. Trump lost the popular vote and he lost in New Hampshire, and that's too bad but he's still the president and the election was 94 days ago, but here we are still talking about it. It couldn't be less important — except for what it tells us to expect about other times Trump might see his winning streak interrupted.

Philip Bump, "Once again, Trump claims that just enough fraud cost him an electoral victory," [Washington Post](#), 18:20 EST, 10 Feb 2017.

On 10 Feb 2017, the Attorney General of New Hampshire denied that there had been significant voter fraud in the Nov 2016 election: "We have seen no evidence of large-scale voter fraud whatsoever, and none has been brought to our attention." [WMUR](#). See also [Union-Leader](#) in New Hampshire.

On 12 February, Bernie Sanders — U.S. Senator from Vermont who was defeated by Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Democratic primary elections — was interviewed on the NBC television program "Meet the Press":

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: Well, I say two things, right now we are in a pivotal moment in American history. We have a president who is delusional in many respects, a pathological liar, somebody who is trying to divide us up.

[Meet the Press host] CHUCK TODD: Those are strong words.

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: Those are strong words.

CHUCK TODD: Can you work with a pathological liar?

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: Well, it makes life very difficult, not just for me. And I don't mean, you know, I know it sounds, it is very harsh. But I think that's the truth. When somebody goes before you and the American people, say, "Three to five million people voted illegally in the last election," nobody believes that. There is not the scintilla of evidence.

What would you call that remark? It's a lie. It's a delusion. ....  
"Meet The Press 02-12-17," [NBC News](#), 11:42 EST, 12 Feb 2017.

Trump and his White House staff should stop talking about alleged voter fraud that denied Trump a win of the popular vote. Instead, on 12 Feb 2017, the White House sent Stephen Miller, a senior policy adviser, to the Sunday morning talk shows on television to defend Trump's claims of voter fraud. The [Washington Post](#) awarded Miller "bushels of Pinocchios" for his uncredible performance. On 13 February, the [Associated Press](#) reported Miller "peddled discredited theories about voter fraud during a round of TV appearances Sunday".

**What Trump's attorneys said in Dec 2016  
is irrelevant to Trump's allegations**

Some journalists and commentators have said that Trump's claims of voter fraud contradict statements by Trump's attorneys in early December 2016. In early December 2016 there were challenges to the election in courts in Michigan and Pennsylvania. During those legal challenges, attorneys for Trump argued that there was *no* evidence of voting fraud. [Washington Post](#) (5 Dec 2016); editorial in [New York Times](#) (5 Dec 2016); [The Hill](#) (25 Jan 2017). But Trump is alleging — with *no* credible evidence — voter fraud in California, Virginia, and New Hampshire. What Trump's attorneys said about elections in Michigan and Pennsylvania is *not* relevant to Trump's unsupported allegations of voting fraud in California, Virginia, and New Hampshire.

### 11 May 2017: Presidential Commission

On 11 May 2017, Trump signed an Executive Order that established Trump's “Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity” to investigate Trump's delusion that at least three million illegal votes were cast in the November 2016 election that Trump won. [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#).

It is not known why Trump waited until 11 May 2017 to create this commission.

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### Kellyanne Conway's “Bowling Green Massacre”

Kellyanne Conway operated a political opinion poll company, was Trump's campaign manager after 19 Aug 2016, and is currently a counselor to Trump in the White House. Above, I briefly mentioned her alleging on 22 January 2017 during NBC's Meet the Press that the White House had “alternative facts” to support Spicer's claims about large attendance at Trump's inauguration.

Twice on 29 Jan 2017, and more prominently on 2 February 2017, Ms. Conway referred to the nonexistent “Bowling Green Massacre” to support Trump's Executive Order that temporarily banned people from seven Muslim-majority nations (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) from entering the USA.

On 3 February, *The Washington Post* reported:

Kellyanne Conway has taken “[alternative facts](#)” to a new level.

During a Thursday [2 Feb] interview with MSNBC's Chris Matthews, the counselor to the president defended President Trump's travel ban related to seven majority-Muslim countries. At one point, Conway made a reference to two Iraqi refugees whom she described as the masterminds behind “the Bowling Green massacre.”

“Most people don't know that because it didn't get covered,” Conway said.

The Bowling Green massacre didn't get covered because it didn't happen. There has never been a terrorist attack in Bowling Green, Ky., carried out by Iraqi refugees or anyone else.



It appeared initially that Conway was referring to two Iraqi citizens living in Bowling Green who were arrested in 2011 and eventually sentenced to federal prison for attempting to send weapons and money to al-Qaeda in Iraq for the purpose of killing U.S. soldiers, according to a [statement](#) from the Justice Department.

....

The arrests in Bowling Green were indeed covered, contrary to what Conway initially said. A Lexis search of major papers turned up about 90 news stories. That's not counting TV coverage, as in the ABC news story she attached to her [tweet](#) [on 3 Feb].

....

Conway also reiterated claims from Trump that his refugee policy is similar to "what President Obama did in 2011 when he banned visas for refugees from Iraq for six months." Conway said it was "brand new information" to people that Obama enacted a "six-month ban on the Iraqi refugee program." ....

As The Washington Post [reported](#) [on 29 Jan 2017], that was not the case. Obama administration officials told The Post that there was never a point when Iraqi resettlement was stopped or banned. In the aftermath of the arrests of the two Iraqis living in Kentucky, the Obama administration imposed more extensive background checks on Iraqi refugees, and the new screening procedures created a dramatic slowdown in visa approvals.

Samantha Schmidt & Lindsey Bever, "Kellyanne Conway cites 'Bowling Green massacre' that never happened to defend travel ban," [Washington Post](#), 3 Feb 2017.

See also [NY Times](#).

It is important to understand that the two emigrants from Iraq were put in prison for attacking U.S. soldiers *in Iraq* and for sending support to terrorists in Iraq. There were *no* allegations that they planned attacks in the USA.

By 6 February 2017, two additional instances of Kellyanne Conway referring to the "Bowling Green Massacre" have been uncovered by journalists:

1. On 29 Jan 2017, Ms. Conway referred to the nonexistent Massacre in an [interview](#) with *Cosmopolitan* magazine.
2. On 29 Jan 2017, Ms. Conway referred to the nonexistent Massacre in an interview with TMZ, as reported by The [Daily Beast](#).  
See the update at the end of a 3 Feb [Washington Post](#) news article.

Kellyanne Conway excused her false assertion about the nonexistent Massacre by saying she "misspoke one word". Everyone occasionally speaks the wrong word, so her excuse sounds good. But her excuse does *not* withstand critical scrutiny:

1. She referred to the nonexistent Massacre in at least *three* interviews. It appears that she really believed the Bowling Green Massacre actually occurred. See the 6 February article in The [Washington Post](#).
2. On 2 Feb she said: “Most people don’t know that because it didn’t get covered.” The lack of coverage by journalists of an alleged Massacre in the USA is a strong hint that the Massacre did *not* occur.
3. As [MSNBC](#) pointed out, replacing the word "Massacre" with "terrorist" in Conway's 2 Feb statement creates an awkward sentence: the Iraqi criminals “were the masterminds behind the Bowling Green terrorists”. Conway's "misspoke one word" excuse does *not* fit the facts.

I conclude that Conway's excuse contains implausible — perhaps false — statements.

On 4 February, the [Associated Press](#) included the Bowling Green Massacre in its news article titled: "AP FACT CHECK: A week's supply of baloney".

Trump's presidential administration has a big problem. Trump himself has very little credibility. And both Spicer and Conway are rapidly losing their credibility. The problem is that Trump has a tenuous relationship with facts and information, so Trump is probably blind to the ignominious performance of Spicer and Conway.

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### Spicer mentions wrong city in his irrelevant explanation

On 29 Jan 2017, and twice on 30 Jan 2017, Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, had mentioned an Islamic terrorist attack on Atlanta. There was a terrorist attack in Atlanta in 1996, but the perpetrator was a Christian anti-abortion zealot who was born in the USA. Spicer later clarified that he should have said Orlando instead of Atlanta. [Daily Beast](#)(8 Feb); [CNN](#)(8 Feb); [ABC News](#)(9 Feb); [Washington Post](#)(9 Feb). But replacing Atlanta with Orlando does *not* fix Spicer's problem. Spicer cited Islamic terror attacks in ~~Atlanta~~ Orlando, San Bernardino, and Boston to justify Trump's ban on immigration from seven Muslim-majority nations. The perpetrator in Orlando was born in the USA and *not* an immigrant. One of the perpetrators in San Bernardino was born in the USA, the other was born in Pakistan. The two perpetrators in Boston were born in North Caucasus or Kyrgyzstan, although the two identified as Chechen. *None* of these five perpetrators were from the seven Muslim-majority nations from which immigration to the USA is banned by Trump. So Trump's ban would *not* have prevented the Islamic terror attacks in Orlando, San Bernardino, and Boston. Spicer's mention of terror attacks Orlando, San Bernardino, and Boston is irrelevant to Trump's ban on immigration from seven Muslim-majority nations.

The White House seems to have forgotten about the 11 Sep 2001 Islamic terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, which killed approximately 3000 people. Most of those Islamic terrorists were from Saudi Arabia, which is *not* amongst the seven Muslim-majority nations in Trump's travel ban. So Trump's ban also would *not* have prevented the 11 Sep 2001 attacks.

I conclude that neither Kellyanne Conway nor Sean Spicer have a solid grasp of the facts regarding Islamic terrorism, one of the major problems that Trump intends to solve.

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## 6 Feb 2017: Speech at CENTCOM

### Are journalists intentionally suppressing reports of Islamic terror attacks?

On 6 February 2017, Trump went to the U.S. Central Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa and gave a speech to the military personnel there. The speech contained one surprising paragraph:

We're up against an enemy that celebrates death and totally worships destruction — you've seen that. ISIS is on a campaign of genocide, committing atrocities across the world. Radical Islamic terrorists are determined to strike our homeland as they did on 9/11; as they did from Boston to Orlando, to San Bernardino. And all across Europe, you've seen what happened in Paris and Nice. All over Europe it's happening. It's gotten to a point where it's not even being reported and, in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it. They have their reasons and you understand that.

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump to Coalition Representatives and Senior U.S. Commanders," [White House](#), 6 Feb 2017. Retrieved at 02:37 EST on 7 Feb 2017.

Trump made three points that jump out at the reader:

1. "It's gotten to a point where it's not even being reported ...." Trump says journalists are *no* longer reporting Islamic terrorist attacks.
2. "... and, in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it." Trump says journalists are not only "very dishonest", but also *do not want* to report terrorist attacks.
3. "They have their reasons and you understand that." Trump implies that journalists are supporting the Islamic terrorists.

*The Washington Post* promptly reported:

Speaking to the U.S. Central Command on Monday [6 Feb], President Trump went off his prepared remarks to make a truly stunning claim: The media was intentionally covering up reports of terrorist attacks.

....

It's certainly true that not every terrorist attack receives broad coverage in the national media. .... Last spring, the [Los Angeles Times](#) set out to log every single terrorist attack in the month of April, counting 180 attacks that killed 858 people. Not every one of those attacks made your local nightly newscast. But filtering what to cover is very different than suppressing information.

....

With his comments on Monday, Trump implied that the media is complicit in making terrorists successful. It's part of a recent pattern of suggesting that others are standing in the way of his terrorism-fighting efforts, which includes [disparaging](#) a federal judge who halted his immigration executive order.

....

Update: In a press availability on Air Force One, Spicer tried to soften Trump's comment. Terror attacks had been "under reported," not "unreported." .... Spicer said the White House would at some point release examples of this "under-reporting."

Update: The list is out, according to CNN. It does not seem to fit Trump's original description.

Philip Bump, "President Trump is now speculating that the media is covering up terrorist attacks," [Washington Post](#), 14:55 EST, 6 Feb 2017.

*The New York Times* reported:

Mr. Trump initially did not provide examples of a news media conspiracy to underplay terrorist attacks, and his comments appeared to ignore the vast amount of reporting on violence committed by the Islamic State and its supporters in the Middle East, Europe and the United States. Later Monday night, the White House released a list of what it said were 78 attacks from September 2014 to December 2016 that were carried out or inspired by the Islamic State. The White House said that "most have not received the media attention they deserved."

The list included the major attacks in Paris; Brussels; San Bernardino, Calif.; and Orlando, Fla., that dominated the news for weeks. Other attacks overseas, lesser known to Americans, received extensive local coverage, like a shooting in Zvornik, Bosnia, in April 2015 in which one police officer was killed and two others were wounded.

The president's speech was the second time in recent weeks that he has used an appearance before national security personnel — usually apolitical settings in which the focus is on strategy and sacrifice — to discredit journalists and exult in his election victory.

....

The president's comments on Monday were reminiscent of his claim during a visit last month to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Va., that the news media had fabricated his feud with the intelligence community. Those remarks came only days after he likened American intelligence officials to Nazis, after several weeks in which he had denigrated their work.

Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Trump Says Journalists 'Have Their Reasons' to Play Down Terror Threat," [NY Times](#), 6 Feb 2017.

At 20:59 EST on 6 February, *The Washington Post* reported the following about Trump's speech:

News organizations have reported extensively about terrorist attacks around the world,

including the two in France mentioned by the president. Trump did not offer a single example of an attack that had gone unreported to support his accusation.

Philip Rucker, "‘If something happens’: Trump points his finger in case of a terrorist attack," [Washington Post](#) 20:59 EST, 6 Feb 2017.

At 21:25 EST, *The Washington Post* reported on the list of 78 terrorist attacks that the White House asserts were "under-reported".

The White House on Monday night released a list of 78 terrorist attacks in response to an assertion earlier in the day by President Trump that the "very dishonest press" often doesn't report on them.

The list, which includes domestic and overseas incidents, starts in September 2014. It includes some very heavily covered news events, including last year's attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando and the series of attacks in Paris in 2015.

But the White House asserted that most of incidents on the list were under-covered by Western media sources.

....

White House spokesman Sean Spicer later told reporters that Trump believes attacks are not "unreported" but "underreported."

"He felt members of the media don't always cover some of those events to the extent that other events might get covered," Spicer told reporters traveling on Air Force One.

Later Monday, White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said that "the real point here is that these terrorists attacks are so pervasive at this point that they do not spark the wall-to-wall coverage they once did."

John Wagner & Philip Rucker, "Here are the 78 terrorist attacks the White House says were largely underreported," [Washington Post](#), 21:25 EST, 6 Feb 2017.

The 21:25 *Post* article quotes the entire list supplied by the White House. My review of the White House list shows two different groups of terrorist attacks that were allegedly underreported by journalists:

- A. Attacks in which either zero, one, or two people died. Further, these attacks are often in far-away nations of little interest to most Americans. Those are good reasons to give minimal reporting in U.S. news media of those minor Islamic terrorist attacks.
- B. Major attacks in the USA and Western Europe that were well-reported by journalists, e.g.,
  1. PARIS, FRANCE in January 2015 (5 dead at kosher supermarket)
  2. COPENHAGEN, DENMARK in Feb 2015
  3. GARLAND, TX, USA in May 2015
  4. PARIS, FRANCE in November 2015 (129 dead)
  5. SAN BERNADINO [sic], CA, USA in December 2015 (14 dead)
  6. PARIS, FRANCE in January 2016 (no casualties; attacker killed)

7. MARSEILLES, FRANCE in January 2016 (one Jewish teacher wounded)
  8. BRUSSELS, BELGIUM in March 2016 (31 dead)
  9. ORLANDO, FL, USA in June 2016 (49 dead)
  10. MAGNANVILLE, FRANCE in June 2016 (policeman and his wife killed)
  11. NICE, FRANCE in July 2016 (84 dead)
  12. WURZBURG, GERMANY in July 2016 (4 wounded on train)
  13. ANSBACH, GERMANY in July 2016 (15 wounded at music festival)
  14. NORMANDY, FRANCE in July 2016 (one Catholic priest murdered)
  15. CHALEROI [sic], BELGIUM in August 2016 (two policewomen wounded)
  16. PARIS, FRANCE in September 2016 (VBIED failed to detonate at Notre Dame Cathedral)
  17. ST. CLOUD, MN, USA in September 2016 (10 wounded at shopping mall)
  18. NEW YORK, NY; SEASIDE PARK AND ELIZABETH, NJ, USA in September 2016 (31 wounded)
  19. COLUMBUS, OH, USA in November 2016 (14 wounded)
  20. BERLIN, GERMANY in December 2016 (12 killed)
- (The description in parenthesis is either condensed or modified from the White House's list.)

The 20 incidents listed above were well-reported by Reuters, the Associated Press, major newspapers (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Telegraph* in London England), as well as newspapers near the location of each attack. I *know* this to be true, because I chronicled each of these Islamic terror attacks in my [essays](#) on Syria and Iraq, with citations (i.e., links) to news articles by journalists. So the White House list has at least 25% false entries (20/78). I say "at least" because some of the terrorists attacks that I ignored in my essays may also have been well-covered by journalists.

At 21:44 EST on 6 February, *The Washington Post* listed the first 25 terror attacks in the White House's list of 78 attacks, with one link to news coverage in the USA for each of those 25 attacks. The *Post* suggested:

Spicer, at least, was smart enough to understand that this was an opportunity to get the media to run with a lengthy list of terror attacks that, he hoped, would reinforce Trump's broader message that terror attacks were a constant threat that demanded a strong response. .... [The point] was to turn Trump's baffling remarks into an opportunity to make a broader point in service to Trump's policies.

The *Post* also observed:

But the [White House's] list does includes stories that no person in his or her right mind could consider undercovered. The bombing in New York City. The attacks in Paris on cafes and the Bataclan theater. The shooting in San Bernardino, Calif. (misspelled on the White House list). The bombing at the airport in Brussels. The shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. These stories received wall-to-wall coverage, and deservedly so.

Philip Bump, "The White House released a list of 'under covered' terror attacks it would like you to look at," [Washington Post](#), 21:44 EST, 6 Feb 2017.

At 20:07 EST on 7 February, after a review of the White House list of 78 attacks by "by Associated Press reporters on four continents", the Associated Press blasted the White House.

A White House list of what it calls underreported terrorist attacks did not support

President Donald Trump's claim that the media are downplaying a "genocide" carried out by the Islamic State group. But it did shine new light on the difficulty in defining the scope, source and motives behind the violence carried out in the name of radical Islam.

A close review of the 78 attacks listed by the White House shows almost all the attacks were reported by the news media and that many were widely covered by local and international outlets. ....

....

[The White House list of 78 attacks] also pays little heed to the scores of terror acts that have plagued nations like Syria and Iraq that are close to the Islamic State's caliphate and under near-daily siege.

....

The inclusion of some of the attacks in the United States defies credulity.

Among those on the White House's list are a deadly rampage in San Bernardino, California, in 2015 in which 14 people were killed and 21 injured, and the June 2016 nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, which left 49 dead, the biggest mass shooting in the nation's history. Both of those attacks received blanket news coverage for days, and all of the attacks in the U.S. received at least some attention by the American media.

....

Across Europe, attacks are increasingly being attributed to the flow of refugees across the continent — and it's hard to find a single attack, large or small, that didn't generate global coverage.

....

The White House list did not include any attacks in Iraq, Syria or Yemen, where civilians are targeted almost daily by militant attacks. Many of those attacks are covered by the media, despite the often-perilous conditions involved in reporting those stories.

Vivian Salama & Jonathan Lemire, "Trump's list of underreported terror doesn't back up claim," [Associated Press](#), 20:07 EST, 7 Feb 2017.

Final version at [AP](#) on 8 Feb.

On the night of 7 February 2017, Kellyanne Conway appeared on a CNN program and admitted that the White House list of 78 underreported Islamic terror attacks included some attacks that were widely reported. The [Washington Post](#) published a transcript of the interview with Conway.

**What's wrong?**



- Trump said journalists are *no* longer reporting Islamic terrorist attacks. Trump offered *no* example of an Islamic terrorist attack that was *not* reported by journalists. This is another baseless claim by Trump. The Truth is that journalists *are* continuing to report Islamic terrorist attacks, including the December 2016 attack in Berlin, which is the most recent example on the White House list of 76 attacks that were allegedly under-reported.
- Trump's press secretary, Spicer, twisted Trump's words to say that journalists are "under-reporting" Islamic terrorist attacks. But the list supplied by the White House of 76 attacks includes at least 20 attacks with extensive coverage by journalists. The White House's own list of attacks do *not* support the claims by either Trump or Spicer.
- Trump said journalists are "very dishonest". But journalists have a much better track record of mentioning facts than Trump.
- Trump alleged journalists *do not want* to report terrorist attacks. Trump offered *no* evidence to support his outrageous claim. Even if it were true that journalists do not want to report terrorist attacks, journalists *are* reporting terrorist attacks.
- Trump implied that journalists are supporting the Islamic terrorists. As usual, Trump offers *no* evidence to support his defaming an entire profession.
- Trump's and Spicer's factual errors — and Kellyanne Conway's earlier fictitious "Bowling Green Massacre" — are *not* errors on some obscure topic. Immigration was one of the principal themes of Trump's presidential campaign, with his promises to build a wall along the Mexican border, deport illegal immigrants, and exclude Islamic terrorists from the USA. So these factual errors on Islamic terrorism should be embarrassing for Trump.

Ironically, there is *one* set of examples in which journalists are failing to cover Islamic terrorist attacks. ISIL terrorists are killing a few people each day in Baghdad Iraq, but journalists stopped reporting these routine attacks long ago. Only the major terrorist attacks in the vicinity of Baghdad (e.g., more than 10 dead) are reported. Trump and his staff in the White House are apparently too ignorant of world news to know about this defect in reporting of terrorist attacks.

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## 7 Feb 2017: erroneous murder rate in USA

On 7 February 2017, Trump met at the White House with a national group of county sheriffs. One paragraph of Trump's remarks contain blatant false statements about the national murder rate in the USA:

And yet the murder rate in our country is the highest it's been in 47 years, right? Did you know that? Forty-seven years. I used to use that — I'd say that in a speech and everybody was surprised, because the press doesn't tell it like it is. It wasn't to their advantage to say that. But the murder rate is the highest it's been in, I guess, from 45 to 47 years. And you would think that you would be invited here, and you would think

that you people would be able to solve — had you — if you ran Chicago, you would solve that nightmare, I tell you. I'll bet everybody in that room, especially Carolyn, right, would raise their hand. Because to allow — I mean, literally — hundreds of shootings a month, it's worse than some of the places that we read about in the Middle East, where you have wars going on. It's so sad. Chicago has become so sad a situation.

Trump, "Remarks by President Trump in Roundtable with County Sheriffs," [White House](#), 09:49 EST, 7 Feb 2018.

### **Facts from FBI on Murder Rate in USA**

It is *not* difficult to prove that Trump is again spewing false statements. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reports national crime statistics in the USA.

Trump said the USA has the highest murder rate in 47 years. From 2015, the most recent year with complete FBI data, 47 years ago is 1968.

The most recent FBI data is for the year 2015, when the murder rate was 4.9 murders per 100,000 people/year. The table of data in the FBI's 2015 Report goes back to the year 1996, when the murder rate was 7.4 murders per 100,000 people/year. During the 20 years from 1996 through 2015, there were 14 years with higher murder rates than the year 2015. See [FBI](#).

The [1996 Report](#) by the FBI says at page 14: "... the national murder rate in 1996 was 7.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest since 1985." That means the 10 years from 1986 through 1995, had higher murder rates than 1996.

So Trump is not just wrong about the highest murder rate in 47 years — the murder rate in 2015 is *lower* than 24 of the past 30 years. The highest murder rate in the USA was in the year 1980, when the murder rate was 10.2 murders per 100,000 people/year.

Another U.S. Department of Justice [publication](#) lists the murder rates from 1950 to 2005. Each of the 40 years from 1966 to 2005 had at least 5.5 murders per 100,000 people/year, *all* higher than the murder rate in 2015.

### **Comments by Journalists on Trump's erroneous murder rate**

*The Washington Post* wrote:

The country's murder rate is not the highest it's been in 47 years. It is almost at its lowest point, actually, according to the FBI, which gathers statistics every year from police departments around the country.

....

Trump made the same claim on the campaign trail on a number of occasions. Some suggested that he may have been confusing the one-year increase in the murder rate

with the actual murder rate. In 2015, the murder rate rose 11 percent, which was the largest one-year increase in 50 years. But the rate itself, 4.9 homicides per 100,000 residents, remains far below the levels of the 1970s and 1980s.

Tom Jackman, "Trump makes false statement about U.S. murder rate to sheriffs' group," [Washington Post](#), 13:26 EST, 7 Feb 2017.

Is Trump really confusing (A) the large 10.8% *annual increase* in the murder rate from 2014 to 2015 with (B) the relatively low *value* of the murder rate? *If* Trump understood calculus, then he would distinguish between the value of a function and its derivative.

See also [Chicago Tribune](#); [Associated Press](#) ("AP FACT CHECK: Trump botches murder rate").

On 7 Feb 2017, Jake Tapper of CNN interviewed Kellyanne Conway. Mr. Tapper said: ... what I'm getting at here is, there's a larger campaign being waged by President Trump and by the White House to undermine the credibility of everybody in the news media except for certain supportive outlets.

For instance, earlier today, President Trump made a quote about the murder rate being at the highest level it's ever been in 47 years. He said that, and then he said, nobody in the media reports on that. There's a reason that nobody in the media reports on that: It's not true. The murder rate is not at the highest rate it's been in 47 years. It spiked a little, it went up a little, but it's still much, much lower — it's 4.9 people per 100,000. That's dwarfed by the murder rates in the 1990s and before that in the 1980s. Facts are stubborn things. And to say that we're not reporting something that happens not to be true, therefore we're not to be trusted, that's a problem.

[Conway's response to Tapper's paragraph was to change the subject. Apparently, Conway has *no* response to Trump's error.]

Callum Borchers, "Kellyanne Conway vs. Jake Tapper, annotated," [Washington Post](#), 09:16 EST, 8 Feb 2017.

On 11 February 2017, the Associated Press summarized six false statements by Trump, including the nonreporting of Islamic terrorist attacks and the highest murder rate in 47 years.

It was a week of sound and fury from President Donald Trump, the commander in tweets. A look at how some of his statements fit with the facts:

....

"AP FACT CHECK: IMPROV WEEK AT THE WHITE HOUSE," [Associated Press](#), 08:58 EST, 11 Feb 2017.

My comment on the Associated Press fact check: It is an embarrassment to the USA, when the president displays such an amateurish and incompetent grasp of facts regarding issues that are important to him.

**Trump made same error  
before the Nov 2016 election**

In response to assertions by some journalists that Trump had made the same error during the presidential campaign, I searched Google News on 8 Feb 2017. Here is what I found:

- On 12 July 2016, Trump [tweeted](#): "Crime is out of control, and rapidly getting worse. Look what is going on in Chicago and our inner cities. Not good!". Criticized by [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#).
- On 13 July 2016, Trump gave a speech in Indiana, where he said: "Look at Chicago, look at what's going on. Since President Obama became president, almost 5,000 killings in Chicago and nobody talks about it. We're going to start talking about it." But [WLS](#) television in Chicago said there had been only 3500 murders in Chicago while Obama was president.
- On 21 July 2016, the [Washington Post](#) said "Trump does accurately cite some recent increases in homicides, but he also appears to cherry-pick data, draw broad conclusions from limited information and, at times, simply misstate things."
- On 26 Sep 2016, the FBI released crime statistics for the year 2015. Major newspapers reported these new statistics. See, e.g., [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Chicago Tribune](#); [Los Angeles Times](#); [Miami Herald](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 11 October 2016 in Panama City Beach, Florida, Trump declared: "You look at the crime and you wonder why. And by the way, do you know, it was just announced that murder is the highest it's been in our country in 45 years?" [News-Herald](#); [The Guardian](#).
- On 12 October 2016 in Lakeland, Florida, Trump declared: "We have the highest murder rate in this country in 45 years. More people are being murdered now than being murdered in 45 years." [The Guardian](#).
- On 26 Oct 2016, Trump said at a campaign rally in Charlotte, North Carolina: "You know the murder rate in the United States, I don't know if you know this because the press never talks about it, is the highest it's been, think of this, in 45 years." [C-SPAN](#); [Washington Post](#) (Trump "continued to falsely assert that the national murder rate is the highest it has been in 45 years."); [FactCheck.org](#).
- On 29 Oct 2016, Trump said at a campaign rally in Phoenix, Arizona: "The murder rate in the United States, it's the worst. The highest it's been in 45 years." [KNXV](#).

### What's wrong?

- Trump is grossly wrong about the murder rate in the USA.
- Trump's 7 Feb 2017 falsehood is *not* the first time he has made this grossly false statement about the murder rate in the USA. Trump has been making false claims about the murder rate since mid-October 2016. And Trump is *not* learning from his mistakes, despite criticism by journalists.

- Trump lied when he said on 7 Feb: "the press doesn't tell it like it is." Journalists correctly reported the FBI crime statistics. It is Trump — *not* journalists — who has a chronic problem with correctly stating facts.
  - On 7 Feb 2017, Trump made a strange statement that the Chicago police department "allow[s] ... hundreds of shootings a month". The police do *not* "allow" crimes. Crimes occur and then police investigate and try to arrest the perpetrators.
- 

### **Kellyanne Conway's alleged ethics violation**

On 2 Feb 2017, the Nordstrom chain of department stores announced it would no longer sell Ivanka Trump's line of shoes and clothing, because of poor sales. [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

On 8 Feb at 07:51 PST, President Trump responded by criticizing Nordstrom on [twitter](#) for treating his daughter "unfairly". Later on 8 Feb, Trump retweeted his 07:51 message from his official account as President of the USA, @POTUS. [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Crain's NY](#).

Commentators suggested that Trump's response — especially on @POTUS — sent a message that the power of the White House would descend upon those who reduce the Trump family income. But the issue is more complicated. Liberal opponents of the president were urging boycotts of Ivanka's merchandise, which is a political attack on the president's daughter. Liberals were attacking the president through his daughter. Trump *may* be correct that this is "unfair" treatment of Ivanka. But using the @POTUS account to respond is probably wrong.

The above three paragraphs are prologue to what Kellyanne Conway did on 9 Feb that caused even a Republican congressman to criticize her.

On the morning of 9 Feb, Kellyanne Conway spoke from White House press briefing room to a television audience on the "Fox & Friends" program. I have been unable to find a verbatim transcript of what Conway said, but the following news articles mention part of what Conway said.

"I do find it ironic that you've got some executives all over the internet bragging about what they've done to her and her line, and yet they're using the most prominent woman in Donald Trump's...she's his daughter...and they're using her who has been a champion for women empowerment, women in the workplace to get to him," Conway said.

"Go buy Ivanka's stuff," Conway added, saying that consumers can buy Ivanka's products online.

"Kellyanne Conway on Ivanka Trump's Fashion Line: 'Go Buy It Today!'," [Fox News](#), 10:19 EST, 9 Feb 2017.

*The New York Times* reported what Conway said.

"Go buy Ivanka's stuff is what I would say," Ms. Conway, whose title is counselor to the president, said in an interview with [Fox News](#). "I'm going to give a free

commercial here: Go buy it today everybody, you can find it online.”

Richard Perez-Pena & Rachel Abrams, "Kellyanne Conway Promotes Ivanka Trump Brand, Raising Ethics Concerns," [NY Times](#), 9 Feb 2017.

Later, Fox News posted a one-paragraph partial quotation from Conway:

At the end of an interview with “Fox & Friends,” [[video](#)] Conway lamented Ivanka Trump’s treatment in the business world and said: “Go buy Ivanka’s stuff ... It’s a wonderful line, I own some of it. ... I’m going to give a free commercial here. Go buy it today, everybody. You can find it online.”

Jennifer G. Hickey, "White House taking bipartisan heat for Ivanka-Nordstrom comments," [Fox News](#), about 17:00 EST, 9 Feb 2017.

*The Washington Post* reported that Conway said on television:

“I’m going to give a free commercial here. Go buy it today, everybody. You can find it online.”

On 9 Feb 2017, White House press secretary tersely said that Conway had been “counseled” about her apparent violation of a federal regulation, 5 CFR 2635.702. In an indication of the seriousness of this matter, the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight Committee, Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), sent a letter to the to the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) that labeled Conway’s advertisement “unacceptable.” Because Trump (Conway’s manager) has an obvious conflict of interest in this matter, Chaffetz asked the OGE to recommend a punishment for Conway. [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Politico](#).

On 13 Feb 2017, the head of the OGE wrote to the White House Deputy Counsel and said: “Under the present circumstances, there is strong reason to believe that Ms. Conway has violated the Standards of Conduct and that disciplinary action is warranted.” [Washington Post](#).

On 9 March 2017, the head of the OGE publicly criticized the White House for failing to discipline Kellyanne Conway. [Washington Post](#).

My comment is that Donald Trump has difficulty separating the role of president from supporting his daughter's business. Ms. Conway did worse, by openly and deliberately advertising Ivanka's products from the White House.

### **Conway's lower profile**

After Conway's disaster with "alternative facts", the "Bowling Green massacre", and asserting that Flynn had voluntarily resigned (when, in fact, Trump asked Flynn to resign), Conway began to develop a reputation as an unreliable source of facts. [Politico](#); [Washington Post](#). On 15 Feb 2017, Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski stopped inviting Conway on their MSNBC cable television program, because of Conway's lack of credibility. [Mediaite](#); [Washington Post](#). See also 22 Feb report in [Washington Post](#).

Kellyanne Conway graduated from Washington Trinity University, a small Catholic college for women, in 1989. On 12 Feb 2017, the president of Trinity criticized Conway's false

statements: Conway “has played a large role in facilitating the manipulation of facts.... ....  
... [Conway's] advocacy on Trump's behalf is often at variance with the truth. .... Ms.  
Conway has been part of a team that thinks nothing of shaping and spreading a skein of lies  
as a means to secure power.” [Trinity](#). On 17 Feb, the [Washington Post](#) said Conway retorted  
that she and her husband had given \$50,000 to Trinity, implying that she should have purchased  
silence from the president of the university.

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## Michael Flynn resigns as National Security Adviser

The scandal began with an opinion column by David Ignatius in *The Washington Post*, part of  
which said:

Retired Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, Trump’s choice for national security adviser,  
cultivates close Russian contacts. He has appeared on Russia Today and received a  
speaking fee from the cable network, which was described in last week’s unclassified  
intelligence briefing on Russian hacking as “the Kremlin’s principal international  
propaganda outlet.”

According to a senior U.S. government official, Flynn phoned Russian Ambassador  
Sergey Kislyak several times on Dec. 29, the day the Obama administration announced  
the expulsion of 35 Russian officials as well as other measures in retaliation for the  
hacking. What did Flynn say, and did it undercut the U.S. sanctions? The Logan Act  
(though never enforced) bars U.S. citizens from correspondence intending to influence  
a foreign government about “disputes” with the United States. Was its spirit violated?  
The Trump campaign didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

....

**UPDATE:** The Trump transition team did not respond Thursday [12 Jan] night to a  
request for comment. But two team members called with information Friday [13 Jan]  
morning. A first Trump official confirmed that Flynn had spoken with Kislyak by  
phone, but said the calls were before sanctions were announced and didn’t cover that  
topic. This official later added that Flynn’s initial call was to express condolences to  
Kislyak after the terrorist killing of the Russian ambassador to Ankara Dec. 19, and  
that Flynn made a second call Dec. 28 to express condolences for the shoot-down of a  
Russian plane carrying a choir to Syria. In that second call, Flynn also discussed plans  
for a Trump-Putin conversation sometime after the inauguration. In addition, a second  
Trump official said the Dec. 28 call included an invitation from Kislyak for a Trump  
administration official to visit Kazakhstan for a conference in late January.

David Ignatius, "Why did Obama dawdle on Russia’s hacking?," [Washington Post](#), 12 Jan  
2017.

On 15 Jan 2017, Vice-President Pence denied that Flynn had spoken with the Russian  
ambassador about sanctions. Pence's denial was based on what Flynn had told Pence. [CNN](#);  
[CBS News](#)(transcript); [Politico](#).



On Thursday, 9 February 2017, *The Washington Post* reported that Flynn had discussed sanctions in December with the Russian ambassador.

The scandal simmered until 13 Feb 2017, when *The Washington Post* reported that officials from the Obama government had informed Trump's White House counsel on 26 Jan 2017 that Flynn had lied about his conversations with the Russian ambassador.

The acting attorney general [Sally Yates] informed the Trump White House late last month that she believed Michael Flynn had misled senior administration officials about the nature of his communications with the Russian ambassador to the United States, and warned that the national security adviser was potentially vulnerable to Russian blackmail, current and former U.S. officials said.

The message, delivered by Sally Q. Yates and a senior career national security official to the White House counsel, was prompted by concerns that Flynn, when asked about his calls and texts with the Russian diplomat, had told VicePresident-elect Mike Pence and others that he had not discussed the Obama administration sanctions on Russia for its interference in the 2016 election, the officials said. It is unclear what the White House counsel, Donald McGahn, did with the information.

....

In the waning days of the Obama administration, James R. Clapper Jr., who was the director of national intelligence, and John Brennan, the CIA director at the time, shared Yates's concerns and concurred with her recommendation to inform the Trump White House. They feared that "Flynn had put himself in a compromising position" and thought that Pence had a right to know that he had been misled, according to one of the officials, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

....

After the sanctions were rolled out [on 29 Dec 2016], the Obama administration braced itself for the Russian retaliation. To the surprise of many U.S. officials, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on Dec. 30 that there would be no response. Trump praised the [Russian] decision on [Twitter](#).

Intelligence analysts began to search for clues that could help explain Putin's move. The search turned up Kislyak's communications, which the FBI routinely monitors, and the phone call in question with Flynn, a retired Army lieutenant general with years of intelligence experience.

Adam Entous, Ellen Nakashima, & Philip Rucker, "Justice Department warned White House that Flynn could be vulnerable to Russian blackmail, officials say," [Washington Post](#), updated 23:17 EST on 13 Feb 2017. [Link to Twitter added by Standler.]

To make the following text of this complicated event more coherent, I am putting most of the citations after 13 Feb 2017 in a [Bibliography](#).

Hours before Flynn resigned, Kellyanne Conway told journalists that Trump continued to

have "full confidence" in Flynn. Sometime around 21:00 or 22:00 EST on 13 Feb 2017, Flynn gave his letter of resignation to Trump. Initial reports were that Flynn had voluntarily resigned, but Spicer said on the afternoon of 14 Feb that Trump had asked Flynn to resign. Flynn held the national security adviser job for only 24 days. Flynn was out because he had lied to Pence, *not* because he discussed sanctions with the Russian ambassador.

The controversy over Flynn does *not* end on 14 Feb 2017, the day after Flynn resigned. There are still unanswered questions:

1. Did Trump ask Flynn to discuss sanctions with the Russian ambassador?
2. Trump was allegedly aware of the Flynn scandal for "weeks" before 13 Feb, probably on 26 Jan.
  - A. *Why* did Trump continue Flynn as national security adviser?
  - B. *Why* did Trump wait until 9 Feb to inform Pence? Pence appears to have first learned of Flynn's false statements to Pence by reading *The Washington Post* on 9 Feb.
3. On 10 Feb 2017, Trump told journalists that he did *not* know about the 9 Feb *Washington Post* report on Flynn's conversations with the Russian ambassador: "I don't know about that. I haven't seen it. What report is that? I haven't seen that. I'll look into that." (See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [The Hill](#)) Did Trump misinform journalists on 10 Feb?

For these and more unanswered questions, see: [National Public Radio](#); [Washington Post](#).

On 14 February 2017, Spicer clearly explained why Trump had dismissed Flynn:

The evolving and eroding level of trust as a result of this situation and a series of other questionable instances is what led the President to ask for General Flynn's resignation.

.... Whether or not [Flynn] actually misled the Vice President was the issue, and that was ultimately what led to the President asking for and accepting the resignation of General Flynn. That's it, pure and simple. It was a matter of trust.

Sean Spicer, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 2/14/2017, #12," [White House](#), begins 13:15 EST, 14 Feb 2017.

On 15 February 2017, Trump held a joint press conference with Benjamin Netanyahu. Astoundingly, Trump contradicted what Spicer had said on 14 Feb about the dismissal of Flynn.

Michael Flynn, General Flynn is a wonderful man. I think he's been treated very, very unfairly by the media — as I call it, the fake media, in many cases. And I think it's really a sad thing that he was treated so badly. I think, in addition to that, from intelligence — papers are being leaked, things are being leaked. It's criminal actions, criminal act, and it's been going on for a long time — before me. But now it's really going on, and people are trying to cover up for a terrible loss that the Democrats had under Hillary Clinton.

I think it's very, very unfair what's happened to General Flynn, the way he was treated,

and the documents and papers that were illegally — I stress that — illegally leaked.  
Very, very unfair.

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Conference," [White House](#), begins 12:15 EST, 15 Feb 2017.

My comment is that “unfair” is a *conclusion* that needs facts to justify the conclusion. Trump, as usual, offers *no* facts. Trump's remark about Clinton's loss in the election is totally irrelevant. Trump may be correct about illegal leaks, *but* the leaks were allegedly necessary because Flynn was dishonest about his conversations with the Russian ambassador. Spicer was explaining rational reasons, while Trump seems to be talking about his emotions.

On 16 February 2017, Trump held a press conference, at which the following was said.

QUESTION: Did you fire Mike Flynn?

THE PRESIDENT: Mike Flynn is a fine person, and I asked for his resignation. He respectfully gave it. He is a man who — there was a certain amount of information given to Vice President Pence, who is with us today. And I was not happy with the way that information was given.

He didn't have to do that, because what he did wasn't wrong, what he did in terms of the information he saw. What was wrong was the way that other people, including yourselves in this room, were given that information, because that was classified information that was given illegally. That's the real problem. And you can talk all you want about Russia, which was all a fake news, fabricated deal to try and make up for the loss of the Democrats, and the press plays right into it. ....

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference," [White House](#), begins 12:55 EST, 16 Feb 2017.

My comment is that Trump should have stopped talking after he said "I asked for [Flynn's] resignation." Instead of saying that Flynn's false statement to Pence was wrong, Trump said it was wrong for journalists to be given classified information. Then Trump rambled into an irrelevant remark about "loss of the Democrats". This little vignette shows a seriously disordered thought process by Trump. Later in the 16 Feb briefing, Trump did admit: "But [Flynn] did something wrong with respect to the Vice President, and I thought that was not acceptable."

On 16 February 2017, the furor in Congress and the news media about Flynn began to subside.

When Flynn resigned at night on 13 Feb, the White House was ready with a list of three candidates for the job of national security adviser. [NY Times](#). But the leading candidate, retired Admiral Harward, rejected the job offer on 16 Feb. [Financial Times](#); [Washington Post](#).

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**My comments:** I am not concerned with Flynn's alleged violation of the Logan Act, unless he undercut the Obama administration. There are examples of private citizens who conducted beneficial diplomacy (e.g., Bill Richardson and Bill Clinton traveled to North Korea to retrieve U.S. citizens who had been arrested there). Because there have been *no* prosecutions under the Logan Act in its more than 200 year history, the Logan Act ought to be either repealed as an unnecessary statute, or amended with a more specific statute that requires interference with the president's foreign policy.

Trump is angry about the leaks of confidential information to journalists. Personally, I am opposed to leaks of confidential information, as the information belongs to the U.S. Government, and the leaker does *not* have legal authority to disclose it to unauthorized people. That having been said, leaks to journalists have been useful in exposing corruption, malfeasance, and false statements by government officials. However, the end does not justify the means. Unfortunately, the legitimate need for secrecy in military and diplomatic work obscures dishonest conduct. Congress needs to carefully amend statutes about confidential or secret information, to permit disclosure that exposes false statements by government officials, corruption, and other substantial matters that impede the functioning of a democracy.



A narcissistic person refuses to admit fault for his error. Instead, a narcissistic person blames unfair treatment by other people. In Trump's case, he blames "dishonest media" (now "fake media") and Trump also blames leaks by the intelligence community. Trump's statements are wrong.

I am very uncomfortable with several of Trump's advisers (and Rex Tillerson, Trump's secretary of state) having a previous cozy relationship with the Russian government. Russia has a long history of atrocious conduct, from Stalin's genocide of the Kulaks to Putin's annexation of Crimea. Recently,

1. On 14 Feb 2017, it was revealed that Russia had deployed cruise missiles in violation of a 1987 treaty. (See, e.g., [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#); [Reuters](#).)
2. On 28 February 2017, Russia cast its *seventh* veto in the United Nations Security Council that prevented sanctions on — or prosecution of — Syrians for violations of international law. The United Nations is unable to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution of war crimes because of Russia's protection of Assad the Barrel Bomber.
3. On 15 March 2017, the U.S. Justice Department announced an indictment against two Russian government espionage agents and two Russian hackers for stealing data from the Yahoo online service in 2014. (See [below](#).)
4. On 24 April 2017, it was revealed that Russia is supplying weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan, for the Taliban's fight against the U.S. Military. [Washington Post](#).

Clearly, Russia should *not* be amongst our friends. The debacle over Flynn should encourage Congress and the Justice Department to investigate the relationships between Trump's advisers and Russia.

This news story began with false statements by Flynn regarding his conversations with the Russian ambassador in late December 2016. By the night of 14 Feb 2017, about 24 hours after Flynn resigned, journalists began to focus on the relationship between Trump's other advisers and Russia. One consequence is that it will be increasingly difficult for Trump to remove sanctions on Russia that were imposed by Obama. See, e.g., the [Reuters](#) article about Trump's cooling his bromance with Putin, and the [Associated Press](#) article that says Trump has, "at least temporarily", abandoned his plans to make a deal with the Russian government.

For a discussion of Trump's contacts with Russians, see [below](#).

On 30 March 2017, General Flynn demanded immunity from criminal prosecution in exchange for his testimony to the government, as described [below](#).

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### Sessions met with Russian Ambassador

On 1 March 2017, it was disclosed that Jeff Sessions — then a U.S. Senator and a foreign policy adviser to candidate Trump; now U.S. Attorney General — met privately with the Russian Ambassador in July and 8 September 2016. But at his 10 January 2017 confirmation hearings, Sessions denied having "communications with the Russians." [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#).

On the morning of 2 March 2017, Sessions denials were already "falling apart". Worse, Sessions may have committed perjury in his confirmation hearings. [Washington Post](#). On the afternoon of 2 March 2017, Sessions agreed to recuse himself from any Justice Department investigation of the 2016 presidential campaign, including Russian interference in that campaign. [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

Some of the news articles cited in the previous paragraph mention that Sessions was the *only* member of the Senate Armed Services Committee to have contact with the Russian ambassador. That raises the unanswered question of *why* the Russian ambassador wanted to meet with Sessions.

My comment is that the Sessions' scandal is a repeat of the Flynn debacle, except that Sessions' denial of contacts with Russians was made under oath during his confirmation hearings in the U.S. Senate.

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### **Erroneous Documents at White House Website**

On 14 February 2017, *USA Today* noticed that Trump's Executive Orders at the White House website differed from the official version in the Federal Register, which is published by the National Archives.

The White House has posted inaccurate texts of President Trump's own executive orders on the White House website, raising further questions about how thorough the Trump administration has been in drafting some of his most controversial actions.

A USA TODAY review of presidential documents found at least five cases where the version posted on the White House website doesn't match the official version sent to the Federal Register. The differences include minor grammatical changes, missing words and paragraph renumbering — but also two cases where the original text referred to inaccurate or non-existent provisions of law.

By law, the Federal Register version is the legally controlling language. But it can often take several days for the order to be published, meaning that the public must often rely on what the White House puts out — and that's sometimes inaccurate.

....

The White House did not respond to a request for comment Monday [13 Feb]. It's unclear whether the press office somehow released out-of-date copies of executive orders, or whether the president signed new orders correcting mistakes before they were

sent to the Federal Register.

Gregory Korte, "White House posts wrong versions of Trump's orders on its website," [USA Today](#), 11:49 EST, updated 16:55 EST, 14 Feb 2017.

The errors in the White House website were generally ignored by journalists, but two mainstream media did quote the *USA Today* article: [The Hill](#); [Washington Post](#).

The *USA Today* article on 14 Feb identified two discrepancies involving citation of statutes:

1. In the 27 Jan 2017 Executive Order 13769 that bans entrance to the USA by foreign nationals from certain nations, the [White House](#) version at §8(a) cited 8 U.S.C. §1222, while the [Federal Register](#) version cites 8 U.S.C. §1202. Section 1202 "requires that all individuals seeking a nonimmigrant visa undergo an in-person interview, subject to specific statutory exceptions", while the erroneous Section 1222 requires a physical and mental examination. The Federal Register version was published 5 days after Trump signed the Order.
2. In Executive Order 13770 that creates an ethics pledge for appointees in the executive branch of the U.S. Government, the [White House](#) version at §2(r) cited "section 207 of title 28" of the U.S. Code, while the [Federal Register](#) version correctly cites "section 207 of title 18". Title 28 does *not* have a section 207.

These errors in documents at the White House website show sloppy proofreading by lawyers in the White House. Worse, when I checked on the night of 17 Feb — 3 days after *USA Today* exposed the errors — the White House had still *not* corrected its erroneous documents.

The *USA Today* article specifically mentions three other discrepancies.

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## 16 Feb 2017: Trump press conference

On the early afternoon of 16 Feb 2017, Trump gave a press conference at the White House. Here are some paragraphs quoted from the official White House transcript.

I'm making this presentation directly to the American people with the media present, which is an honor to have you this morning, because many of our nation's reporters and folks will not tell you the truth and will not treat the wonderful people of our country with the respect that they deserve. And I hope going forward we can be a little bit different, and maybe get along a little bit better, if that's possible. Maybe it's not, and that's okay too.

Unfortunately, much of the media in Washington, D.C., along with New York, Los Angeles, in particular, speaks not for the people but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system. The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people — tremendous disservice. We have to talk about it to find out what's going on, because the press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control.

I ran for President to represent the citizens of our country. I am here to change the broken system so it serves their families and their communities well. I am talking, and really talking, on this very entrenched power structure, and what we're doing is we're talking about the power structure, we're talking about its entrenchment. As a result, the media is going through what they have to go through to oftentimes distort — not all the time — and some of the media is fantastic, I have to say; they're honest and fantastic. But much of it is not — the distortion. And we'll talk about it, and you'll be able to ask me questions about it.

But we're not going to let it happen, because I'm here again to take my message straight to the people. As you know, our administration inherited many problems across government and across the economy. To be honest, I inherited a mess — it's a mess — at home and abroad. A mess. Jobs are pouring out of the country. You see what's going on with all of the companies leaving our country, going to Mexico and other places — low-pay, low-wages. Mass instability overseas, no matter where you look. The Middle East, a disaster. North Korea — we'll take care of it, folks. We're going to take care of it all. I just want to let you know I inherited a mess.

....

I'm here following through on what I pledged to do. That's all I'm doing. I put it out before the American people. Got 306 Electoral College votes. I wasn't supposed to get 222. They said there's no way to get 222; 230 is impossible. Two hundred and seventy, which you need, that was laughable. We got 306 because people came out and voted like they've never seen before. So that's the way it goes. I guess it was the biggest Electoral College win since Ronald Reagan.

....

I turn on the TV, open the newspapers, and I see stories of chaos. Chaos! Yet, it is the exact opposite. This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine, despite the fact that I can't get my Cabinet approved, and they're outstanding people. ....

....

QUESTION: Very simply, you said today that you had the biggest electoral margins since Ronald Reagan with 304 or 306 electoral votes. In fact, President Obama got 365 in 2008.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm talking about Republican. Yes.

QUESTION: President Obama, 332. George H.W. Bush, 426 when he won as President. So why should Americans trust —

THE PRESIDENT: Well, no, I was told — I was given that information. I don't know. I was just given. We had a very, very big margin.

QUESTION: I guess my question is, why should Americans trust you when you have

accused the information they receive of being fake when you're providing information that's fake?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know. I was given that information. I was given — actually, I've seen that information around. But it was a very substantial victory. Do you agree with that?

QUESTION: You're the President.

....

THE PRESIDENT: But I am having a good time. Tomorrow they will say, Donald Trump rants and raves at the press. I'm not ranting and raving. I'm just telling you, you're dishonest people. But — but I'm not ranting and raving. I love this. I'm having a good time doing it. But tomorrow the headlines are going to be: Donald Trump Rants and Raves. I'm not ranting and raving.

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference," [White House](#), begins 12:55 EST, 16 Feb 2017. Retrieved at 19:48 EST on 16 Feb 2017.

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In reading this transcript, I am astounded by the level of Trump's hostility toward journalists, who he called “dishonest” *four times* in the one press conference. Trump mentioned the phrase “fake news” *seven times* in the one press conference. I think journalists are doing a good job exposing false statements by Trump, which exposure obviously irritates him.

During this press conference, Trump mentioned he received 306 electoral votes, which he characterized as the "biggest Electoral College win since Ronald Reagan." But, according to the U.S. Government [Archives](#), Trump's claim is false for *six* reasons:

1. George H.W. Bush received 426 electoral votes in 1988.
2. Bill Clinton received 370 electoral votes in 1992.
3. Bill Clinton received 379 electoral votes in 1996.
4. Barack Obama received 365 electoral votes in 2008.
5. Barack Obama received 332 electoral votes in 2012.
6. Trump actually received 304 electoral votes, because two electors pledged to Trump voted for someone else.

Note that when a journalist in the press conference disputed Trump's false statement, Trump did *not* admit his error, but twice said "I was given that information." Additionally, it is inappropriate for Trump to continue boasting about his election victory. Trump's false statement on 16 Feb about his "biggest Electoral College win since Ronald Reagan" is perhaps an example of his narcissistic need to have a larger inaugural crowd and to have won

the popular vote.

Another thing that caught my eye was Trump mentioned Hillary Clinton by name 11 times (including twice as "Hillary") during the 16 Feb 2017 press conference. The election was on 8 Nov 2016, 100 days ago. Trump decisively defeated Clinton. Trump needs to stop campaigning against Hillary Clinton. (Jennifer Rubin, writing in the [Washington Post](#), says the choice now is between Trump and Pence.)

There is much more that is wrong with Trump's assertions on 16 Feb. See, e.g.:

- Glenn Kessler & Michelle Ye Hee Lee, "Fact-checking President Trump's news conference," [Washington Post](#), 17:57 EST, 16 Feb 2017. (15 false statements by Trump)
- Philip Rucker, "In an erratic performance, President Trump shows his supporters who's boss," [Washington Post](#), 18:31 EST, 16 Feb 2017. (" 'I'm not ranting and raving,' President Trump insisted ... [in a] tempest of a news conference in which he did just that. .... The president's erratic showing seemed to leave much of official Washington alarmed and aghast and may not have convinced doubters that he can govern smoothly.")
- Julie Pace, "Trump raps 'criminal' leaks, 'dishonest' media, 'bad' judges," [Associated Press](#), 19:32 EST, 16 Feb 2017. (Trump's "answers were often unwieldy, almost stream of consciousness, and some of his responses were startlingly strange.")
- Ashley Parker & John Wagner, "Trump claims he 'inherited a mess' at sprawling, grievance-filled news conference," [Washington Post](#), 19:43 EST, 16 Feb 2017. ("President Trump aired his grievances against the news media, the intelligence community and his detractors in a sprawling, stream-of-consciousness news conference....")
- Jonathan Lemire, "Trump, in Unprecedented Fashion For a President, Rips Press," [Associated Press](#), 20:54 EST, 16 Feb 2017.
- Maryalice Parks, Riley Beggin, & Ryan Struyk, "Trump press conference fact-check: What the president got wrong and right," [ABC News](#), 21:14 EST, 16 Feb 2017. ("Below are more than a dozen [actually 15] false, questionable or misleading claims Trump made over the course of the 75-minute press conference....")
- Michael D. Shear, Maggie Haberman, & Glenn Thrush, "Trump, Aggrieved and Sometimes Gregarious, Stands Up for Himself," [NY Times](#), 16 Feb 2017. (Trump "offered a disjointed and emotional performance in which he appeared to release pent-up anger and suspicion about the 'dishonest media,' Democrats, intelligence officials, 'criminal' leakers, Hillary Clinton, environmentalists and judges.")
- Nicholas Fandos, "Trump Calls Press 'Dishonest,' Then Utters Falsehoods of His Own," [NY Times](#), 16 Feb 2017.

- "FactChecking Trump's News Conference," [FactCheck.org](#), 16 Feb 2017.
- "Australian PM says Trump wasting his time criticising media," [Reuters](#), 01:11 EST, 17 Feb 2017. Also see: "Donald Trump wasting his time complaining about media coverage, Malcolm Turnbull says," [Australian Broadcasting](#), 17 Feb 2017.
- Lynn Sweet, "Trump Twitter Friday: 'Fake media not happy'," [Chicago Sun-Times](#), 07:19 CST, 17 Feb 2017. (Described Trump's press conference as "rambling, stream-of-consciousness, error-laden, grievance-filled".)
- Jim Drinkard & Calvin Woodward, "AP FACT CHECK: The audacity of hype," [Associated Press](#), 09:49 EST, 18 Feb 2017.

Again, Trump displays a tenuous grasp of facts on issues that are important to him.

*Why* is Trump giving one of his campaign-style speeches during a White House press conference? I have seen no explanation that makes sense.

### 17 Feb 2017

On 17 Feb 2017, *The Washington Post* explained why Trump's attacks on journalists can succeed amongst Trump's supporters.

If [Trump's] supporters don't actually read a report, such as the one the [New York] Times ran Wednesday [15 Feb], then Trump doesn't have to respond to it, really. He can respond to a version of his own invention, and his backers will be none the wiser. Callum Borchers, "Here's why Trump's attacks on 'fake news' succeed," [Washington Post](#), 12:39 EST, 17 Feb 2017.

I agree with what Mr. Borchers said in the previous paragraph. Trump's supporters will *not* notice when Trump mentions erroneous so-called "facts". And those who agree with Trump's prejudices and slogans, are likely to believe that criticism of Trump by the mainstream media is evidence of liberal bias by the "dishonest" media. In this way, a combination of ignorance of facts plus a lack of critical thinking skills makes Trump's supporters vulnerable to Trump's demagoguery.

On the afternoon of 17 Feb 2017, Trump further escalated his attacks on journalists:

The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!  
Donald Trump, [tweet](#), 16:48 EST, 17 Feb 2017.

My comment is surprise that Trump omits *The Washington Post* from his enemies list. *The Post* has been shredding Trump — exposing Trump's false statements and Trump's emotions. Apparently, Trump does *not* read *The Washington Post*.

Also on 17 Feb 2017, John McCain — the Republican candidate for U.S. president in 2008 and currently chairman of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee — gave a speech at the Security Conference in Munich, in which McCain condemned Trump (without



mentioning Trump's name):

[Those who survived World War II] would be alarmed by the growing inability, and even unwillingness, to separate truth from lies.

John McCain, "Remarks by SASC Chairman John McCain at the 2017 Munich Security Conference," [U.S. Senate](#), 17 Feb 2017.

For interpretation of McCain's 17 Feb remarks, see, e.g.: [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 18 February 2017, Senator John McCain criticized Trump's tweet (quoted above) about journalists being the "enemy of the American people". McCain retorted: "That's how dictators get started. .... .. when you look at history, the first thing that dictators do is shut down the press." [NBC News](#); [Washington Post](#); [NBC News](#)(transcript).

On 20 February 2017, Howard Kurtz, writing in [Fox News](#) condemned Trump's tweet about the media being the "enemy of the American people". Kurtz said: "But even for a president who regularly breaks the rules, there are lines he shouldn't cross — as he did with this tweet on Saturday: [quoting tweet] The media are not the enemy. That has sinister connotations."

### **18 Feb 2017: campaign rally**

On 18 February 2017, Trump held a campaign rally in an airplane hanger at the Melbourne, Florida airport. [Fox News](#); [NY Times](#). The [Washington Post](#) found Trump made 13 false statements in his speech.

In his 18 Feb speech, Trump tersely referred to "You look at what's happening last night [17 Feb] in Sweden." Trump's vague remark baffled people in Sweden, because nothing spectacular happened in Sweden on 17 Feb, neither a terrorist attack nor a big crime. [Reuters](#); [The Guardian](#); [The Telegraph](#); [BBC](#). Amongst the ridicule of Trump is a [tweet](#) with a parody of an IKEA instruction page for Trump's wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. (The parody was copied from a 31 Jan webpage by [Der Postillion](#) in Germany.)

On 19 February, Trump attempted to clarify with a [tweet](#): "My statement as to what's happening in Sweden was in reference to a story that was broadcast on @FoxNews concerning immigrants & Sweden." But a broadcast on Fox News cable television in the USA is *not* something that happened in Sweden "last night". Further, the Fox News program blamed immigrants in Sweden for an alleged increase in crime. But there is actually a decrease in crime in Sweden. It appears that Fox News — Trump's favorite television news channel — is broadcasting fake news. [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

On 20 February, Trump clarified with another [tweet](#): "Give the public a break — The FAKE NEWS media is trying to say that large scale immigration in Sweden is working out just beautifully. NOT!" Two days earlier, Trump falsely said something bad happened in Sweden on the night of 17 Feb. Trump appears to be trying to shift the focus from his erroneous "fact" to a discussion of Swedish immigration policy. But Swedish immigration policy is a matter for the Swedes to decide. Instead of making a fool of himself with false references to Sweden, Trump should work on reducing the homicide rate in Chicago.

On 25 February 2017, the [Associated Press](#) disclosed that a Fox News channel program had featured an interview with a "Swedish defense and national security advisor" who was unknown to the Swedish Defense Ministry or Swedish Foreign Office. Again, it appears that Fox News — Trump's favorite television news channel — is broadcasting fake news.

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## 24 Feb 2017: Trump attacks journalists

On 23 February 2017, [CNN](#) reported that the White House Chief of Staff, Reince Priebus, asked the FBI to deny a 14 Feb report by *The New York Times* that Trump's campaign staff contacted Russian agents. The FBI refused the political request. See also [Associated Press](#)(23Feb); [Associated Press](#)(24Feb).

After CNN and other news organizations reported this news, Trump was outraged at the embarrassing leak from the FBI. At about 07:30 EST on 24 Feb 2017, Trump [tweeted](#) and [tweeted](#): “The FBI is totally unable to stop the national security "leakers" that have permeated our government for a long time. They can't even find the leakers within the FBI itself. Classified information is being given to media that could have a devastating effect on U.S. FIND NOW”

Chris Cillizza, writing in *The Washington Post*, says the real issue is the content of the leaks, *not* that leaks occur. And if Trump is concerned about allegedly criminal leaks, how about being concerned that Priebus contacted the FBI about an ongoing criminal investigation?

More reporting and commentary by Greg Sargent at *The Washington Post*.

On 24 February 2017, Trump addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference. Here is part of what Trump said about journalists:

And I want you all to know that we are fighting the fake news. It's fake — phony, fake. (Applause.) A few days ago, I called the fake news “the enemy of the people” — and they are. They are the enemy of the people. Because they have no sources, they just make them up when there are none. I saw one story recently where they said nine people have confirmed. There are no nine people. I don't believe there was one or two people. Nine people. And I said, give me a break. Because I know the people. I know who they talked to. There were no nine people. But they say, nine people, and somebody reads it and they think, oh, nine people. They have nine sources. They make up sources.

They are very dishonest people. In fact, in covering my comments, the dishonest media did not explain that I called the fake news the enemy of the people — the fake news. They dropped off the word “fake.” And all of the sudden, the story became, the media is the enemy. They take the word “fake” out, and now I'm saying, oh, no, this is no good. But that's the way they are. So I'm not against the media. I'm not against the press. I don't mind bad stories if I deserve them. And I tell you, I love good stories, but we won't — (laughter) — I don't get too many of them.

But I am only against the fake news media or press — fake, fake. They have to leave that word. I'm against the people that make up stories and make up sources. They shouldn't be allowed to use sources unless they use somebody's name. Let their name be put out there. Let their name be put out. (Applause.) A source says that Donald Trump is a horrible, horrible human being. Let them say it to my face. (Applause.) Let there be no more sources.

....

And many of these groups are part of the large media corporations that have their own agenda, and it's not your agenda, and it's not the country's agenda. It's their own agenda. They have a professional obligation as members of the press to report honestly. But as you saw throughout the entire campaign, and even now, the fake news doesn't tell the truth. Doesn't tell the truth.

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump at the Conservative Political Action Conference," [White House](#), 24 Feb 2017.

The [Washington Post](#) found 13 erroneous statements in Trump's speech, including Trump's remark about nine anonymous sources cited in one news article. The [Associated Press](#) discussed 4 errors in Trump's speech. On 25 February, the Associated Press issued a news article titled "Trump and His overdrawn apocalypse". That AP article was not available at their archival BigStory website, but is available at The [NY Times](#) and The [Washington Post](#).

President Trump's demand that journalists stop using anonymous sources is a blatant violation of the First Amendment. Government should *not* tell journalists how to do their job. Ironically, only hours before Trump condemned anonymous sources, the [Associated Press](#) reported that White House staff members were talking to journalists on condition of anonymity.

Not noticed by commentators were *two* uses of an anonymous source by Trump himself in his 24 Feb speech:

1. "Jim [no last name]" formerly visited Paris, France every summer. But 4 or 5 years ago, Jim stopped traveling to Paris, because of Islamic terrorism. Jim said: "Paris is no longer Paris."
2. the unnamed head of a pipeline company ("the gentleman — never met him, don't even know the name of his company") who spent "hundreds of millions of dollars" on consultants who were supposed to get government approval for a new pipeline, but the "bloodsucker consultants" failed.

At night on 24 Feb, the [Washington Post](#) reported that after the FBI refused to dispute the 14 Feb *New York Times* article about Russian contact with Trump's campaign staff, the White House then asked "senior members of the intelligence community and Congress" to dispute the news. In short, the White House attempted to use U.S. Government agencies as a public-relations tool to cover-up alleged misconduct by Trump's campaign staff. On 25 February, the [Washington Post](#) reported that commentators see similarities with Nixon's attempted cover-

up of the burglary at the Watergate.

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### White House Retaliates Against Journalists

In an astounding development, on 24 Feb 2017, the White House refused to allow journalists from *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, CNN, and Politico to attend a press briefing by Spicer. Spicer called his presentation a "press gaggle", but that does *not* justify excluding major news media, while allowing some smaller conservative media (e.g., Breitbart and *Washington Times*) to attend. Spicer held his gaggle in his office — perhaps to justify limiting the number of journalists — but the larger White House press room was available at the time of his gaggle. The Associated Press, *Time* magazine, and *USA Today* refused to attend, in protest of the exclusion of their colleagues. The executive editor of *The New York Times* said: "Nothing like this has ever happened at the White House in our long history of covering multiple administrations of different parties." CNN criticized the White House: "Apparently this is how they retaliate when you report facts they don't like. We'll keep reporting regardless." [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [CNN](#); [Associated Press](#); [Politico](#); [Washington Post](#).

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### Trump blames Obama for Protests

On 21 February 2017, Trump tweeted:

The so-called angry crowds in home districts of some Republicans are actually, in numerous cases, planned out by liberal activists. Sad!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 15:23 PST, 21 Feb 2017.

In an exclusive interview with the "Fox & Friends" television program on 27 February 2017, Trump specifically blamed Obama for protests at town hall meetings with Republicans from the U.S. Congress:

"I think that President Obama is behind it because his people are certainly behind it, and some of the leaks possibly come from that group," Trump said.

The president said he understands what's going on, since he is attempting to undo much of the legislation Obama implemented. [Trump] also said these protests will likely continue because "it's politics."

"I'm not really surprised because I understand the way the world works," Trump said. "'It's Politics': Trump Says Obama Is Behind Protests and 'Possibly' the Leaks," [Fox News](#), 08:20 EST, 28 Feb 2017.

A later Fox News webpage said:

President Trump said in an exclusive interview Tuesday that he believes former President Barack Obama and his top aides are behind the protests and leaks that have tormented the new administration — and he doesn't expect it to stop anytime soon.

Trump, during an interview with "Fox & Friends," blamed Obama acolytes and the ex-

president himself for the organized demonstrations that have sprung up nationwide since the Nov. 8 election, and also for the politically embarrassing leaks that have hindered Trump's messaging.

"I think that President Obama's behind it because his people are certainly behind it," Trump said. "And some of the leaks possibly come from that group, you know, some of the leaks — which are very serious leaks, because they're very bad in terms of national security."

Trump didn't provide evidence to support the charge.

....

"But I also understand that's politics," Trump said. "And in terms of him being behind things, that's politics. And it will probably continue."

He added: "I'm not really surprised because I understand the way the world works. It's politics. I mean I'm changing things that he's wanted to do."

Cody Derespina, "Trump: Obama and former aides behind protests, leaks," [Fox News](#), 28 Feb 2017.

On the night of 27 Feb, Fox News released video of part of their interview, which was broadcast on CNN. *The Washington Post* reported Trump said:

"I think that President Obama is behind it because his people certainly are behind it," Trump said. "In terms of him being behind things, that's politics. It will probably continue."

....

"I think he is behind it," Trump said. "I also think it's politics. That's the way it is." Philip Rucker, "Trump says Obama is helping to organize protests against his presidency," [Washington Post](#), first posted at 22:59 EST, 27 Feb 2017, updated 07:05 on 28 Feb.

The [Associated Press](#) also reported on the Fox interview with Trump.

Finally, *The Washington Post* posted a transcript of the entire interview with Fox & Friends. In the relevant part of the interview, one of the three Fox & Friends hosts, Brian Kilmeade, first suggested Obama's organization was behind some of the protests against Trump.

KILMEADE: All right, can we talk about President Obama?

You said you personally get along with him. You guys were going at each other for three, four, maybe eight years. It turns out his organization seems to be doing a lot of the organizing for some of the protests that a lot of these Republicans are seeing around the country and against you.

TRUMP: Right.

KILMEADE: Do you believe President Obama is behind it?

And if he is, is that a violation of the — the so-called unsaid president's code?

TRUMP: No, I think he is behind it. I also think it's politics. That's the way it is. And look, I have a very thick skin.

KILMEADE: But Bush was never — Bush wasn't going after Clinton. And Clinton wasn't going after Bush.

TRUMP: Well, you never know what's exactly happening behind the scenes. You know, you're probably right or possibly right. But you never know.

No, I think that President Obama is behind it, because his people are certainly behind it. And some of the leaks possibly come from that group, you know, some of the leaks, which are really very serious leaks, because they're very bad...

KILMEADE: Right.

TRUMP: — in terms of national security.

But I also understand that's politics. And in terms of him being behind things, that's politics. And it will probably continue.

KILMEADE: Does he just — does that disappoint you?

This — don't you think that that goes beyond what we usually do in this country?

TRUMP: I don't want to use the word disappoint. I'm not really surprised because I understand the way the world works. It's politics. I mean I'm changing things that he's wanted to do. I mean we're much tougher in terms of getting the bad guys out.

You know, people don't realize, he deported a lot of people, but we're focused on the bad people. But we're focused on the bad people.

We're focused on the drug lords and the gang members. We're focused on a very, very bad group that are in this country that we're getting out rapidly. He was much less focused on that.

Chris Cillizza, "President Trump's friendly 'Fox and Friends' interview went exactly how you think it would," [Washington Post](#), 11:10 EST, 28 Feb 2017.

To see if there is any factual basis for Kilmeade's and Trump's view that Obama is organizing protests against Trump, I searched Google News for the query `Obama protests Trump` during the date range from 20 Jan 2017 to 26 Feb 2017. Here is some of what I found:

- On 30 Jan 2017, Obama responded to Trump's Executive Order that banned entry from seven-Muslim majority nations by supporting nationwide protests. A spokesman for Obama said: "President Obama is heartened by the level of engagement taking place in communities around the country." Obama himself was on vacation. [Washington Post](#);

[NY Times](#); [NBC News](#).

- On 14 February 2017, [CNN](#) reported Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) claimed protesters were paid by well-funded liberal groups "to bully and intimidate" Republicans in Congress. But Chaffetz's claims of paid protesters are unsubstantiated. Also, CNN listed some of the liberal organizations who were "working to help with grassroots organizing around GOP town halls": Organizing For Action, the SEIU, MoveOn.org, the Center for American Progress, and a new group called Indivisible.
- On 17 February 2017, the [New York Times](#) reports: "[MoveOn.org](#) is mobilizing members to attend town-hall-style meetings across the country" and "[Organizing for Action](#), the political nonprofit group that grew out of former President Barack Obama's election campaign, has created a 'Recess Toolkit' with suggestions on how to effectively ask questions at the events."
- On 19 February 2017, [Breitbart](#), a right-wing news organization, reported that the successor to Obama's presidential campaign organization, Organizing for Action, is attempting to "disrupt Trump's agenda".
- On 24 February 2017, [Politico](#) reported there was *no* evidence that anti-Trump protesters were being paid by liberal groups.

On 27 February 2017, [PolitiFact](#) found *no* evidence of paid protesters at Republican town hall meetings.

My conclusion is that groups of liberal Democrats *may* be organizing some protests against Republicans. But these protests are energetic because the protesters genuinely believe Trump's policies are wrong. Obama surely agrees with the liberals who are protesting Trump's policies, but there is *no* evidence that Obama is personally involved in organizing protests.

My comment is that it is a fact that some U.S. citizens are angry about Trump's policies or Trump's behavior. But instead of simply recognizing that *all* politicians are criticized by some citizens, Trump sees a nefarious organization by Obama and his henchmen to criticize Trump. Once again, Trump offers *no* evidence to support his inflammatory claim. One wonders if Trump is developing paranoia.

I am surprised that Trump did *not* blame Hillary Clinton.

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On 16-17 February 2017, the [New York Times](#) and then the [Washington Post](#) reported that Trump had asked the Justice Department to investigate some of Trump's opponents. During Trump's 16 Feb press conference, discussed [above](#), Trump said "I've actually called the Justice Department to look into the leaks. Those are criminal leaks."

My comment is that Trump is just one step away from asking the Justice Department and/or Internal Revenue Service to investigate organizations and people who are criticizing Trump.

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## 28 Feb 2017: Trump speaks to Congress

The transcript of Trump's first speech to Congress is posted at the [White House](#).

As usual, Trump's speech contains factual errors. The [Associated Press](#) found 8 errors. The [Washington Post](#) found 13 errors. The [New York Times](#) found approximately ten facts that were at least misleading. [PolitiFact](#) found at least 8 errors or misleading statements by Trump.

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### Pence & Pruitt Used Private E-Mail to conduct state business

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Republicans — quite properly in my opinion — excoriated Hillary Clinton for using her private e-mail server for official business while she was U.S. Secretary of State. She was subsequently unable to produce copies of *all* of her e-mails, thereby failing to preserve public records and raising questions about the content of the missing e-mails.

But in late February and early March 2017, it was revealed that two prominent Republicans in Trump's administration had used a private e-mail account to conduct official business when they were previously in state government:

1. Scott Pruitt, Trump's Environmental Protection Agency administrator, used a private Apple e-mail account for state business when he was Attorney General of Oklahoma. Worse, he told the U.S. Senate during his confirmation hearings that he *only* used an official state e-mail account for state business. [KOKH](#)(17 Feb); [KOKH](#)(24 Feb); [Associated Press](#)(27 Feb); [Washington Post](#)(2 Mar).
2. Mike Pence, Trump's Vice President, used an AOL e-mail account for state business when he was governor of Indiana. [Indianapolis Star](#)(2 Mar); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#). The [Indianapolis Star](#) and [Associated Press](#) reported that Pence attempted to keep his AOL e-mails private. Pence's attorneys delivered 13 boxes of AOL e-mails to the Indiana government on 2 March 2017, in a belated attempt to deliver public records after Pence resigned as governor on 9 Jan 2017. [Indianapolis Star](#).

My comment is that these two Republicans are hypocrites for criticizing Hillary Clinton for her unlawful use of private e-mail for official government business. Using a private e-mail server shows politicians are clueless about computer security, as well as avoiding preserving public records of their communications.

Both Pence and Pruitt attended law school, where they learned to defend misconduct, instead of admit the facts and apologize. In my opinion, their explaining differences and distinctions between Hillary Clinton's conduct and their conduct only serves to show they are unable to understand their misconduct. Regardless of whether state law permitted state executives to

use private e-mail, and regardless of the contents of their state e-mails, it was at least bad practice for Pence and Pruitt to send official state e-mails from a private e-mail account.

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## Trump alleges Obama wiretapped Trump Tower

On 4 March 2017, Trump alleged that President Obama wiretapped the telephones at Trump Tower in New York City in October 2016. Trump's allegations came in a series of four Tweets:

1. [tweet](#) at 06:35 EST: "Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my "wires tapped" in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"
2. [tweet](#) at 06:49 EST: "Is it legal for a sitting President to be "wire tapping" a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW!"
3. [tweet](#) at 06:52 EST: "I'd bet a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October, just prior to Election!"
4. [tweet](#) at 07:02 EST: "How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"

As usual, Trump offered absolutely *no* evidence to support his inflammatory claim. Obama's spokesman replied: "... neither President Obama nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any U.S. citizen...." [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [CNN](#).

Trump does *not* understand wiretap law. Only a judge can issue a warrant authorizing a wiretap. The president can *not* authorize a wiretap. So Trump's series of four tweets not only insults Obama, but also displays Trump's ignorance of law.

Back in October 2016, it was known that Russians had hacked into computers at the Democratic National Committee and also hacked into the personal e-mail account of Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager. The stolen e-mails were publicly displayed on WikiLeaks. (See [below](#).) Because Trump benefited from the public disclosure of stolen e-mails, there could have been legitimate questions about whether Trump was communicating with Russians about the criminal hacking. But at 15:55 EST on 4 March 2017, The [Washington Post](#) reported: "Senior U.S. officials with knowledge of the wide-ranging federal investigation into Russian interference in the election said Saturday that there had been no wiretap of Trump." And on 5 March 2017, James Clapper — Obama's Director of National Intelligence — appeared on the NBC television program [Meet the Press](#) and denied any wiretap of Trump.

In my opinion, Trump's tweets appear to be more paranoia by Trump. And Trump's accusations without any supporting facts — and without any citations to sources — again show defects in Trump's thought process.

Astoundingly, on 5 March 2017, the White House asked Congress to investigate Obama for

allegedly wiretapping Trump in 2016. [White House](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Associated Press](#).

White House staff — *not* Trump — finally managed to cite some news articles in support of Trump's inflammatory claims. But The [Washington Post](#) explained why the White House citations were either *not* credible or irrelevant.

Apparently, the White House intends to divert attention away from contacts between Trump's advisers and Russians. But it was a stupid gambit by Trump, because:

1. If Trump's allegations are false (the likely outcome), then it was an abuse of presidential power to demand that Congress investigate a person without any credible evidence of misconduct by that person. More importantly, this *may* be Trump's first impeachable offense.
2. If Trump or his associates were wiretapped, then an investigation of the wiretapping may expose criminal activity by Trump or his associates, which could be an impeachable offense.

### McCain

On 12 March 2017, U.S. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, put the Obama wiretapping dispute into its proper perspective during an interview on CNN's "State of the Union" television program.

JAKE TAPPER [host]: [Trump] tweeted that President Obama had wiretapped him at Trump Tower during the campaign. .... If there's no proof for what the president said — and we know that the FBI director has said it is not true, and the former director of national intelligence has said it's not true — should President Trump take back his charge and apologize to President Obama and to the American people?

JOHN McCAIN: Well, look, President Trump has to provide the American people, not just the Intelligence Committee, but the American people, with evidence that his predecessor, former president of the United States, was guilty of breaking the law, because our director of national intelligence, General Clapper, testified that there was absolutely no truth to that allegation.

So, I think the president has one of two choices, either retract or to provide the information that the American people deserve, because, if his predecessor violated the law, President Obama violated the law, we have got a serious issue here, to say the least.

TAPPER: But there's no one I have heard who has any information relating to the FBI or intelligence, including Vice President Pence, Sean Spicer, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who has said that they know of any information that backs this up. Do you have any reason to think that this charge is true?

McCAIN: I have no reason to believe that the charge is true.

But I also believe that the president of the United States could clear this up in a minute. All he has to do is pick up the phone, call the director of the CIA, director of national intelligence, and say, OK, what happened?

Because they certainly should know whether the former president of the United States was wiretapping Trump Tower.

....

But I do believe that, on an issue such as this, accusing a former president of the United States of doing something which is not only illegal, but just unheard of, then that requires corroboration. And I will let the American people be the judge.

But this is serious stuff, Jake, because it under — if true, or the allegation is left out there, it undermines the confidence the American people have in the entire way that the government does business.

"Transcript: 'State of the Union'," [CNN](#), 12 March 2017.

McCain made two points here. First, the burden of proof is always on the accuser, so it was *not* proper for Trump to accuse Obama of illegal wiretapping — without Trump also presenting credible evidence to support his claim. Second, there are easier ways of resolving Trump's accusation than having Congressional committees investigate Obama. For more about the response of Congress, see [The Washington Post](#).

**Kellyanne Conway believes  
microwave ovens take photographs  
and *not* her job to provide evidence**

Trump is in deep trouble with his unfounded accusation that Obama wiretapped Trump Tower. So Kellyanne Conway dug the hole deeper for Trump. In an interview with the *Bergen County Record*, a newspaper in New Jersey, Conway alleged Obama's surveillance of Trump went beyond telephones.

... Conway ... suggested that the alleged monitoring of activities at Trump's campaign headquarters at Trump Tower in Manhattan may have involved far more than wiretapping.

“What I can say is there are many ways to surveil each other,” Conway said as the Trump presidency marked its 50th day in office during the weekend. “You can surveil someone through their phones, certainly through their television sets — any number of ways.”

Conway went on to say that the monitoring could be done with “microwaves that turn into cameras,” adding: “We know this is a fact of modern life.”

Conway did not offer any evidence to back up her claim. But her remarks are significant — and potentially explosive — because they come amid a request by the

House Intelligence Committee for the White House to turn over any evidence by today [13 Mar] that the phones at Trump Tower were tapped as part of what the president claims to be a secret plot by the Obama administration to monitor his campaign.

....

The strategy of dueling inquiries [in the House and Senate] — along with Conway's suggestion of even broader surveillance by the Obama administration besides wiretapping — certainly complicates any investigation that involves Russia. But it may also confuse the issue.

Mike Kelly, "Kellyanne Conway alludes to even wider surveillance of Trump campaign," [Bergen County Record](#), 12 Mar 2017. (accessed at 06:50 EDT on 13 Mar)

My comment is that I want to see Conway disassemble a microwave oven and show us the photodiode array — or other image sensor — that enables a microwave oven to become a camera. And Conway — as a self-appointed expert on electronic surveillance — needs to explain, using electrical engineering technical terms, how surveillance data are transmitted from a microwave oven. To be clear, not only is there *no* image sensor in a microwave oven, but also there is *no* way to transmit data from a microwave oven. Conway is babbling more pseudo-facts, in a continuation of her "Bowling Green Massacre" assault on the Truth.

On the morning of 13 March 2017, Kellyanne Conway appeared on [CNN's "New Day"](#) program, where she actually said: "I'm not in the job of having evidence. That's what investigations are for." (See also [CNN](#).)

The [Washington Post](#) retorted: "You *are* in the business of having evidence, Ms. Conway. You are a representative of the president of the United States, and your business is presenting accurate information to the American people on his behalf."

### **White House press secretary attempts to explain Trump's delusion**

On the afternoon of 13 March, the White House press secretary made a hypertechnical defense of Trump's delusion about Obama wiretapping Trump Tower.

QUESTION: Does he have an obligation, as Senator McCain said, to clear this up?

MR. SPICER: And I think if you look at the President's tweet, he said very clearly "wiretapping" in quotes. There's been substantial discussion in several reports that Bret Baier from Fox on March 3rd talked about evidence of wiretapping. There's been reports in The New York Times and the BBC and other outlets about other aspects of surveillance that have occurred.

....

QUESTION: The question I wanted — when should Americans trust the President? Should they trust the President — is it phony or real when he says that President Obama was wiretapping him?

MR. SPICER: Well, again, let's get back. I think there's two things that are important about what he said. I think recognizing that it's — he doesn't really think that President Obama went up and tapped his phone personally.

QUESTION: What does he think?

MR. SPICER: But I think there's no question that the Obama administration, that there were actions about surveillance and other activities that occurred in the 2016 election. That is a widely reported activity that occurred back then. The President used the word "wiretap" to mean, broadly, surveillance and other activities during that. And that is, again, something — it is interesting how many news outlets reported that this activity was taking place during the 2016 election cycle, and now we're wondering where the proof is. It is many of the same outlets in this room that talked about the activities that were going on back then.

....

QUESTION: You said when he meant wiretapping — said it — he meant surveillance. That's not what he said.

MR. SPICER: He literally had it in quotes.

QUESTION: So you're interpreting the tweet for us, it sounds like.

MR. SPICER: No, in some cases I'll ask him, what did the quotes mean, and he'll say —

QUESTION: Did you ask about this tweet?

MR. SPICER: I did.

QUESTION: And what did he say?

MR. SPICER: He said they were in quotes, I was referring to surveillance overall. It's something that had been referred to in other reports.

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 3/13/2017, #22," [White House](#), 13 March 2017.

Spicer attempted to twist Trump's words to now mean something different than what Trump plainly said in his four tweets on 4 March that are quoted [above](#).

Obama is a lawyer and former politician who does *not* know how to install a wiretap. The only reasonable interpretation of Trump's tweets is that Obama ordered someone else to install wiretap(s) in Trump Tower. *If* any wiretap existed, then it *may* have been pursuant to a judicial order.

"Surveillance" is a broader word than "wiretap". Trump should have used the correct word. It

is *not* plausible that it took Trump 9 days to decide he used the wrong word. Spicer's assertion that Trump put quotation marks around "wiretap" is only true in two of four instances in Trump's 4 March tweets.

The [Washington Post](#) said Spicer was rewriting the meaning of Trump's tweets: "The unavoidable conclusion is this: Spicer knows that no evidence of actual wiretapping is coming, so his best shot to vindicate Trump is to claim that 'wire tapping' could mean something else."

[CNN](#) said: "White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Trump wasn't referring to wiretapping when he tweeted about wiretapping."

The [New York Times](#) said: "The unusual and shifting explanations from Mr. Spicer and Ms. Conway reflected the contortions that members of Mr. Trump's inner circle have employed to explain the president's explosive accusation, which he has yet to address personally."

### **Trump's government misses deadline to provide evidence**

On Saturday, 11 March 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported that the Intelligence Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives asked the White House to provide any evidence that Trump's telephone was tapped during the election. The due date for the evidence is Monday, 13 March.

On the evening of 13 March 2017, the Justice Department missed the deadline for providing evidence of Obama wiretapping Trump Tower. The House Intelligence Committee gave the Justice Department a revised deadline of 20 March. [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#).

The House Intelligence Committee is *not* the only Congressional committee to demand evidence of Obama wiretapping Trump Tower. Senator Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.Car.) — who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security — requested the Justice Department and the FBI provide copies of any warrants or court orders related to the alleged wiretapping. On 14 March, [Alan He](#) of CBS News reported that Graham was angry that his request for evidence was ignored.

On 15 March 2017, Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee told [CNN](#): "If you're going to take Trump's tweets literally on wiretapping, then 'clearly the President was wrong'."

On the night of 15 March 2017, Trump appeared on Tucker Carlson's program on the Fox News cable television channel. I can not find a transcript of what Trump said, but I did find the following quotations:

President Trump discussed his tweeted accusation that President Obama ordered "wires" at Trump Tower tapped during last year's presidential campaign in an exclusive interview with Fox News' "Tucker Carlson Tonight" Wednesday [15 March].

Trump told host Tucker Carlson that the administration "will be submitting things" to



the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence "very soon." The president added that he "will be, perhaps speaking about this next week" and predicted that "you're going to find some very interesting items coming to the forefront over the next 2 weeks."

When asked by Carlson why he tweeted about the alleged phone tap before producing evidence, Trump said his definition of wiretapping "covers a lot of different things."

"That really covers surveillance and many other things," he said. "Nobody ever talks about the fact that [the words 'wires tapped'] was in quotes [in the tweet], but that's a very important thing."

"Trump says he will submit evidence of wiretapping to House committee 'very soon'," [Fox News](#), 15 March 2017.

My comment is that 11 days after Trump's inflammatory 4 March tweets, Trump is only promising evidence sometime in the next two weeks. Trump *should* have disclosed his evidence when he accused Obama of wiretapping Trump Tower.

On 16 March 2017, two senior members of the Senate Intelligence Committee — chairman Richard Burr (R-N.Car.) and vice-chairman Mark Warner (D-Va.) — issued a one-sentence statement that said: "Based on the information available to us, we see no indications that Trump Tower was the subject of surveillance by any element of the United States government either before or after Election Day 2016." [Warner](#) and [Burr](#).

**My comment** is that Trump *should* have had his evidence ready when he made his inflammatory tweets on 4 March. And the White House staff *should* have begun assembling evidence when the tweets became public. Remember, on 5 March the White House *asked* Congress to investigate this wiretapping, so the White House should be cooperating with the investigation that the White House requested, instead of missing deadlines. The 13 March missed deadline is 9 days after Trump tweeted and there is still *no* evidence to support Trump's tweets, which are almost certainly based on Trump's delusions.

Incidentally, the Justice Department has a dilemma: it must submit evidence to support Trump's assertions, but evidence does *not* exist for Trump's delusions. One wonders how long it will take the Justice Department to admit there is zero evidence for Trump's delusion about Obama wiretapping Trump Tower.

In my opinion, Trump has begun an era in which the highest levels of the U.S. Government operate on delusions without facts. And that is just fine with the people who elected Trump. Operating on delusions is supposed to "make america great again", according to Trump's campaign slogan.

On 14 March, *The Washington Post* clearly explained what is happening.

The White House's reactions to Trump's evidence-free claims — be it [Obama wiretapping Trump Tower] or the one about millions of illegal votes in 2016 — is to call for investigations. That has the triple benefit of putting the onus on someone else to look into it, to buy some time and hope people forget that the president is making such wild allegations, and, in this case, to give themselves an excuse to clam up. The

White House initially said it wouldn't comment on Trump's wiretapping claim while it was being investigated and then it said it couldn't provide evidence because of separation of powers — another [claim](#) that strained credulity.

But that also puts Republicans such as Nunes and Graham in the position of having to account for these claims — and calling on Trump and his team to put up or shut up. By pushing the administration to produce evidence — or else — they are effectively putting the ball back in the executive branch's court. The subtext: You can't just make these claims and then ask us to deal with the fallout.

Aaron Blake, "Republicans are threatening to expose Trump as the emperor with no clothes," [Washington Post](#), 14:37 EDT, 14 Mar 2017.

Prof. Lawrence Douglas at Amherst College in Massachusetts wrote in *The Guardian* newspaper in Manchester, England:

Incredibly, Trump has never had to pay a political price for his malign speech, shameless evasions and legion lies. To the contrary. By treating words as potent and weightless — potent, as tools to skewer opponents; and weightless, without lasting consequence — he greased his way to a spectacular political rise.

....

.... But Trump is a stubborn or dull pupil. In refusing to utter a word of regret, much less apology, he is sticking to his tried and true script. Apologies are recognitions of mistake and Trump by his own lights commits none.

Lawrence Douglas, "Donald Trump's disregard for words — and truth — is finally catching up with him," [The Guardian](#), 18 March 2017.

Perhaps an explanation for why Trump can *not* recognize his mistakes is that Trump is narcissistic.

### **17 March 2017: Trump meets with Dr. Merkel**

On 17 March 2017, Trump met with German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel at the White House. At a joint press conference, Trump actually blurted out: "As far as wiretapping, I guess, by this past administration, at least we have something in common perhaps." [White House](#).

Three leading newspapers in the USA remarked:

1. The [Washington Post](#) said: "Merkel did not respond to Trump's attempt at a joke."
2. The [NY Times](#) said: "Ms. Merkel did a barely perceptible double take, busying herself by shuffling her notes. She smiled thinly and said nothing, as if she had resolved not to get drawn into Mr. Trump's political dramas."
3. The [Los Angeles Times](#) said: "President Trump refused Friday to back off his unsubstantiated accusation that President Obama ordered surveillance of him, instead

dismissing questions about it by cracking a joke that revived one of the most troublesome diplomatic episodes of Obama's tenure."

I think this was a bad thing for Trump to say for three reasons:

1. It reminded Dr. Merkel of an unpleasant experience when the U.S. National Security Agency probably wiretapped her cell phone during 2010-2013. [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [The Telegraph](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).
2. Trump used the probable wiretapping of Dr. Merkel to validate the unproven wiretapping of Trump Tower. In other words, Trump took Dr. Merkel's state visit and twisted it to validate Trump's personal delusion of being wiretapped.
3. Trump portrayed Obama as the enemy of both Dr. Merkel and Trump, which is a strange position for a U.S. president to take in discussions with the leader of a foreign government.

On the morning of 18 March 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "President Donald Trump defiantly refused to back down from his explosive claim that Barack Obama wiretapped his phones, ...."

**16-17 March 2017:  
White House says United Kingdom wiretapped Trump  
More "fake news" from Fox News**

Sadly, there is *more* to this story. Andrew Napolitano — a retired judge on a state trial court in New Jersey and a legal commentator on the Fox News cable television channel since 1998 — [alleged](#) on 14 March 2017 that Obama asked the United Kingdom Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) to wiretap Trump. Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, repeated the allegations in a [White House](#) press conference on 16 March. The U.K. government was outraged. The White House promised *not* to repeat the allegations again. [The Telegraph](#)(16Mar); [Financial Times](#)(17Mar); [BBC](#)(17Mar); [Reuters](#).

But then on 17 March, during the press conference with Dr. Merkel, Trump said: "All we did was quote a certain very talented legal mind who was the one responsible for saying that on television. I didn't make an opinion on it. That was a statement made by a very talented lawyer on Fox. And so you shouldn't be talking to me, you should be talking to Fox, okay?" [White House](#). The U.K. government was again outraged that Trump had repeated a discredited (i.e., fake) news story that alleged the GCHQ wiretapped Trump for Obama. [The Telegraph](#); [The Guardian](#); [Reuters](#).

On 17 March, Shepard Smith of Fox News repudiated Napolitano's false allegation: "Fox News cannot confirm Judge Napolitano's commentary," the anchor Shepard Smith said on air. "Fox News knows of no evidence of any kind that the now president of the United States was surveilled at any time, any way. Full stop." Peter Baker & Steven Erlanger, "Trump Offers No Apology for Claim on British Spying," [NY Times](#), 17 Mar 2017.

See also [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).

On 20 March 2017, it was reported that Fox News cable television had indefinitely suspended Napolitano from appearing on its programs. [Los Angeles Times](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 29 March 2017, Napolitano returned to Fox News cable television programs. Napolitano immediately reiterated his 14 March claim that GCHQ wiretapped Trump Tower and Napolitano asserted that his three anonymous sources continued to believe their claim. [Washington Post](#); [Los Angeles Times](#).

On 1 April 2017 — four weeks after Trump's famous four tweets — there is still *no* credible evidence for Trump's claims that Obama wiretapped Trump Tower. Trump's delusion about wiretapping has greatly diminished Trump's reputation and grieved the U.K. government.

### **Trump has *no* evidence**

On Friday, 17 March, the Justice Department provided a report to the House Intelligence Committee. On Sunday, 19 March, Devin Nunes (R-Calif), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, appeared on "Fox News Sunday" and spoke about the evidence. I am unable to find a transcript of the program, but here is a quotation from an article by Fox News:

The chairman of the House intelligence committee told "Fox News Sunday" that phones at President Donald Trump's campaign headquarters in midtown Manhattan were never tapped during last year's election campaign, contrary to Trump's earlier, unsubstantiated assertion.

"Was there a physical wiretap of Trump Tower? No, there never was," Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., said. "The information we received Friday continues to lead us in that direction."

Nunes added: "There was no FISA warrant I am aware of to tap Trump Tower." FISA stands for the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which requires investigators to seek a warrant from a secret court to wiretap a foreign suspect.

"House intel committee chairman: 'There never was' Trump tower wiretap," [Fox News](#), 19 March 2017.

That is a strong statement by a senior member of Trump's political party. Plainly, the wiretap of Trump Tower *never happened*. But the real problem is just beginning. The USA has a president who makes inflammatory assertions with absolutely *no* evidence to support his assertion. This is a defective thought process. It appears that Trump can *not* distinguish between facts and his delusions.

On Monday, 20 March 2017, the director of the FBI and the director of the National Security Agency testified before the House Intelligence Committee about (1) continuing investigation of possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russian hackers before the Nov 2016 election and (2) Trump's baseless claims that Obama wiretapped Trump Tower.

The Associated Press reported:

In a bruising five-hour session, the FBI director [James Comey] also knocked down Trump's claim that his predecessor had wiretapped his New York skyscraper, an assertion that has distracted White House officials and frustrated fellow Republicans who acknowledge they've seen no evidence to support it.

....

Comey for the first time put himself publicly at odds with the president by contradicting a series of recent tweets from Trump that asserted his phones had been ordered tapped by President Barack Obama during the campaign.

"With respect to the president's tweets about alleged wiretapping directed at him by the prior administration, I have no information that supports those tweets, and we have looked carefully inside the FBI," Comey said. The same was true, he added, of the Justice Department.

....

The FBI director was the latest government official to reject Trump's claims, made without any evidence, that Obama had wiretapped Trump Tower during the campaign. Rep. Nunes [chairman of the House Intelligence Committee] rejected them earlier in the hearing.

Eric Tucker & Eileen Sullivan, "Comey: FBI probing Trump-Russia links, wiretap claims bogus," [Associated Press](#), 17:24 EDT, 20 Mar 2017.

*The Washington Post* published a transcript of Comey's entire testimony, where the following was said about Trump's claim that Obama wiretapped Trump Tower.

SCHIFF'S OPENING STATEMENT: We have also reviewed whether there is any evidence to support President Trump's claim that he was wiretapped by President Obama in Trump Tower and found no evidence whatsoever to support that slanderous accusation. And we hope that Director Comey can now put that matter permanently to rest.

....

QUESTION BY SCHIFF: Director Comey, was the president's statement that Obama had his wires tapped in Trump Tower a true statement?

COMNEY: With respect to the president's tweets about alleged wiretapping directed at him by the prior administration, I have no information that supports those tweets and we have looked carefully inside the FBI. The Department of Justice has asked me to share with you that the answer is the same for the Department of Justice and all its components. The department has no information that supports those tweets.

....

SCHIFF: So President Obama could not unilaterally order a wiretap of anyone?

COMEY: No president could.

....

SCHIFF: Now, the British allies — our British allies have called the president's suggestion that they wiretapped him for Obama nonsense and utterly ridiculous. Would you agree?

ROGERS [director of the National Security Agency]: Yes, sir.

SCHIFF: Does it do damage to our relationship with one of our closest intelligence partners for the president to make a baseless claim that the British participated in a conspiracy against him?

ROGERS: I think it clearly frustrates a key ally of ours.

"Full transcript: FBI Director James Comey testifies on Russian interference in 2016 election," [Washington Post](#), 20 Mar 2017.

Later on 20 March 2017, the Associated Press's White House correspondent wrote:  
Taken together, the disclosures in Monday's [20 Mar] lengthy House intelligence committee hearing amounted to an extraordinary undercutting of a president, whose headline-grabbing accusations and Twitter-friendly attacks crumbled quickly under the weight of sworn congressional testimony from some of the nation's top security officials.

....

... Monday's hearings left the White House scrambling for cover, though there was little to be found. .... In one particularly eyebrow-raising moment, Spicer resorted to claiming one associate, Paul Manafort, had a "very limited role" in the 2016 election. In fact, Manafort was hired in March [2016] as Trump's convention manager and promoted to campaign chairman in May. Spicer also described foreign policy adviser Michael Flynn as simply a "volunteer." Flynn traveled frequently with the president, delivered a high-profile speech at the Republican National Convention and served as his first National Security Adviser. Both Manafort and Flynn were fired by Trump after revelations about their connections to Russia.

Julie Pace, "Analysis: Reality catching up with Trump on Russia," [Associated Press](#), 20:30 EDT, 20 Mar 2017.

*The Washington Post* explained:

James B. Comey — the FBI director whom Trump celebrated on the campaign trail as a gutsy and honorable “Crooked Hillary” truth-teller — testified under oath Monday [20 Mar] what many Americans had already assumed: Trump had falsely accused his predecessor of wiretapping his headquarters during last year’s campaign.

Trump did not merely allege that former president Barack Obama ordered surveillance on Trump Tower, of course. He asserted it as fact, and then reasserted it, and then

insisted that forthcoming evidence would prove him right.

....

For Trump, Comey's testimony punctuates what has been a troubling first two months as president. His approval ratings, which were historically low at his inauguration, have fallen even further. [Gallup's](#) tracking poll as of Sunday [19 Mar] showed that just 39 percent of Americans approve of Trump's job performance, with 55 percent disapproving.

The Comey episode threatens to damage Trump's credibility not only with voters, but also with lawmakers of his own party whose support he needs to pass the health-care bill this week in the House, the first legislative project of his presidency.

....

As always in Trump world, where the guiding ethos is winning at any cost, the worst sin is conceding defeat.

Philip Rucker & Ashley Parker, "President Trump faces his hardest truth: He was wrong," [Washington Post](#), 18:23 EDT, 20 Mar 2017.

I disagree when *The Post* says Trump's accusing Obama of wiretapping Trump Tower "threatens to damage Trump's credibility". In my opinion, Trump already has *zero* credibility, so there is nothing remaining to damage. The real issue here is when will Congress act to remove Trump from the presidency.

On 21 March 2017, *The Washington Post* explained about the total lack of accountability for Trump's false statements.

The simple fact is that short of impeachment, which is used extremely sparingly and rightly so, there is a relative pittance of punitive measures for a president like Trump who is willing to say things that just aren't true. Shame has long been the tool of choice in politics. As in: A president says something that fact-checkers rule is totally false. The president, concerned — even if he won't acknowledge it — about how he is perceived by the political class, either apologizes for the remark or just stops saying it. Like the political class or hate them, that shaming was a way of regulating political rhetoric.

Trump is not interested in the opinions of the political class. In fact, he likes the idea of sticking it to those people and believes it is fundamental to his political brand. Which it is! ....

No modern president has taken advantage of that fact in ways that Trump has. He simply creates his own reality — often through tweets to his 26.8 million followers [on twitter] — and then ignores any attempts to hold him accountable to the facts. Because shame doesn't work on him, there's almost nothing to be done to change his behavior.

Trump is a president unlike any we have ever seen before. His willingness to stretch the bounds of truth — and then be unapologetic about doing so — is something we've



not seen on a regular basis in the White House before now. .... Trump understands that the punitive consequences for continuing to insist that he was wiretapped are relatively minimal. And so he will keep doing it.

Chris Cillizza, "Donald Trump keeps getting things wrong. And there's not much we can do about it." [Washington Post](#), 14:35 EDT, 21 Mar 2017.

My opinion is that Cillizza has an interesting analysis. However, I am not as pessimistic as Cillizza. Trump's false allegation that Obama wiretapped Trump Tower is just one of *many* instances where Trump made a false statement and then failed to apologize for his mistake. During the two months ending on 21 March 2017, this essay has accumulated 10 sections that chronicle at least one false statement by Trump. I say "at least" for two reasons:

1. In some sections of this essay, I chronicle in one section one speech by Trump, although that one speech might contain ten false statements.
2. In other sections of this essay, I chronicle in one section one false statement that Trump made on multiple occasions.

Trump has shown a persistent pattern of making conclusions that are based on falsehoods or delusions, which shows his consistent disregard for Truth.

Educated people recognize a difference between Truth and Falsity. It is *not* an acceptable thought process to base opinions on either delusions or false "facts". At some point, I hope that Congress declares that the U.S. president must use real facts, *not* delusions. One way of making such a declaration would be to impeach Trump and then remove him from the presidency. I agree with Cillizza that impeachment should be "used extremely sparingly", but a president like Trump is apparently unprecedented in U.S. history.

### **20 Mar 2017: Trump's tweets**

But hours before the testimony before the House Intelligence Committee on 20 March, Trump unleashed three more tweets:

The Democrats made up and pushed the Russian story as an excuse for running a terrible campaign. Big advantage in Electoral College & lost!  
[twitter](#) at 06:49 EDT on 20 March 2017.

The real story that Congress, the FBI and all others should be looking into is the leaking of Classified information. Must find leaker now!  
[twitter](#) at 07:02 EDT on 20 March 2017.

What about all of the contact with the Clinton campaign and the Russians? Also, is it true that the DNC would not let the FBI in to look?  
[twitter](#) at 09:14 EDT on 20 March 2017.

In the first tweet quoted above, Trump still does *not* believe that Russian hacker(s) stole documents from the Democrat's presidential campaign, despite the fact that the FBI, CIA, and NSA agreed in a 6 Jan 2017 report that there was Russian involvement, and despite the fact that, on 29 Dec 2016, Obama sanctioned Russia in response to Russian hacking of

Democrats. (See [below](#).)

In the second tweet quoted above, Trump attempts to divert attention from the focus of the Congressional investigation. But remember that on 5 March 2017, the White House *asked* Congress to investigate Obama's wiretapping of Trump Tower.

In the third tweet quoted above, it is not clear what Trump means when he refers to alleged contact between "the Clinton campaign and the Russians".

The FBI Director began five-hours of testimony before the House Intelligence Committee at 10:30 EDT on 20 March. ([AP](#).) Astoundingly, Trump continued to tweet during those hearings.

The NSA and FBI tell Congress that Russia did not influence electoral process. [twitter](#) at 12:42 EDT on 20 March 2017.

FBI Director Comey: fmr. DNI Clapper "right" to say no evidence of collusion between Russia and Trump Campaign. [twitter](#) at 15:11 EDT on 20 March 2017.

In the 12:42 tweet, the polite thing to say is that Trump mischaracterized the testimony of the FBI director, while the Truth is that Trump lied again. The FBI director actually said his investigation was continuing, and he made no public conclusions. Further, any effect on the elections is outside the scope of the FBI investigation into possible collusion between Russians and Trump's campaign.

At 10:48, Comey and Rodgers did say "they have no evidence or intelligence that Russian cyber actors changed vote tallies in key states [e.g., Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio] during last year's presidential election." ([AP](#)). But changing vote tallies is only one of many ways to "influence electoral process". I am also concerned about the effect of disclosing Clinton's private campaign e-mails on the opinion of voters about who is the better candidate.

The [Washington Post](#) reported that when Comey was asked at the hearing about Trump's 12:42 tweet, Comey replied: "It certainly wasn't our intention to say that today."

*The Washington Post* article cited in the previous paragraph explained that Trump's 15:11 tweet referred to Comey's testimony about a 6 Jan 2017 report, there was no evidence of collusion in that report. *The Post* then says: "Former director of national intelligence James Clapper later issued a statement saying it was 'in the best interest of all Americans' to investigate possible Trump-Russia ties." *The Post* concluded: "The president's tweets throughout the day were misleading, inaccurate or simply false."

The [Associated Press](#) also reported a fact-check of Trump's tweets on 20 March. During the hearing, Comey disputed Trump's 12:42 tweet: "We've offered no opinion, have no view, have no information on potential impact because it's never something that we looked at." In Trump's 15:11 tweet, Trump omitted that there could be evidence found after Clapper resigned on 20 Jan 2017. Neither Comey nor Rodgers would comment on the continuing

investigation.

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### Nunes is *not* neutral

Devin Nunes, as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, is supposed to lead a neutral, fact-finding investigation into the relationship between Russia and both Trump and his advisers. But on 22 March 2017, Nunes abandoned any pretense of neutrality when, he went to the White House to brief Trump of the progress of the committee's investigation of Trump and Trump's advisers. The briefing itself was bad enough, but Nunes also made a public statement that Trump, and/or some of Trump's advisers, *may* have been "incidentally" surveilled during their conversations with agents of foreign governments. After the briefing by Nunes, Trump said that he felt "somewhat vindicated" by the information.

[Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#)(AP); [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#).

For more on Trump's feelings of vindication, see Spicer's remarks in his 23 March [press briefing](#).

On 23 March, Nunes privately apologized to Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee. [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

On 24 March, Paul Waldman, writing in The [Washington Post](#), clearly explained the problems with Nunes' subservience to Trump.

*Why* did Nunes, a Republican, decide his role was to support the Republican president? Before Nunes began his 14-year career in the U.S. House of Representatives, Nunes was a dairy farmer. [Associated Press](#). Nunes never attended law school, which is a basic credential for conducting a forensic investigation. Nunes is apparently unaware of ethical standards forbidding the appearance of a conflict of interest.

In my opinion, Nunes' personal disclosure to Trump — who is a subject of the investigation — destroyed the integrity, independence, and objectivity of the investigation. At this point, Congress needs to create a special commission to handle the investigations in a professional and independent way. I envision appointing a law professor or retired prosecutor to be an independent counsel, leading the investigation of the relationship between Russia and the Trump campaign.

On 27 March 2017, various Democrats (e.g., Nancy Pelosi and Adam Schiff) called on Nunes to recuse himself as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee's investigation of the relationship between Russia and the Trump campaign. [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Los Angeles Times](#).

On 28 March 2017, Nunes refused to relinquish leadership of the investigation by his Committee. [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

On 6 April 2017, owing to complaints to the House Ethics Committee, Nunes temporarily relinquished the chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee's investigation of the relationship between Russia and the Trump campaign. [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#);

[Reuters](#).

### **More Allegations by Trump**

On 5 April 2017, in an interview with the [New York Times](#), Trump alleged that Obama's National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, "may have committed a crime by seeking to learn the identities of Trump associates swept up in surveillance of foreign officials by United States spy agencies". *The Times* notes that "Mr. Trump gave no evidence to support his claim".

On 11 April 2017, [CNN](#) reported: "After a review of the same intelligence reports brought to light by House Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes, both Republican and Democratic lawmakers and aides have so far found no evidence that Obama administration officials did anything unusual or illegal, multiple sources in both parties tell CNN. Their private assessment contradicts President Donald Trump's allegations that former Obama national security adviser Susan Rice broke the law by requesting the 'unmasking' of US individuals' identities."

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### **Trump falsely claims Germany owes money to the U.S.**

The U.S. taxpayer has been subsidizing the military defense of Western Europe since the end of World War II. That was proper until about the 1960s, because Europe had the cost of reconstruction after a terrible war.

For a long time, Trump has been saying that the European members of NATO do not pay enough for their military defense. (See, e.g., [Washington Post](#) on 21 Mar 2016, [Washington Post](#)(fact-check) on 30 Mar 2016; and [NY Times](#)(Trump-interview), [NY Times](#)(allies react), [Washington Post](#), all on 21 July 2016) While I think Trump is correct about that, Trump's abrasive statements about NATO are reprehensible. And then Trump began to falsely claim that the European nations *owed* the USA for past U.S. contributions to European military defense.

That political issue leaped out during the press conference of Trump and Dr. Merkel (the chancellor of Germany) on 17 March 2017:

.... I reiterated to Chancellor Merkel my strong support for NATO, as well as the need for our NATO allies to pay their fair share for the cost of defense. Many nations owe vast sums of money from past years, and it is very unfair to the United States. These nations must pay what they owe.

During our meeting, I thanked Chancellor Merkel for the German government's commitment to increase defense spending and work toward contributing at least 2 percent of GDP.

"Joint Press Conference with President Trump and German Chancellor Merkel," [White House](#), 17 March 2017.

Trump reiterated his opinion that Germany owed money to the U.S. Government in two tweets on 18 March 2017 that should be combined.

Despite what you have heard from the FAKE NEWS, I had a GREAT meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Nevertheless, Germany owes.....  
[tweet](#), 09:15 EDT, 18 Mar 2017.

...vast sums of money to NATO & the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany!  
[tweet](#), 09:23 EDT, 18 Mar 2017.

Once again, Trump is spewing false "facts". In 2014, NATO members agreed to spend at least 2% of their gross domestic product on military defense, sometime before the year 2024. Currently, Germany spends 1.23% of GDP on defense, while the USA voluntarily spends more than 3% of GDP on defense. But there is *no* legally binding agreement that says underspending nations owe money to either NATO or the U.S. Government. Western Europe *never agreed* to reimburse the U.S. Government for the cost of the U.S. military defense of Europe. After Dr. Merkel's visit, the German Defense Minister publicly criticized Trump for saying Germany owed money to the USA. See, e.g., [Washington Post](#)(18 Mar); [Washington Post](#)(19Mar); [NY Times](#)(18Mar); [Associated Press](#)(18Mar); [Deutsche Welle](#)(19Mar); [The Guardian/Reuters](#)(19Mar).

Trump apparently has the delusion that, because the U.S. Government voluntarily exceeded the minimum defense spending, the other NATO nations must reimburse the USA for the excessive spending. Trump's delusion is not only *fictitious*, but also really lousy international diplomacy.

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## 22 March 2017: *Time* magazine interview

On 22 March 2017, Michael Scherer of *Time* magazine interviewed Donald Trump about Trump's repeated false statements. A [transcript](#) of the interview is posted at the *Time* website. Scherer's article, titled "Can President Trump Handle the Truth?", is posted at [Time](#).

On 23 March, Glenn Kessler and Michelle Ye Hee Lee of *The Washington Post* published a fact-check of the interview that disclosed 14 false statements by Trump. *The Post* concluded: "Trump consistently astounds us with his inability to acknowledge that he repeatedly gets facts wrong and consistently misleads the American public with inaccurate, dubious claims. He earns Four Pinocchios for this interview."

On 24 March, Jill Colvin of the [Associated Press](#) wrote: "Since the early days of his campaign, the president has developed a pattern: Make an outrageous claim. Dig in as the criticism rolls. And wait until, eventually, something emerges that can be spun as vindication of the earlier claim."

Most people would be careful in an interview about their false statements to avoid making more false statements. But *not* Trump.

On 21 March 2017, the [Wall Street Journal](#) published an editorial with the title: "A President's Credibility Trump's falsehoods are eroding public trust, at home and abroad."

Prof. Lawrence Douglas at Amherst College in Massachusetts wrote commentary in *The Guardian* newspaper in Manchester, England about this *Time* Interview. Because fair-use in copyright law permits only short quotations, I am quoting only three of Prof. Douglas' six points about Trumpspeak:

Donald Trump's elastic connection to reality was richly on display in his [interview](#) with *Time* magazine, published on Thursday [23 Mar]. Much of what the president said was unsurprising — that is, to those who have spent the past two months radically recalibrating their standards of what counts as presidential speech.

Devoted to the topic of "truth and falsehoods", the interview gave the president a chance to substantiate or explain his most offensive deformations of the factual record — that Muslims danced in the streets of the New Jersey as the Twin Towers crumbled, that 3 million undocumented aliens threw the popular vote in Hillary Clinton's favor, that Ted Cruz's father trucked with Lee Harvey Oswald, and that Barack Obama tapped the phone of then candidate Trump.

Predictably, the president offered nothing in the way of substantiation or contrition. Instead, he overwhelmed his interviewer with such a profusion of misstatements, half-truths, dodges and red herrings that one grows dizzy trying to untangle it all.

....

1. In Trumpspeak, a speaker can never be accused of lying if he's simply repeating the statements of others; it is the responsibility of those who make original claims to check for the accuracy and truthfulness of their assertions, not the person who repeats them — even if that person happens to be the most powerful person and speaker on the planet.

....

3. [Trump:] "*Sweden. I make a statement, everyone goes crazy. The next day they have a massive riot, and death, and problems.*"

In Trumpspeak, truth is not factual, it's imagistic.... Truthful statements do not necessarily offer an accurate account of events in the world. They provide an approximation or exaggeration of something that might, in theory, have occurred. Whether a terror attack in Sweden ever took place on the night named by the president is irrelevant. Nor should we care that the riot was not massive and there was no death. Close and maybe are good enough.

....

5. [Trump:] "*The country believes me.*"

In Trumpspeak, belief is a signal of truth. If his supporters believe him, then what Trump is saying must be true. Conversely, if his detractors disbelieve him, this too is evidence that what he is saying must be true. In Trumpspeak, detractors claim Trump is

a liar because they are his detractors; and in calling Trump a liar, they in fact are lying. Lawrence Douglas, "Donald Trump's dizzying Time magazine interview was 'Trumpspeak' on display," [The Guardian](#), 24 March 2017.

In Prof. Douglas' first point, the original source has a responsibility to check for accuracy. Where Trump runs off the rails is that Trump asserts so-called "facts" from sources *without* citing those sources. By failing to cite a source, Trump himself vouches for the accuracy of the "facts" that Trump asserted. When the "facts" are exposed as falsehoods, Trump then blames the original source that Trump did *not* cite.

In Prof. Douglas' third point, Trump is describing Trump's alternative reality, a reality that Trump himself believes is (or should be) true. But Trump's alternative reality is merely Trump's delusion. It is *really scary* to have the U.S. Government led by a man with a tenuous grasp of reality.

In Prof. Douglas' fifth point, it may be that Trump and his supporters share a common set of prejudices, so Trump's delusions are also a good fit with his supporters' distorted view of reality. In other cases, unsophisticated supporters may simply trust the president to speak the Truth.

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### **Flynn demands immunity from criminal prosecution**

[Above](#), I discussed the resignation of Michael Flynn, Trump's first national security adviser, as well as some of the allegations about Flynn's contacts with Russians.

Flynn has a problem. If Flynn makes false statements to the FBI, Flynn could be charged with a felony. If Flynn gives false testimony to Congressional committees that are investigating, then Flynn could be charged with perjury. But if Flynn testifies truthfully, he apparently believes he could be charged with at least one crime.

So on 30 March 2017, Flynn demanded immunity from criminal prosecution in exchange for his truthful testimony to government investigators. Flynn's attorney issued a statement to journalists that said: "No reasonable person, who has the benefit of advice from counsel, would submit to questioning in such a highly politicized, witch hunt environment without assurances against unfair prosecution." [Wall Street Journal](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

Ironically, on 25 September 2016, Flynn told the NBC television program, Meet the Press, in the context of the FBI investigation of Hillary Clinton's private e-mail server while she was U.S. Secretary of State: "I mean, five people around [Hillary Clinton] have had, have been given immunity, to include her former Chief of Staff. When you are given immunity, that means that you have probably committed a crime." [NBC News](#)(transcript); [video](#).

As an attorney, let me be clear. Asking for immunity is *not* an admission of guilt. It could be that the witness fears a "highly politicized" prosecution that is unfair. It could be that a



witness fears spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on legal fees in the political inquiry.

Donald Trump — who has an opinion on everything — said on Twitter:

Mike Flynn should ask for immunity in that this is a witch hunt (excuse for big election loss), by media & Dems, of historic proportion!

Donald Trump, [twitter](#), 07:04 EDT, 31 Mar 2017.

It is not clear whether Trump was advising Flynn, Congress, or the Justice Department. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "The president is not supposed to direct ongoing investigations."

On 31 March 2017, the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee rejected Flynn's request for immunity, because his request was premature. [NBC News](#); [Associated Press](#); [The Hill](#).

On 18 May 2017, Flynn had *not* responded to a 10 May subpoena for documents for an investigation by the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee. [Associated Press](#).

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## Trump's Income Tax Returns

On 15 April 2017 — the day that income taxes are due in the USA, except that it was a Saturday — there were protest demonstrations in many cities of the USA about federal income taxes. Many protesters demanded that Trump make public his income tax returns. [Associated Press](#).

On 16 April 2017 at 09:07 EDT, Trump [tweeted](#): "I did what was an almost an impossible thing to do for a Republican — easily won the Electoral College! Now Tax Returns are brought up again?"

On 16 April 2017 at 09:13 EDT, Trump [tweeted](#): "Someone should look into who paid for the small organized rallies yesterday. The election is over!"

See news articles: [Washington Post](#); [San Francisco Chronicle](#)(AP); [NY Times](#). On 17 April, Jennifer Rubin, the conservative columnist for *The Washington Post*, [criticized](#) Trump's refusal to disclose his income tax returns.

There is a widespread perception in the USA amongst middle-class people that wealthy people (e.g., Trump) do *not* pay their fair share of income taxes. The only way for wealthy people to defend themselves from this accusation is to publicly release their tax returns and let independent accountants review them. Every presidential candidate, and every president, beginning with Nixon in 1973, has publicly released his tax returns — except Trump. With Trump, people also want to look for business relationships (e.g., with Russians) that could be potential conflicts of interest.

Trump is wrong that disclosure of tax returns is only an issue during political campaigns. Presidents are also expected to disclose their tax returns each year, to see if they have income from improper sources (e.g., bribes) or conflicts of interest. Furthermore, Trump's position is fallacious that, because he won the election, therefore no one cares about his tax returns. Trump won because voters hated Hillary Clinton more than they hated Trump, or maybe

Trump won because voters wanted a wall along the Mexican border more than they liked Hillary's continued illegal immigration.

Trump inappropriately impugned the character of protesters when Trump suggested that they were paid to criticize him. When Trump is accused of hiding evidence (i.e., failing to release his tax returns), instead of responding to the accusation, Trump changes the subject and criticizes his accusers. This is propaganda by Trump and unworthy of the U.S. President.

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## **U.S.S. Vinson and inconsistent U.S. policy on North Korea**

### **March 2017: Introduction to North Korea Problem**

The North Korean government is continuing to test ballistic missiles that are forbidden by multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The North Koreans have a long-standing plan to develop ICBMs that could hit the west coast of the USA. The U.S. Government — quite rightly — fears that the North Koreans will soon test their sixth nuclear weapon.

On 16 March 2017, U.S. Secretary of State declared in Japan:

Well, I think it's important to recognize that the diplomatic and other efforts of the past 20 years to bring North Korea to a point of denuclearization have failed. So we have 20 years of failed approach, and that includes a period in which the United States provided \$1.35 billion in assistance to North Korea as an encouragement to take a different pathway. That encouragement has been met with further development of nuclear capabilities, more missile launches, including those of the recent February 11th and March the 5th. In the face of this ever-escalating threat, it is clear that a different approach is required.

Rex Tillerson, "Press Availability With Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida," [U.S. State Dept](#), 16 March 2017.

On 17 March 2017, U.S. Secretary of State declared in Korea:

We stand together in facing what was once a regional security challenge, but today North Korea threatens not only its regional neighbors, but the United States and other countries. Efforts toward North Korea to achieve peaceful stability over the last two decades have failed to make us safer. The U.S. and our allies have repeatedly reassured North Korea's leaders that we seek only peace, stability, and economic prosperity for Northeast Asia. As proof of our intent, America has provided \$1.3 billion in assistance to North Korea since 1995. In return, North Korea has detonated nuclear weapons, and dramatically increased its launches of ballistic missiles to threaten America and our allies.

The U.S. commitment to our allies is unwavering. In the face of North Korea's grave and escalating global threat, it is important for me to consult with our friends, and chart a path that secures the peace. Let me be very clear: the policy of strategic patience has ended. We are exploring a new range of diplomatic, security, and economic measures.

All options are on the table. North Korea must understand that the only path to a secure, economically-prosperous future is to abandon its development of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and other weapons of mass destruction.

....

.... It is important that the leadership of North Korea realize that their current pathway of nuclear weapons and escalating threats will not lead to their objective of security and economic development. That pathway can only be achieved by denuclearizing, giving up their weapons of mass destruction. And only then will we be prepared to engage with them in talks.

Rex Tillerson, "Remarks With Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se Before Their Meeting," [U.S. State Dept](#), 17 March 2017.

On 16 March, Tillerson said diplomacy with North Korea had "failed" and "a different approach is required." On 17 March, Tillerson said U.S. "patience has ended" — and he said the U.S. is considering "new ... security ... measures" and "All options are on the table." On these two days, Tillerson seems to be hinting at a possible pre-emptive military strike by the U.S. on North Korea.

Note that Tillerson demands that North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons program *before* the U.S. Government will engage in more negotiations with the North Korean aggressors. The leadership of North Korea is paranoid that the U.S. Military is preparing an invasion of North Korea, and so the North Korean government strongly believes that it *needs* nuclear weapons to deter the U.S. It is unlikely that the North Koreans will voluntarily abandon their nuclear weapons program.

On 31 March 2017, the U.S. Secretary of Defense said North Korea's weapons development program has "got to be stopped". [Associated Press](#). In a 2 April 2017 interview with the [Financial Times](#), Trump said the U.S. Government would act unilaterally to solve the North Korean problem if China declined to help solve the problem: "Well if China is not going to solve North Korea, we will. That is all I am telling you." In an interview with *The Times* of London on 4 April, retired U.S. General Jack Keane said: "A pre-emptive strike against launch facilities, underground nuclear sites, artillery and rocket response forces and regime leadership targets may be the only option left on the table. We are rapidly and dangerously moving towards a military option." [The Australian](#).

On the early morning of 7 April 2017, the U.S. Navy suddenly launched a massive airstrike with Tomahawk cruise missiles against one of Syria's military airfields. On 13 April, the U.S. Air Force dropped a 20,000 pound bomb on caves in Afghanistan, perhaps entombing 100 Taliban members. That was the first combat use of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) bomb, the largest conventional explosive in the U.S. arsenal. Those two airstrikes showed the world — including North Korea — that U.S. president Trump was much more willing to use military force than president Obama.

The above paragraphs are background for what happens next.

### 9 April 2017: U.S.S. Vinson to Korea

On 9 April 2017, the U.S. Navy announced the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Carl Vinson and three other warships — each of the three carry Tomahawk cruise missiles — began sailing on 8 April to the ocean near North Korea. (All of the following news articles were published on 9 April, except as noted.) [U.S. Navy](#); [Reuters](#); [U.S. Pacific Command](#)(10Apr); [Pentagon](#)(10Apr); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [JoongAng Ilbo](#)(Yonhap 10Apr); [The Guardian](#).

The obvious U.S. intention was to be ready to launch a pre-emptive military strike against North Korea, perhaps to decapitate the government in Pyongyang, destroy their nuclear weapons development program, and/or destroy their ballistic missile program.

### 9-12 April 2017: quotations from White House & Pentagon

On Sunday, 9 April, the U.S. Navy's Third Fleet issued a press release. On Monday 10 April, the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) posted an identical press release at its website, of which I quote the first two paragraphs:

Adm. Harry Harris, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, has directed the Carl Vinson Strike Group to sail north and report on station in the Western Pacific Ocean after departing Singapore April 8.

Carl Vinson Strike Group, including Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112), and Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain (CG 57), will operate in the Western Pacific rather than executing previously planned port visits to Australia. The Strike Group will remain under the operational control of U.S. 3rd Fleet as part of the 3rd Fleet Forward initiative.

"Carl Vinson Strike Group Departs Singapore for Western Pacific," [PACOM](#), 10 April 2017. Same press release posted at the [U.S. Navy](#) website on 9 April.

On 9 April 2017, Trump's National Security Adviser, General H.R. McMaster, tersely said on a television program:

CHRIS WALLACE, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Why the carrier strike force to the Korean Peninsula?

McMASTER: Well, it's prudent to do it, isn't it? I mean, North Korea has been engaged in a pattern of provocative behavior. This is a rogue regime that is now a nuclear capable regime, and President Xi and President Trump agreed that that is unacceptable, that what must happen is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And so, the president has asked to be prepared to give him a full range of options to remove that threat the American people and to our allies and partners in the region.

"Exclusive: General H.R. McMaster on decision to strike Syria," [Fox News](#), 9 April 2017.

On 11 April, Trump dispatched another of his infamous tweets:

North Korea is looking for trouble. If China decides to help, that would be great. If not,

we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A.  
Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 08:03 EDT, 11 April 2017.

On 11 April, the White House press secretary said at a press briefing:  
[About Trump's tweet] .... I just said that, as you know, when the President is ready to act, he makes it very clear. And I think there is no question that when the President is ready to make a statement, he will do that.

But I think he has made it clear with respect to North Korea that their behavior and their actions with respect to the missile launches is not tolerable. The last thing we want to see is a nuclear North Korea that threatens the coast of the United States, or, for that matter, any other country and any other set of human beings. So we need stability in that region, and I think he has put them clearly on notice.

....

QUESTION: .... And when you unpack it through that lens and the fact that the USS Carl Vinson is sort of steaming out toward the Sea of Japan, that may be an additional pressure to maybe get China to come to the table. .... Putting that strike carrier group in the Sea of Japan, in that region, is that also a messaging circumstance? Or is that simply protective for our allies in Japan and Korea?

MR. SPICER: A carrier group is several things. The forward deployment is deterrence, presence. It's prudent. But it does a lot of things. It ensures our -- we have the strategic capabilities, and it gives the President options in the region.

But I think when you see a carrier group steaming into an area like that, the forward presence of that is clearly, through almost every instance, a huge deterrence. So I think it serves multiple capabilities.

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 4/11/2017, #36," [White House](#), begins 13:42 EDT, 11 April 2017.

On 11 April, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, gave a press briefing.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, if I can ask you about North Korea, the Vinson strike group has now been redirected towards the Sea of Japan in the coming weeks. .... Has tension ratcheted up just recently in the past few days and can you explain why, what has changed just in the past couple of days or week?

SEC. MATTIS: .... As far as the movement of the Vinson, she's stationed there in the western Pacific for a reason. She operates freely up and down the Pacific, and she's just on her way up there because that's where we thought it was most prudent to have her at this time. There's not a specific demand signal or specific reason why we're sending her up there.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) unusual for us to know about a ship movement in advance. That was sort of what — what got everyone's attention. So why was that? I mean, why was it put out in advance? Was it just to signal to North Korea that there would be a show of presence there?

SEC. MATTIS: I believe it's because she was originally headed in one direction for an exercise, and we canceled our role in that exercise, and that's what became public. We had to explain why she wasn't in that exercise. [Sic: The ship's port visit to Fremantle, Australia, was cancelled; the exercise with the Royal Australian navy is proceeding as planned.]

"Press Conference by Secretary Mattis and Gen. Votel in the Pentagon Briefing Room," [Pentagon](#), 11 April 2017, retrieved 22 April 2017. [Material in brackets added by Pentagon *after* the press conference.]

In an interview by Maria Bartiromo of Fox Business Network, Trump tersely spoke about North Korea.

Although he didn't get into specifics, Trump spoke about his decision to send the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier and its battle group to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

"We are sending an armada. Very powerful." Trump said. "We have submarines. Very powerful, far more powerful than the aircraft carrier, that I can tell you."

"Trump on North Korea: 'We Are Sending an Armada'," [Fox News](#), 07:27 EDT, 12 Apr 2017.

*If* the U.S. Military launched a pre-emptive strike on North Korea, then North Korea might respond with artillery fire on Seoul, the capital of South Korea. North Korea might even invade South Korea. Even if the U.S. does *not* launch an airstrike on North Korea, the U.S. saber-rattling increases tension with North Korea and might provoke North Korea to attempt a pre-emptive strike. [Hankyoreh](#)(11Apr); [Washington Post](#). On 12 April, the [Korea Herald](#) said: "North Korea's threat of impending nuclear and missile tests and the US escalation of saber-rattling in response have raised tensions around the Korean Peninsula."

### **17-18 April: U.S.S. Vinson actually went to Australia**

But on 17-18 April 2017, it was revealed that the U.S.S. Carl Vinson and three other ships had sailed south from Singapore on 8 April to join the Australian Navy for previously scheduled exercises. On 8 April, the U.S.S. Carl Vinson did *not* sail north from Singapore, towards Korea. [Defense News](#)(17Apr); [Stars&Stripes](#); [NY Times](#); [NBC News](#); [Washington Post](#); [Los Angeles Times](#); [CNN](#)(19Apr); [Reuters](#)(19Apr); [Straits Times](#)(20Apr).

That could mean the U.S. Government engaged in a hoax, deception, or deliberate falsehood. As Trump has previously said in other contexts, this is FAKE NEWS! The U.S. Government lost credibility as a result of this hoax. Worse, the U.S. Government was recklessly gambling with peace and safety in South Korea.

The admission by the U.S. Government on 18 April can also be interpreted as neither the Pentagon nor the White House knew the location of the U.S.S. Carl Vinson for 9 days — which is colossal incompetence.

Note that on 9-10 April, the Navy and PACOM falsely said: "to sail north ... after departing



Singapore April 8". But on 8 April, the U.S.S. Vinson actually sailed *south* from Singapore, toward Australia. Note the Navy and PACOM also falsely said: "... will operate in the Western Pacific rather than executing previously planned port visits to Australia." And that is not all. Concurrently with these Navy press releases, anonymous Navy officers were telling journalists about the intent of sending the U.S.S. Vinson group to North Korea. (See, e.g., [Reuters](#)(UK); [Reuters](#)(USA), which are cited in many news articles.)

Summarizing the above quotations, on 9-12 April, McMaster, Trump, Mattis, and Spicer all apparently believed the U.S.S. Carl Vinson was heading toward Korea. The fact that so many high-level government officials had their facts wrong is really distressing. But when one considers the anonymous Navy officers who talked to journalists on 9 April about the intent of sending the U.S.S. Vinson to North Korea, there is a *possibility* that the 9 April statements were a deliberate hoax by the U.S. Government.

My search of the Pentagon news articles and news releases on 22 April 2017 shows the Pentagon did *not* correct their erroneous news article of 10 April. Further, my search of the PACOM news on 22 April shows PACOM did *not* correct their erroneous news article of 10 April. The failure to correct erroneous articles is consistent with a deliberate hoax.

I would expect that someone in either PACOM or the Pentagon would read a newspaper article about how the U.S.S. Vinson strike group was traveling towards Korea, when that someone knew the Vinson strike group was traveling towards Australia. That someone could have sent an e-mail to the Pentagon press office and aborted the spreading of false information. The fact that many knowledgeable Navy officers did *not* correct the false information again suggests to me the *possibility* that the 9 April statements were a deliberate hoax by the U.S. Government.

Finally, the cancellation of the U.S.S. Vinson's port visit in Australia is consistent with a deliberate hoax, in order to conceal the fact that the Vinson was near Australia.

Regardless of whether Trump engaged in deliberate hoax or colossal incompetence, the false claim that the U.S.S. Vinson was heading towards Korea on 8 April was criticized in South Korea. See, e.g., [New York Times](#); [JoongAng Ilbo](#); [Hankyoreh](#); [Hankyoreh](#)(editorial); [JoongAng Ilbo](#); [Chosun Ilbo](#).

On 18 April, [The New York Times](#) said: "With Mr. Trump himself playing up the show of force, Pentagon officials said, rolling back the story became difficult."

On 20 April 2017, the [Joong Ang](#) newspaper in South Korea explained:

The New York Times wrote Tuesday [18 April] that White House officials declined to comment on the confusion, referring questions to the Pentagon. Unnamed Pentagon officials reportedly characterized it as a miscommunication among U.S. authorities that later involved the media, saying it became difficult to correct the story once President Donald Trump began playing it up.

It is unclear whether Trump, a crusader against what he deems to be "fake news," purposefully ignored the truth in order to deter Pyongyang, which said the Vinson strike group was proof that the United States was planning an invasion.



Lee Sung-Eun, "Carl Vinson to arrive in Korea around April 25," [JoongAng Ilbo](#); 20 April 2017.

From the incidents chronicled in this essay, we know that Trump is *not* capable of admitting he made a factual error. It now appears that once Trump has publicly asserted a factual error, it is impossible to correct Trump. In this way, Trump's personality and management style prevents correction of his errors. And that could lead to Trump starting a major war that kills tens of thousands of U.S. Military personnel and wastes more than a trillion dollars of U.S. taxpayers' money.

### **19 April 2017 Stupid Excuses from White House**

On 19 April, the president's press secretary said at a press conference:

QUESTION: And, Sean, on the USS Carl Vinson, what happened? Can you take us through the events from the perspective of the White House that led to the miscommunication — this administration thinking that this vessel was thousands of miles away from its actual location?

MR. SPICER: I'm sorry, can you repeat the last part?

QUESTION: Can you take us through the events that led people within this administration to believe the vessel was thousands of miles away from its actual location?

MR. SPICER: Well, I mean, PACOM put out a release talking about the group ultimately ending up in the Korean Peninsula. That's what it will do. I think we were asked very clearly about the use of a carrier group in terms of deterrence and foreign presence and what that meant, and we were — that's what we discussed. I'd refer you back to any other issues with that to the Department of Defense.

[QUESTION:] Does the President believe that he might have spoken too quickly on this location of the vessel before it was actually —

MR. SPICER: The President said that we have an armada going towards the peninsula. That's a fact; it happened — it is happening, rather.

QUESTION: Sean, I just want to follow up on that. Obviously, when the President of the United States says there is military hardware going to a region in the middle of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula, the allies of the United States are encouraged. When that happens to not be the case, they can interpret that as a false encouragement. So how is this White House explaining to South Korea and Japan that, in fact, during the buildup and the actual DPRK missile launch, there was no USS Carl Vinson off the coast of the Korean Peninsula?

MR. SPICER: Well, respectfully, Jessica, I would ask you to either touch base with PACOM or the Department of Defense. The statement that was put out was that the

Carl Vinson Group was headed to the Korean Peninsula. It is headed to the Korean Peninsula. And it will arrive there —

QUESTION: It's headed there now, though.

MR. SPICER: What's that?

QUESTION: It's headed there now. It wasn't headed there last week.

MR. SPICER: Sure. No, no, no — but that's not what we ever said. We said that it was heading there, and it was heading there — it is heading there. So that remains —

QUESTION: — the impression that allies have —

MR. SPICER: But if there is an impression, then that's not — then there should have been clarification from people who were seeking it.

But, I mean, PACOM put out a release talking about what its ultimate destination was going to be, and that's where it ended up.

....

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 4/19/2017," [White House](#), begins 12:08 EDT, 19 April 2017.

Spicer is correct that PACOM put out an erroneous press release on 10 April. Spicer should have stopped there, and let PACOM take the blame. But then Spicer makes a specious and verbose argument that the White House correctly said the U.S.S. Vinson *will* arrive in Korea. There is a huge difference between the false version that the Vinson began heading from Singapore towards Korea on 8 April, and the true version the the Vinson finished the Australian exercises on 18 April and then began heading towards Korea. For example, some days are more important than others in North Korea: 15 April is the birthday of the Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea, and a day when many commentators expect weapons tests in North Korea. As another example, 25 April is the anniversary of the founding of the North Korean army, another day when many commentators expect weapons tests in North Korea.

### **North Korean threats & propaganda**

On 10 April 2017, the Korean Central News Agency — the North Korean propaganda machine — responded to the announcement about the U.S.S. Vinson by saying “(North Korea) is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the US.” [The Guardian](#); [Joong Ang](#).

On 16 April 2017, North Korea released a propaganda video showing an imaginary attack by North Korean missiles on an unnamed U.S. city. [Washington Post](#).

On 23 April 2017, an editorial in the North Korean newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* says the North Koreans "revolutionary forces are combat-ready to sink a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier [i.e., U.S.S. Vinson] with a single strike". [Reuters](#).

On 27 April 2017, North Korea released a propaganda video showing the White House in the crosshairs of a rifle sight, and also showed an aircraft carrier in flames following an imaginary attack by North Korea. [Washington Post](#); [The Independent](#).

I attempted to access the website of the Korean Central News Agency, hoping to quote the text from the original source, but the North Korean propaganda website was offline when I looked on several different days during April 2017. The KCNA is amusing with their extreme propaganda that is written in stilted English that *no* fluent speaker of English would use.

### **Japanese Cooperation**

On 12 April 2017 — when people believed the U.S.S. Vinson would soon arrive near Korea — Japan announced it would conduct military drills with the Vinson. [Reuters](#); [Japan Times](#)(Reuters); [Asahi Shimbun](#).

On 23 April 2017, the U.S.S. Vinson group was joined by two ships of the Japanese Navy for exercises east of the Philippines. [Reuters](#); [Japan Times](#); [Yomiuri Shimbun](#).

On 29 April 2017, the U.S.S. Vinson group sailed into the Sea of Japan (which South Korea calls the "East Sea"). [Mainichi](#); [NHK](#). The Vinson will presumably stay close to the Japanese coast, to avoid short-range missiles from North Korea, and to give ample warning of any North Korean aircraft that might approach the U.S. Navy ships.

On 1 May 2017, Japan sent its largest warship, the helicopter carrier Izumo, as a symbolic escort for a U.S. supply ship sailing to the Vinson group. [Asahi Shimbun](#); [Mainichi](#).

On 3 May 2017, Japan added the destroyer Sazanami to the escort mission. [Japan Times](#); [Mainichi](#).

Later on 3 May 2017, the two ships of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force completed their mission of escorting one U.S. Navy supply ship. [Kyodo](#).

### **Trump's inconsistent policy**

Concurrent with belligerent threats of U.S. military action to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and to prevent North Korea from developing ICBMs to deliver those nuclear weapons, people in the White House told journalists that Trump would be pursuing diplomacy with North Korea, as well as increased economic sanctions on North Korea. Specifically, on 14 April the [Associated Press](#) cited anonymous government officials as declaring a policy of "maximum pressure and engagement". See, e.g., [NY Times](#)(10Apr); [Washington Post](#)(14Apr); [Reuters](#)(16Apr); [CNBC](#)(16Apr); [Associated Press](#)(19Apr); [Washington Post](#)(19Apr); [Los Angeles Times](#)(19Apr); [NY Times](#)(26Apr); [Associated Press](#)(27Apr).

I have three comments:

1. As Tillerson said on 16-17 March 2017 (quoted above), diplomacy has *failed* to stop the North Koreans from developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Furthermore, the North Koreans have a long track record of violating past agreements.

For example, during 1991-2007 there were intermittent, tortuous negotiations with North Korea to prevent production of plutonium at their Yongbyon reactor. The North Koreans allowed IAEA inspectors into North Korea after agreements were signed and the U.S. provided food, fuel oil, or other humanitarian aid to North Korea. But after North Korea received the benefit of the bargain, North Korea expelled the IAEA inspectors on 27 Dec 2002 and again on 16 April 2009. Plutonium from that reactor's fuel rods was used as an ingredient in North Korea's atomic bombs.

As another example, there was a manufacturing plant in Kaesong, North Korea that used cheap North Korean labor to produce goods for South Korean companies. The plant operated intermittently beginning in 2005, but was permanently closed in February 2016.

These examples show that the North Koreans are unreliable and do *not* keep their promises. More diplomacy appears futile.

2. Past economic sanctions on North Korea have been ineffective, partly because Russia, China, and other rogue nations ignored the sanctions. But China has been enforcing sanctions on North Korea beginning in February 2017, so it is *possible* that sanctions *might* pressure North Korea into negotiating an end to their nuclear weapons program. It is also possible that sanctions could make North Korea more isolated, more paranoid, and feeling more in need of a strong military.
3. The leadership of North Korea must be truly bewildered by U.S. policy towards North Korea. On 9 April and following days, it appeared that Trump might either launch Tomahawk cruise missile strikes on North Korea, or a pre-emptive bombing of North Korea's nuclear weapons development and test sites. Almost simultaneously, anonymous U.S. Government employees were quoted by journalists as saying Trump is bluffing with the military threats, and that Trump will pursue diplomacy. My comment is that this inconsistency by Trump's administration is not only dangerous, but also exposes Trump's administration as a bunch of amateurs who are *not* competent to deal with North Korea.

On 19 April 2017, Evan Horowitz wrote an editorial in the [Boston Globe](#) with a title: "There are no good options on North Korea. Zero."

On 26 April 2017, Trump hosted an extraordinary meeting for all 100 U.S. Senators at the White House, at which the Trump administration declared that defending the USA from nuclear attack by North Korea is now Trump's "top foreign-policy priority". See the [Joint Statement](#) by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats.

Immediately after the meeting at the White House, many of the Senators blabbed to

journalists. See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#); [McClatchy](#). One wonders why the White House did not simply invite journalists to attend the briefing.

On 27 April, Trump was interviewed by Reuters, during which interview Trump admitted that a major war with North Korea was possible.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday [27 April] a major conflict with North Korea is possible in the standoff over its nuclear and missile programs, but he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dispute.

"There is a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely," Trump told Reuters in an Oval Office interview ahead of his 100th day in office on Saturday [29 April].

Nonetheless, Trump said he wanted to peacefully resolve a crisis that has bedeviled multiple U.S. presidents, a path that he and his administration are emphasizing by preparing a variety of new economic sanctions while not taking the military option off the table.

"We'd love to solve things diplomatically but it's very difficult," he said.

....

[Trump] also said he wants South Korea to pay the cost of the U.S. THAAD anti-missile defense system, which he estimated at \$1 billion, and intends to renegotiate or terminate a U.S. free trade pact with South Korea because of a deep trade deficit with Seoul. Asked when he would announce his intention to renegotiate the pact, Trump said: "Very soon. I'm announcing it now."

Stephen J. Adler, Steve Holland, & Jeff Mason, "Exclusive: Trump says 'major, major' conflict with North Korea possible, but seeks diplomacy," [Reuters](#), 03:10 EDT, 28 April 2017.

Incidentally, during the Reuters interview, Trump went off topic and talked about the 2016 election results. While this digression is *not* relevant to either North Korea or Trump's accomplishments as president, it is highly relevant to the subject of this essay, so I am including it here.

More than five months after his victory and two days shy of the 100-day mark of his presidency, the election is still on Trump's mind. Midway through a discussion about Chinese President Xi Jinping, the president paused to hand out copies of what he said were the latest figures from the 2016 electoral map.

"Here, you can take that, that's the final map of the numbers," the Republican president said from his desk in the Oval Office, handing out maps of the United States with areas he won marked in red. "It's pretty good, right? The red is obviously us."

He had copies for each of the three Reuters reporters in the room.

Stephen J. Adler, Jeff Mason, & Steve Holland, "Exclusive: Trump says he thought being president would be easier than his old life," [Reuters](#), 13:02 EDT, 29 April 2017.

My comment is that this is more evidence of Trump's narcissistic character flaw. And now back to North Korea.

See also [NY Times](#).

Unfortunately, war with North Korea is increasingly likely, because previous U.S. presidents — at least back to Bill Clinton — erroneously believed that they could negotiate with North Korea. The previous agreements with North Korea only delayed the problem, *not* solved the problem.

#### **North Korean reaction to Trump**

During April 2017, the conventional wisdom was that North Korea would test another nuclear weapon, given preparations seen by reconnaissance satellites at the test site. But *no* nuclear test occurred. Does that mean that Trump's belligerent threats were successful? No, because the North Koreans tested ballistic missiles on 5, 16, and 29 April, each time in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions and in defiance of international demands.

On 1 May 2017, North Korea reacted to Trump's belligerence, and reacted explicitly to Trump's new policy of "maximum pressure and engagement". The Associated Press reported: North Korea's Foreign Ministry says the country will speed up measures to bolster its nuclear program "at the maximum pace" in response to the new U.S. policy that calls for new sanctions and "maximum pressure and engagement."

A statement from the Foreign Ministry spokesman on Monday [1 May] that was circulated by North Korea's U.N. Mission says the government is ready to respond to any option taken by the United States.

"NKorea says it will speed up nuke program in response to US," [Associated Press](#), 2 May 2017.

[Reuters](#) reported on 1 May 2017:

"Now that the U.S. is kicking up the overall racket for sanctions and pressure against the DPRK, pursuant to its new DPRK policy called 'maximum pressure and engagement', the DPRK will speed up at the maximum pace the measure for bolstering its nuclear deterrence," a spokesman for North Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by its official KCNA news agency.

North Korea's "measures for bolstering the nuclear force to the maximum will be taken in a consecutive and successive way at any moment and any place decided by its supreme leadership," the spokesman said.

My conclusion is that Trump's incompetent policy has accelerated North Korea's nuclear weapons development, pushing the nations closer to war.

**1 May 2017: Trump's offer to negotiate**

On 1 May 2017, Trump told Bloomberg News:

U.S. President Donald Trump said he would meet with Kim Jong Un amid heightened tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons program if the circumstances were right.

"If it would be appropriate for me to meet with him, I would absolutely, I would be honored to do it," Trump said Monday [1 May] in an Oval Office interview with Bloomberg News. "If it's under the, again, under the right circumstances. But I would do that."

Margaret Talev & Jennifer Jacobs, "Trump Says He'd Meet With Kim Jong Un Under Right Circumstances," [Bloomberg News](#); 1 May 2017.

Later on 1 May, Trump's press secretary was asked about Trump's offer of a meeting with Kim.

QUESTION: On North Korea, today the President told Bloomberg he was open to meeting with Kim Jong-un if the conditions were right. How does the President define the right condition to have this meeting?

MR. SPICER: Well, there's a lot of things that go along with that, and that's the key thing. "Under the right circumstances" was, I believe, the phrase he used. And I think that is something in keeping with our — consistent with the policy expressed by Secretary Tillerson as well.

We've got to see their provocative behavior ratcheted down immediately. There's a lot of conditions that I think would have to happen with respect to its behavior and to show signs of good faith. Clearly, conditions are not there right now, but I think the President has made it clear, as Secretary Tillerson had the other day, that if the conditions, if the circumstances present themselves we'll be prepared to, but they're clearly not at this time.

....

QUESTION: Coming back to North Korea, the President didn't just say he would be open to meeting with Kim Jong-un under the right circumstances. He said he would be "honored" to meet with him. This is somebody who has starved his own people, somebody who has threatened to destroy the United States. Just last week he put out a video showing the Capitol getting destroyed by North Korea fighters. How could he be "honored" to meet with Kim Jong-un?

MR. SPICER: Well, the President understands the threat that North Korea poses, and he will do whatever is necessary under the right circumstances to protect our country from the threat that they pose, so —

QUESTION: How could that be an honor?

MR. SPICER: I guess because he's still a head of state. So it is sort of — there is a diplomatic piece to this. But the bottom line is the President is going to do what he has to do. Right now he's building a coalition in the region to isolate North Korea both economically and diplomatically to get the threat — to take that threat down. And so



— but that is his number-one priority right now, is protecting this country and our people.

....

QUESTION: Sean, two questions. One on — just to clarify on North Korea, were those conditions that you laid out to the earlier question, are those the conditions that would have to be met before there was any meeting — i.e. that North Korea would have to agree to totally disarm its nuclear program, stop threatening their neighbors? Are those the conditions?

MR. SPICER: I think those are some of the conditions. There's going to be a whole host of ones that we determine, that the State Department determines in consultation with the President that have to be met.

As I mentioned, we are so early into this process that I don't see this happening anytime soon. But I think that, as the President said, under the right circumstances. Those circumstances aren't present today, and there would have to be significant change for that to even be a possibility.

"Daily Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer -- \*43," [White House](#), begins 13:55 EDT, 1 May 2017.

My comment is that Trump being "honored" to meet Kim the belligerent dictator does *not* sound like the Trump who ordered the U.S.S. Vinson to sail towards North Korea just three weeks earlier. Trump is being inconsistent. Furthermore, if Trump and Tillerson want negotiations, then they need to *clearly state all of the pre-conditions* that North Korea must satisfy before such negotiations are scheduled. Adding more conditions later would be likely to scuttle the negotiations that Trump allegedly desires.

If one listens to what North Korea has been saying — listening is *not* one of Trump's strong points — North Korea is very concerned over military exercises that South Korea and the USA conduct several times each year. North Korea interprets those exercises as preparation for an invasion of North Korea, which motivates North Korea to develop nuclear weapons to deter the invasion. *If* the U.S. is serious about solving the problem, then the U.S. should propose ending military exercises with South Korea, and stop U.S. bomber flights over South Korea, in exchange for the North Koreans allowing IAEA inspectors to witness the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons development program. This is not a novel proposal: China has suggested it, but both the USA and South Korea rejected the proposal. (See, e.g., [ABC News](#)(24Apr); [BBC](#)(28Apr); [RIA-Novosti](#).)

On 28 April 2017, John Kasich — a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, the current governor of Ohio, and a failed candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016 — proposed to “eradicate” North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un and his henchmen. [Christian Science Monitor](#); [Washington Post](#); [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#).

The problem with more negotiations and more treaties with North Korea is that the current leadership of North Korea will breach the treaty whenever they feel like it. So, regime change

in North Korea *might* give us new leadership with whom we could negotiate a solution.

But that is the only possible benefit to Kasich's proposal, and there are two obvious huge detriments:

1. If the U.S. Military tried but failed to assassinate Kim and his henchmen (remember the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran in 1980), Kim would then retaliate with a massive war that could easily evolve into World War III.
2. If the assassination of Kim is successful, Kim's successor *might not* be more willing to negotiate an end to the North Korean nuclear weapons program. We have *no* control over the choice of the next North Korean leader.

Kasich's mention of assassination of a foreign leader is provocative, inflammatory, and probably increased Kim's paranoia — making a bad situation worse. Incidentally, Kasich's proposal is blatantly unlawful and an act of war against North Korea.

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## Should South Korea pay for THAAD?

In the 27 April Reuters interview quoted above, notice Trump's sudden request that the South Koreans pay US\$ 1 billion to reimburse the U.S. for the cost of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery that will soon be operational.

As one would expect, the South Koreans are upset that they suddenly are asked to pay a billion dollars for THAAD, when they never agreed to pay for THAAD when they approved the installation in July 2016. [Yonhap](#); [JoongAng](#); [Reuters](#); [Hankyoreh](#); [Associated Press](#)(28Apr); [NY Times](#)(28Apr); [Korea Herald](#)(30Apr editorial).

In the 27 April 2017 Reuters interview with Trump:

[Trump:] "On the THAAD system, it's about a billion dollars. I said, 'Why are we paying? Why are we paying a billion dollars? We're protecting. Why are we paying a billion dollars?' So I informed South Korea it would be appropriate if they paid. Nobody's going to do that. Why are we paying a billion dollars? It's a billion dollar system. It's phenomenal. It's the most incredible equipment you've ever seen — shoots missiles right out of the sky. And it protects them and I want to protect them. We're going to protect them. But they should pay for that, and they understand that."

"Highlights of Reuters interview with Trump," [Reuters](#), 07:26 EDT, 28 April 2017.

Trump does *not* make a mistake just once. In a 28 April interview with *The Washington Times*, Trump reiterated his billion dollar demand.

President Trump pushed back Friday [28 April] against South Korea's objections to paying for a U.S.-deployed missile defense system, insisting that it's "appropriate" for Seoul to shoulder the \$1 billion cost.

"Why should we pay for it?" Mr. Trump said in an exclusive interview with *The Washington Times*. "It's a phenomenal protective system, best in the world by far, and that's meant to protect South Korea. So I respectfully say that I think it would be

appropriate if they paid for it.”

The U.S. military is deploying the missile shield as a defense against North Korea. The South Korean defense ministry said it has no plans to pay for the system, and South Korea’s leading presidential candidate Friday called Mr. Trump’s demand an “impossible option.”

Dave Boyer, "EXCLUSIVE: Trump demands South Korea pay for new U.S.-deployed missile system," [Washington Times](#), 28 April 2017.

On 30 April 2017, General McMaster, Trump's national security adviser, called his counterpart in South Korea. Early reports from the South Korean presidential mansion said Trump would *not* try to collect the billion dollars. [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#). But later on 30 April, General McMaster clarified:

CHRIS WALLACE [FOX NEWS ANCHOR]: President Trump, ..., said this week that South Korea should pay for the missile defense system that we have installed there, the THAAD system, \$1 billion. There is a report today that you called your South Korean counterpart and said, no, the old agreement was that we the United States pay that billion dollars and we’re going to stick by that. Is that true?

MCMASTER: Well, the last thing I would ever do is contradict the president of the United States, you know? But — and that's not what it was. In fact, what I told our South Korean counterpart is until any renegotiation that the deal is in place. We’ll adhere to our word.

But what the president has asked us to do is to look across all of our alliances and to have appropriate burden-sharing, responsibility-sharing. We are looking at that with a great ally, South Korea. We’re looking at that with NATO.

And what you’ve seen because of the president's leadership, more and more nations are contributing more to our collective defense.

WALLACE: So, the question of who pays the billion dollars is still up in the air?

MCMASTER: The question of what is the relationship on THAAD, on our defense relationship going forward, will be renegotiated as it’s going to be with all of our allies. Because what the president has said is, he will prioritize American citizens' security and interests. And to do that, we need strong alliances. But also to do that effectively, and a way that is sustainable economically, we need everybody to pay their fair share.

"Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster on foreign policy; Sen. Schumer on President Trump's first 100 days," [Fox News](#), 30 April 2017.

The Yonhap news agency in South Korea reported what General McMaster said on Fox News: "The United States will renegotiate the terms of the THAAD missile defense system's deployment to South Korea, and until then, will stick to the existing deal that commits the U.S. to pay for the system, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster said Sunday [30 April]." [Yonhap](#).

On 1 May 2017, [Yonhap](#) reported that the South Korean Ministry of National Defense will refuse to renegotiate the cost of THAAD. See also [Korea Herald](#) on 4 May.

The THAAD protects approximately 30,000 U.S. Military personnel in South Korea, as well as protects at least tens of millions of South Koreans. Also the USA *owns* and operates THAAD in South Korea, and in other foreign nations, so this is *not* a sale to South Korea. In July 2016, Obama and the now impeached South Korean president agreed that the U.S. would install THAAD on land supplied by South Korea, and there was *no* mention that South Korea would pay for the cost of THAAD. (See, e.g., [NY Times](#).) The allocation of costs is specified in a written Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that was negotiated and approved in 1966. Also, in 2014 South Korea began paying the USA part of the costs (about 40% in 2014) of maintaining the U.S. Military presence in South Korea.

China strongly opposes operation of THAAD in South Korea, because the THAAD radars could conduct espionage on Chinese missiles. Accordingly, China put economic sanctions on South Korea, to encourage the South Koreans to expel THAAD. On 3 May 2017, [JongAng](#) newspaper estimates the Chinese sanctions could cost South Korean firms US\$ 7.5 billion during 2017.

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Trump did something similar on 17 March 2017, when he falsely claimed that Germany owed money to the USA for the cost of NATO defense. (See [above](#).) Trump's demand for more money — in contradiction of a written agreement — is the kind of stunt that the North Korean government does.

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Incidentally, Trump has — for at least six years — insisted that foreign nations pay more of the cost of U.S. Military defense. Here is part of a paragraph from an April 2011 interview with Trump:

And then we defend South Korea? Listen, George. And then we send the — the great aircraft carrier, George Washington, and destroyers to defend South Korea. They don't pay us? They don't pay us for it. We send all these ships, hundreds of millions of dollars to protect South Korea from North Korea. We have thou— you know, we have what? 20,000-25,000 soldiers over there. They don't even pay us for this. What are we doing? What are we thinking? What are we thinking?

George Stephanopoulos, "Donald Trump Interview: Transcript Part Two," [ABC News](#), 19 April 2011.

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## Trump Wants to Seize Iraq's Oil

The U.S. Military invaded Iraq in March 2003, to stop Saddam Hussein from developing weapons of mass destruction (which weapons were never found and were probably a fictional boast by Hussein). The U.S. Military departed from Iraq in December 2011, after having wasted more than US\$ 1 trillion. Donald Trump proposed to have Iraq "reimburse" the USA for the cost of this war, by the U.S. seizing Iraq's oil. But seizing Iraq's oil would be a gross violation of the sovereignty of Iraq.

Note that Iraq did *not* request either the U.S. Military invasion, the removal of Saddam Hussein, or plunging Iraq into anarchy for years. Iraq is adamant that they will *not* voluntarily reimburse the USA for the cost of the U.S. invasion. So Trump's plan would involve a forcible taking of Iraqi oil, probably with armed resistance by the Iraqi army, Shiite militias, and remnants of ISIL. The fight to take Iraq's oil would be an additional cost for the USA, and might cost the USA more than the oil is worth.

Below are some quotations about Trump's plan and why it is a very bad idea.

On 8 Sep 2016, NBC News reported:

At Wednesday [7 Sep] night's Commander-In-Chief Forum, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said that the United States should "take the oil" out of Iraq, an idea he's expressed before for that war-torn country and other conflict zones.

....

"We go in, we spent \$3 trillion. We lose thousands and thousands of lives, and then look, what happens is we get nothing. You know, it used to be the victor belong the spoils," Trump told NBC News' Matt Lauer. "Now, there was no victor there, believe me. There was no victory. But I always said, take the oil."

His challenger, Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, criticized Trump Thursday [8 Sep] morning, saying the United States "does not invade other countries to plunder and pillage."

....

David Mack, scholar with the Middle East Institute and former ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, said the idea smacks of "colonialism and imperialism." "They are not about to stand for a foreign power coming in and seizing their resources and keeping them," he added. "When I heard this last night, it took my breath away."

Leigh Ann Caldwell, "Trump Said 'Take the Oil' From Iraq. Can He?," [NBC News](#), 15:57 ET, 8 Sep 2016.

Emily Meierding, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., wrote a commentary in the [Washington Post](#) that explains why taking Iraq's oil would create more problems than it would solve.

On 21 Jan 2017, the morning after Trump's inauguration, Trump went to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency to give a speech to mollify the intelligence community. Here is part of what Trump said:

When I was young — and I think we're all sort of young. When I was young, we were always winning things in this country. We'd win with trade. We'd win with wars. At a certain age, I remember hearing from one of my instructors, "The United States has never lost a war." And then, after that, it's like we haven't won anything. We don't win anymore. The old expression, "to the victor belong the spoils" — you remember. I always used to say, keep the oil. I wasn't a fan of Iraq. I didn't want to go into Iraq. But I will tell you, when we were in, we got out wrong. And I always said, in addition

to that, keep the oil. Now, I said it for economic reasons. But if you think about it, Mike, if we kept the oil you probably wouldn't have ISIS because that's where they made their money in the first place. So we should have kept the oil. But okay.

(Laughter.) Maybe you'll have another chance. But the fact is, should have kept the oil. "Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence at CIA Headquarters," [White House](#), 21 Jan 2017.

Trump's stupid idea appears to have died on 20 February 2017, when the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that the U.S. will *not* seize Iraq's oil. *The New York Times* reported: Before arriving in Baghdad, Mr. Mattis was asked by reporters about Mr. Trump's remarks during a visit to C.I.A. headquarters last month that the United States should have "kept" Iraq's oil after the American-led invasion, and might still have a chance to do so.

"We're not in Iraq to seize anybody's oil," Mr. Mattis said during a stop in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates.

Helene Cooper, "Jim Mattis to Baghdad: 'We're Not in Iraq to Seize Anybody's Oil'," [New York Times](#), 20 Feb 2017.

Mattis's declaration was also reported by the [Washington Post](#) and [Reuters](#).

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## 27 April 2017: Trump surprised at difficulty

In the 27 April 2017 Reuters interview with Trump:

He misses driving, feels as if he is in a cocoon, and is surprised how hard his new job is.

....

"I loved my previous life. I had so many things going," Trump told Reuters in an interview. "This is more work than in my previous life. I thought it would be easier."

A wealthy businessman from New York, Trump assumed public office for the first time when he entered the White House on Jan. 20 after he defeated former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in an upset.

Stephen J. Adler, Jeff Mason, & Steve Holland, "Exclusive: Trump says he thought being president would be easier than his old life," [Reuters](#), 13:02 EDT, 29 April 2017.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, one of the big concerns amongst opponents of Trump was that Trump had *no* experience as either a mayor, governor, or legislator. And Trump's statements showed that he was ignorant of international politics.

Anyone who reads a newspaper like *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* knows of the many problems facing the USA, as well as many complicated international problems (e.g., North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, ....). Being the U.S. President must be one of the most difficult jobs on the planet.

That Trump is surprised how difficult it is to be President tells us that Trump is unqualified to be President.

The [Washington Post](#) — repeated by [The Independent](#) newspaper in England — said: "One group that probably wasn't surprised that Trump wasn't prepared? The majority of Americans. At no point over the course of the 2016 campaign did a majority of Americans think that Trump was qualified for the job of the presidency."

So why did americans elect Trump? Apparently, the democrats nominated the most hated woman in america.

As more evidence of Trump's ignorance, on 1-2 May 2017, [CNN](#) and [New York Times](#) both criticized Trump's ignorance of history that was on display in Trump's public statements.

Trump's total lack of experience in government, and Trump's ignorance of both law and foreign policy, might be less of a concern *if* Trump had surrounded himself with professionals (e.g., university professors, former government officials) with relevant experience and knowledge. On 10 May 2017, James Hohmann, writing in the [Washington Post](#) said: "Donald Trump has surrounded himself with sycophants and amateurs who are either unwilling or unable to tell him no." Instead of appointing an experienced diplomat as Secretary of State, Trump appointed the former CEO of Exxon-Mobil. A much better choice would have been a professor of international relations — someone like Henry Kissinger, Madeline Albright, or Condoleezza Rice.

Back in January 2017, I predicted [below](#) that sometime Trump would be resign as president, after being frustrated by Congress and the Judiciary, as well as angered by incessant criticism. By the end of April 2017, Trump appears to *no* longer enjoy being president.

On 17 May 2017, Trump gave the commencement speech at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Here is part of what he told the graduating students:

Look at the way I've been treated lately — (laughter) — especially by the media. No politician in history — and I say this with great surety — has been treated worse or more unfairly. You can't let them get you down. You can't let the critics and the naysayers get in the way of your dreams. (Applause.) I guess that's why I — thank you. I guess that's why we won.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump at United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement Ceremony," [White House](#), 17 May 2017.

My comment is that the graduating students worked hard for four years, and then Mr. Blowhard comes up from Washington and whines about how unfairly he is being treated. If Trump wants to whine, he should stay in Washington and whine there, instead of inflicting his whine on innocent cadets. And Trump won the election not because he was qualified to be president, but because the democrats nominated the most hated woman in america.

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## 9 May 2017: Trump fires FBI Director



In 2013, President Obama nominated James Comey to be Director of the FBI for a ten-year term. The long term was intended to make the FBI independent of the executive branch of government. It is expected that Comey would serve the full term. Although a president can terminate the employment of the Director of the FBI, that has happened only once in U.S. history — in 1993 when Bill Clinton dismissed William Sessions.

On 3 May 2017, the Director of the FBI, James Comey, testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee about his 2016 investigation of Hillary Clinton's private e-mail server when she was U.S. Secretary of State and also his current investigation of contacts between Trump's staff and Russian government officials. [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).

Journalists reported that Comey had misstated some facts in his testimony. [ProPublica](#)(22:38 8May); [Washington Post](#)(11:42 9May).

On 9 May, the FBI sent a letter to the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee that corrected the errors in Comey's 3 May testimony. [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#).

Coincidentally, on 9 May 2017 Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein completed a memorandum that concluded that Comey's public statements about the FBI investigation of Hillary Clinton violated Justice Department policy. Rosenstein said about Comey's 5 July 2016 public disclosure: "[Comey] ignored another longstanding principle: we do not hold press conferences to release derogatory information about the subject of a declined criminal investigation." [Washington Post](#)(19:49 9May).

As I read Rosenstein's memo, I am struck by the absence of citations to FBI policy manuals and the absence of citations to the Code of Federal Regulations. I agree with what Aaron Blake of *The Washington Post* reiterated: "the case against Comey seems to have been hastily cobbled together with a bunch of easily plucked media quotes and op-eds from former Justice Department officials." Furthermore, Rosenstein never explicitly said in his memorandum that Comey's employment should be terminated. Lawyers are taught to clearly say what they want in complaints and motions to courts. The lack of a clear statement by Rosenstein may indicate his memo was hastily written.

On 9 May 2017 at about 17:00 EDT, Trump suddenly and unexpectedly terminated the employment of James Comey. [White House](#); [Washington Post](#)(21:34 9May); [New York Times](#); [Associated Press](#)(23:30 9May).

*The Washington Post* published a [timeline](#) of events that led to the termination of Comey's employment. That timeline is very helpful in understanding what happened with Comey. [PolitiFact](#) also published a historical summary.

*The Washington Post* also published copies of [documents](#) from Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein and Attorney General Sessions that recommend the dismissal of Comey, plus Trump's letter to Comey.

Comey may have made mistakes about his public disclosures about Hillary Clinton — and Comey's public disclosures (especially on 28 Oct 2016) could have affected the presidential

election. But those mistakes by Comey were amply discussed in 2016 and there is *no* new information on 9 May 2017. The fact that Comey made mistakes does *not* automatically imply that his employment should be terminated. Obama continued to employ Comey. Furthermore, Comey's mistakes did *not* prevent Trump from retaining Comey in January 2017. It appears pretextual to terminate Comey six months after Comey's 28 Oct 2016 public disclosure about reopening the criminal investigation of Hillary Clinton.

On 9 May, [CNN](#) reported that a federal grand jury has, "in recent weeks", issued subpoenas to associates of Michael Flynn, which indicates that the FBI's investigation of Trump's associates is intensifying. This *may* be the real reason why Trump fired Comey: to hinder the FBI investigation of Trump's associates.

### **Evolving Reasons Why Trump Terminated Comey**

What is of real concern on the night of 9 May 2017 is that Trump's dismissal of Comey may end the current impartial, nonpartisan FBI investigation of contacts between Trump's staff and Russian government officials.

On the evening of 8 May, Trump tweeted:

The Russia-Trump collusion story is a total hoax, when will this taxpayer funded charade end?

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 18:46 EDT, 8 May 2016.

Trump's tweet in the previous paragraph publicly displays his continuing annoyance with the FBI investigation of Trump's associates.

After Comey was fired by Trump, Jennifer Rubin, a conservative columnist for *The Washington Post* asked rhetorically:

Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein laid out a convincing case as to why Comey acted improperly and unfairly to Clinton last July. However, Trump thought Comey should have prosecuted her, so why would Trump now object that Comey had been unfair to his nemesis?

Jennifer Rubin, "The one thing we know for sure about Comey's firing," [Washington Post](#), 19:01, 9 May 2017.

*The New York Times* reported:

The dismissal ended the long-deteriorating relationship of Mr. Trump and Mr. Comey, who repeatedly collided publicly and privately. For Mr. Trump, a president who puts a premium on loyalty, Mr. Comey represented an independent and unpredictable director with enormous power to disrupt his administration.

Michael D. Shear & Matt Apuzzo, "F.B.I. Director James Comey Is Fired by Trump," [New York Times](#), 9 May 2017. (Retrieved at 23:12 EDT on 9 May.)

*The Washington Post* reported:

President Trump's sudden removal of James B. Comey as director of the FBI sparked immediate fears among legislators and others that the bureau's probe into possible collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign might be upended now that

Trump himself can handpick its new supervisor.

The investigation is still in its infancy, but the probe's sensitive subject matter has already created a political quagmire for the Justice Department. Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from the case in March after it was revealed that he had spoken twice with Russia's ambassador to the United States and not disclosed that during his confirmation hearing.

The matter is now overseen by Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein — the man who authored the three-page rationale for removing Comey from the bureau because of his handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation.

On Tuesday [9 May], legislators on both sides of the aisle [see [WaPo](#)] called for an independent body to investigate.

....

Rosenstein also was critical of Comey's decision to reveal in late October [2016] that the investigation [of Hillary Clinton] had resumed .... [but] that criticism was somewhat curious, because in October, when Sessions was a Trump campaign surrogate, he praised Comey for doing what was necessary. "He had an absolute duty, in my opinion, 11 days or not, to come forward with the new information that he has and let the American people know that, too," Sessions said then on [Fox Business Network](#). Ellen Nakashima & Matt Zapposky, "Comey's removal sparks fears about future of Russia probe," [Washington Post](#), 23:34, 9 May 2017. [Two links added by Standler.]

Additionally, at 10:24 EDT on 10 May, James Hohmann at the [Washington Post](#) posted a collection of comments from 5 Republican senators who were critical of Trump. Later in Hohmann's long webpage, there are quotations from many Democrats in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. Also, *The New York Times* posted its collection of terse quotations from Senators and Representatives.

Around midnight on 9 May, *Politico* reported:

[Trump] had grown enraged by the Russia investigation, two advisers said, frustrated by his inability to control the mushrooming narrative around Russia. He repeatedly asked aides why the Russia investigation wouldn't disappear and demanded they speak out for him. He would sometimes scream at television clips about the probe, one adviser said.

....

By ousting the FBI director investigating his campaign and associates, Trump may have added more fuel to the fire he is furiously trying to contain — and he was quickly criticized by a chorus of Republicans and Democrats. "The timing of this firing was very troubling," said Sen. Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican.

Trump had grown angry with the Russia investigation — particularly Comey admitting in front of the Senate that the FBI was investigating his campaign — and that the FBI

director wouldn't support his claims that President Barack Obama had tapped [Trump's] phones in Trump Tower.

....

In his letter dismissing Comey, Trump said the FBI director had given him three private assurances that he wasn't under investigation. The White House declined to say when those conversations happened — or why Comey would volunteer such information. It is not the first time Trump has publicly commented on an ongoing investigation — typically a no-no for presidents. He said earlier this month that Comey had done Clinton a favor by letting her off easy.

Josh Dawsey, "Behind Comey's firing: An enraged Trump, fuming about Russia," [Politico](#), 00:02 EDT, 10 May 2017.

On 10 May, *The New York Times* reported that Comey privately told Congress that he had recently met with Rosenstein to request "a significant increase in resources for the bureau's investigation into Russia's interference in the presidential election". But a spokesman for the Justice Department called reports of Comey's request "totally false". [New York Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). These reports give the appearance that Comey was fired because Comey wanted to expand the investigation of Trump's connections with Russia.

At 13:39 EDT on 10 May, McClatchy newspapers reported:

Attorney General Jeff Sessions and his new deputy, Rod Rosenstein, arrived at the White House Monday [8 May] with a message for President Donald Trump: They had serious concerns about the embattled FBI Director James Comey.

Trump listened to what they had to say in a hastily scheduled meeting and then asked for them to put their reasons in writing.

Rosenstein wrote a scathing three-page memo entitled "Restoring Public Confidence in the FBI" about Comey's botched handling of the high-profile investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails. That memo was delivered to the White House Tuesday [9 May].

Hours later, Trump had made his decision: He fired Comey in a terse letter that didn't mention the Clinton investigation.

....

The account of Trump's meeting with Sessions and Rosenstein, which has not been reported previously, was offered by officials familiar with the situation who were not authorized to speak publicly. A White House spokeswoman later confirmed the details.

....

But White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump has been considering firing Comey since [Trump] was elected in November in part because he went around the chain of command in the Clinton investigation and failed to stop FBI

leaks.

....

The shocking firing came days after Comey asked his new boss, Rosenstein, for additional money and personnel for the bureau's investigation into Russia's interference in the presidential election.

"All I know is that I'm told that as soon as Rosenstein arrived there was a request for additional resources for the investigation, and a few days afterwards he was sacked," Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill. "I have a general conclusion: I think that the Comey operation was breathing down the neck of the Trump campaign and their operatives, and this was an effort to slow down the investigation."

Anita Kumar, "Trump asked for Comey memo after Oval Office meeting," [McClatchy](#), 13:39, 10 May 2017.

While Kumar at McClatchy is correct that Trump's letter to Comey does *not* mention the Clinton investigation, Trump does attach the memoranda from Rosenstein and Sessions, and Trump explicitly says "I have accepted their recommendation...." So Trump indirectly mentions the Clinton investigation via the Rosenstein memorandum.

On 10 May, the deputy White House press spokesperson, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, [asserted](#): "most importantly, the rank and file of the FBI had lost confidence in their director." [Politico](#) explained why that alleged reason for terminating Comey was wrong. And the current acting FBI director, Andrew McCabe, testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee: "I can tell you also that Director Comey enjoyed broad support within the FBI and still does until this day. .... We have a diversity of opinions about many things, but I can confidently tell you that the majority — the vast majority of FBI employees enjoyed a deep and positive connection to Director Comey." (See transcript at [Washington Post](#).)

Late at night on 10 May 2017, *The Washington Post* reported:

Trump had long questioned Comey's loyalty and judgment, and was infuriated by what he viewed as the director's lack of action in recent weeks on leaks from within the federal government. By last weekend [6-7 May], he had made up his mind: Comey had to go.

....

Back at work Monday [8 May] morning in Washington, Trump told Vice President Pence and several senior aides — Reince Priebus, Stephen K. Bannon and Donald McGahn, among others — that he was ready to move on Comey. First, though, he wanted to talk with Attorney General Jeff Sessions, his trusted confidant, and Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, to whom Comey reported directly. Trump summoned the two of them to the White House for a meeting, according to a person close to the White House.

The president already had decided to fire Comey, according to this person. But in the meeting, several White House officials said Trump gave Sessions and Rosenstein a

directive: to explain in writing the case against Comey. [¶] The pair quickly fulfilled the boss's orders, and the next day [9 May] Trump fired Comey ....

Rosenstein threatened to resign after the narrative emerging from the White House on Tuesday [9 May] evening cast him as a prime mover of the decision to fire Comey and that the president acted only on his recommendation, said the person close to the White House, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

....

Trump was angry that Comey would not support his baseless claim that President Barack Obama had his campaign offices wiretapped. Trump was frustrated when Comey revealed in Senate testimony the breadth of the counterintelligence investigation into Russia's effort to sway the 2016 U.S. presidential election. And he fumed that Comey was giving too much attention to the Russia probe and not enough to investigating leaks to journalists.

....

In his Tuesday [9 May] letter dismissing Comey, Trump wrote: "I greatly appreciate you informing me, on three separate occasions, that I am not under investigation." People familiar with the matter said that statement is not accurate, although they would not say how it was inaccurate. FBI officials declined to comment on the statement, and a White House official refused to discuss conversations between Trump and Comey. Philip Rucker, Ashley Parker, Sari Horwitz, & Robert Costa, "Inside Trump's anger and impatience — and his sudden decision to fire Comey," [Washington Post](#), 23:14, 10 May 2017.

The above *Post* article explains why the Rosenstein memorandum was hastily written and is *not* a carefully crafted product. Also, note that Trump included a false and self-serving statement about himself in his letter that terminated Comey's employment — the statement about Comey assuring Trump three times that Trump was *not* under investigation. It is perhaps more evidence of Trump's narcissistic character flaw that Trump would use a termination letter to praise himself.

At 03:00 on 11 May, Michelle Ye Hee Lee at the [Washington Post](#) collects numerous quotations from Trump in 2016. She shows that Trump was critical of Comey in July 2016, because Trump wanted to see Hillary Clinton charged with a crime, while Comey recommended *no* prosecution of Hillary Clinton, an issue which Rosenstein now says was solely for the Attorney General to decide. On 28 October 2016, Comey disclosed to Congress that he was reopening the criminal investigation of Hillary Clinton. Ms. Lee writes: "This time, Trump and Sessions agreed with Comey's decision. Seven months later, both men would blame Comey for this decision and use it to justify his dismissal." Ms. Lee found the Trump and Sessions were inconsistent in their opinion of Comey in Oct/Nov 2016 and May 2017. To say it another way, the alleged reasons why Comey was fired in May 2017 include behavior that both Trump and Sessions praised in Oct/Nov 2016.

At 09:30 on 11 May, Aaron Blake at the [Washington Post](#) summarized three contradictory sets of explanations from the White House about why Comey was terminated. As with any set of contradictions, some of those reasons must be false.

On 11 May, Charles Krauthammer, writing in the [Washington Post](#), listed 5 "implausible" reasons given by the White House for the termination of Comey's employment. Krauthammer concludes: "These implausibilities were obvious within seconds of Comey's firing and the administration's immediate attempt to pin it all on the Rosenstein memo."

#### 11 May 2017: Holt's interview of Trump

On 11 May 2017, news coverage of Trump's termination of Comey began to decline. Then NBC News had an exclusive interview of Trump, in which Trump contradicted the White House propaganda about reasons to dismiss Comey. Here is the part of the transcript of that interview, the part about terminating Comey's employment.

TRUMP: Look, [Comey is] a showboat. He's a grandstander.

The FBI has been in turmoil. You know that, I know that, everybody knows that.

You take a look at the FBI a year ago, it was in virtual turmoil — less than a year ago. It hasn't recovered from that.

HOLT: Monday [8 May] you met with the Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

TRUMP: Right.

HOLT: Did you ask for a recommendation?

TRUMP: What I did is, I was going to fire Comey. My decision. It was not —

HOLT: You had made the decision before they came into your office.

TRUMP: I was going to fire Comey. There's no good time to do it, by the way.

HOLT: Because in your letter, you said, "I accepted their recommendation."

TRUMP: Yeah, well, they also —

HOLT: So you had already made the decision.

TRUMP: Oh, I was going to fire regardless of recommendation.

TRUMP: They — [Rosenstein] made a recommendation. He's highly respected. Very good guy, very smart guy. And the Democrats like him. The Republicans like him.



He had made a recommendation. But regardless of recommendation, I was going to fire Comey knowing there was no good time to do it.

And in fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself — I said, you know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story. It's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should've won.

And the reason they should've won it is the electoral college is almost impossible for a Republican to win. It's very hard because you start off at such a disadvantage. So, everybody was thinking they should've won the election. This was an excuse for having lost an election.

HOLT: But were — are you angry with Mr. Comey because of his Russia investigation?

TRUMP: I just want somebody that's competent. I am a big fan of the FBI. I love the FBI.

Transcript posted by Tim Hanes, "President Trump's Full Interview With Lester Holt: Firing Of James Comey," [Real Clear Politics](#), 11 May 2017. [Minor editing by Standler.]

Also see: video without transcript at [NBC News](#), and partial transcript of interview (which I can not view) posted at [CNN](#).

Aaron Blake at *The Washington Post* commented on Trump's disclosure to Lester Holt of NBC News:

In one fell swoop in an NBC News interview, Trump totally contradicted his three top spokespeople [Sean Spicer, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, and Kellyanne Conway] and offered a polar-opposite version of events than they had provided, on nearly every important count.

After they had spent the past 45 hours emphasizing that this was a decision Trump arrived at after receiving a memo and recommendation from Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, Trump just blurted out that he was going to fire Comey all along. Basically, he admitted the memo was a ruse and a political ploy.

And [Trump] even seemed to suggest he may have fired Comey [because](#) of the Russia investigation — which only makes his decision more controversial and runs counter to the suggestions of everyone who has spoken on his behalf in recent days.

....

Spicer's version of events [on the night of 9 May] is utterly obliterated by Trump's comments on Thursday [11 May]. With Sanders and Conway, you could make an argument that Trump was indeed, technically speaking, taking Rosenstein's recommendation and then acting.

....

After all, [Trump's] decision clearly had nothing to do with Rosenstein.

It's clear that the White House wanted to use Rosenstein's credibility, built up over three decades in law enforcement, to make this decision look apolitical. This made it seem like it wasn't just the president unilaterally firing the guy who was investigating his 2016 campaign's ties to Russia. This was actually a talking point and narrative that was intended to *protect* Trump.

But then Trump himself told us the truth.

Aaron Blake, "President Trump just decimated the White House's entire Comey narrative," [Washington Post](#), 14:45 updated at 20:45, 11 May 2017. [Blake's link to Rucker's [tweet](#) replaced with a link to Rucker's subsequent article.]

Trump said he was "going to fire Comey .... regardless of recommendation." After Trump ordered Rosenstein and Sessions to write memoranda justifying terminating Comey, did Trump expect any other conclusion from those memoranda?

In the interview with Lester Holt, Trump denigrated Comey: "Look, he's a showboat. He's a grand-stander." I think those words apply more to Trump than to Comey. And Trump is kicking Comey after Trump ended Comey's career at the FBI. It was bad enough that Comey learned of the termination of his employment by watching television. Trump goes on to mention alleged "turmoil" at the FBI, but that contradicts Andrew McCabe's sworn testimony (cited above in the paragraph about Sarah Huckabee Sanders) that FBI agents liked Comey.

In the interview, Trump goes off on one of his irrelevant tangents when he said "the electoral college is almost impossible for a Republican to win." But that statement is *false*. If one looks at the years 1981-2016, a Republican was president for 20 years, and a Democrat was president for 16 years, so it is *not* "impossible for a Republican to win." If one adds Trump's victory, the recent statistics favoring Republicans is even stronger.

On the night of 11 May, *The Washington Post* recognized that Trump said he was thinking about the FBI investigation of Russian contacts by Trump associates when Trump decided to terminate Comey's employment.

President Trump on Thursday [11 May] said he was thinking of "this Russia thing with Trump" when he decided to fire FBI Director James B. Comey, who had been leading the counterintelligence investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election.

Recounting his decision to dismiss Comey, Trump told NBC News, "In fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story, it's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won.' "

Devlin Barrett & Philip Rucker, "Trump said he was thinking of Russia controversy when he decided to fire Comey," [Washington Post](#), 20:09, 11 May 2017.

It is *not* known why Trump would contradict the White House propaganda when the scandal was beginning to subside. Looking at Trump's alleged reasons to terminate Comey, the alleged "turmoil" at the FBI is factually wrong, and Trump had already decided to terminate

Comey *before* the Rosenstein memo was written — which leaves interference with the FBI's investigation of Russian influence on the 2016 election as Trump's sole reason to terminate Comey.

#### After 11 May 2017

On 11 May 2017, The [New York Times](#) reported that, in January, Trump had asked Comey to pledge loyalty to Trump, as a condition of Comey continuing his job as director of the FBI. On 13 May, Jeanine Pirro asked Trump, "Did you ask that question?" Trump replied: "No, no, I didn't. But I don't think it would be a bad question to ask. I think loyalty to the country, loyalty to the United States is important. You know, I mean, it depends on how you define loyalty, number one. Number two, I don't know how that got there, because I didn't ask that question." [Fox News](#); [Fox News](#)(different quotation).

My comment is that requiring personal loyalty is shockingly inappropriate. The relationship of the FBI director to president is *not* like a priest to the pope, or a subject to a king. Learned professionals should have loyalty to concepts like integrity, truth, honesty, ethics, etc. — but *not* loyalty to people. Trump's statement that "loyalty to the United States is important" is problematic, in that different people could interpret that in different ways. For example, Trump wanted to see Hillary Clinton prosecuted, while Obama did *not*. As another example, attorneys are generally loyal to their clients, but the attorney must refuse to commit a crime (e.g., fraud, offer perjured testimony) suggested by their client.

On 16 May 2017, the [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#) reported that on 14 February 2017 Trump asked Comey to end the investigation of Flynn. Trump told Comey: "I hope you can let this go." That improper request by Trump *may* be obstruction of justice, an impeachable offense.

On 16 May 2017, Republicans in Congress reached a breaking point with Trump, as mentioned [below](#).

On 17 May at 18:00 EDT, the Department of Justice suddenly and unexpectedly appointed a special counsel — Robert Mueller, who preceded Comey as FBI Director — to lead the investigation into Russian influence on the 2016 election. [DoJ](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog). In my opinion, this was a good decision, but it should have been done months ago.

On 18 May 2017 at 07:52 EDT, Trump [tweeted](#) "This is the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history!" Trump was referring to the continuing FBI investigation of Russian influence on the 2016 election, and the appointment of an independent special counsel on the previous evening. Once again, Trump shows his ignorance of history when he ignores:

1. the public anger at Gerald Ford for pardoning Richard Nixon
2. the investigation of Bill Clinton over the Whitewater land investment that finally found Bill's relationship with Monica Lewinsky.
3. the investigation of Rep. Gary Condit for the murder of Chandra Levy in 2001

4. Trump's series of fictitious assertions during 2011-2016 that Obama was born in Kenya.

Trump's boasting that he is the subject of the "single greatest witch hunt" is perhaps more evidence of his narcissistic character flaw, in which everything about Trump must be the biggest, greatest, or best.

On 19 May 2017, the [New York Times](#) reported that on 10 May Trump told Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov that "I just fired the head of the F.B.I. He was crazy, a real nut job. .... I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off." See also [Associated Press](#). That is strong evidence that Trump *intended* to interfere with Comey's investigation, which would be obstruction of justice by Trump.

Let me comment on Trump's denigrating Comey as "crazy, a real nut job". Trump's style of speaking includes childish *ad hominem* attacks and personal insults on his opponents. Trump's implication is that anyone who opposes Trump is mentally ill or Evil, which may be an expression of Trump's narcissistic character flaw. Linguists have noticed that Trump's extemporaneous speech has a very limited vocabulary, characteristic of a third-grade or fourth-grade pupil (i.e., 9 year old child). In August 2015, [Politico](#) observed that Trump "lives to diminish his foes by calling them 'losers,' 'total losers,' 'haters,' 'dumb,' 'idiots,' 'morons,' 'stupid,' 'dummy' and 'disgusting'." In March 2016, the [Washington Post](#) and [The Independent](#) reported on an academic paper that showed Trump's grammar and vocabulary was at a lower level than other politicians (except G.W. Bush's grammar was even lower than Trump's).

While childish speech and insults are *not* impeachable offenses, they limit the president's ability to form a consensus with educated people. The insults are also needlessly abrasive, and interfere with the president's ability to be a leader. In my opinion, Trump's childish speech and insults make him more unfit to be president than any crimes he may have committed.

#### **Conclusion to Trump terminating Comey**

Initially, the White House said Comey was terminated because Comey made mistakes with the investigation of Hillary Clinton's private e-mail server in 2016. But it is *not* plausible that Trump would terminate Comey because Comey was unfair to Hillary Clinton. Journalists quickly revealed that Trump decided to terminate Comey — because Comey would not support Trump's baseless claims of wiretapping by Obama, because Comey was not stopping leaks that embarrassed Trump, and perhaps also because Comey was intensifying his current investigation of contacts with Russians by Trump's associates. Trump's actual reasons are inappropriate, because they interfere with the integrity and independence of the FBI, and — *if* Trump intended to interfere with the investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election — may be obstruction of justice. Then Trump ordered Rosenstein and Sessions to create memoranda that would justify terminating Comey. In short, Trump abused his power as president, which *may* be an impeachable offense. And *again* Trump and his cronies failed to tell the Truth.

In my opinion, there are similarities in Trump's decision to launch cruise missiles at one of Syrian president's Assad's airfields on 7 April (see my [essay](#)) and Trump's decision to terminate Comey's employment. Both decisions were sudden, impulsive, and contradicted Trump's prior public positions. This is *not* the kind of person who we want as commander-in-chief of the U.S. Military, with the decision to use nuclear weapons.

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### 11 May 2017: *The Economist* interviews Trump

*The Economist*, a respected weekly newsmagazine published in England, interviewed Trump on 4 May 2017, but first published the transcript on 11 May. As you would expect, Trump makes more false claims in the interview.

Trump: ... you understand the expression “prime the pump”?

Economist: Yes.

Trump: We have to prime the pump.

Economist: It's very Keynesian.

Trump: We're the highest-taxed nation in the world. Have you heard that expression before, for this particular type of an event?

Economist: Priming the pump?

Trump: Yeah, have you heard it?

Economist: Yes.

Trump: Have you heard that expression used before? Because I haven't heard it. I mean, I just ... I came up with it a couple of days ago and I thought it was good. It's what you have to do.

"Transcript: Interview with Donald Trump," [The Economist](#), 11 May 2017.

Water pumps have existed since the early 1800s, and that is where the expression "prime the pump" began. That expression began to be commonly used by economists in the early 1930s, before Trump was born. When Trump claims he invented the expression "a couple of days ago", Trump displays an appalling ignorance of not only economic policy, but also the English-language. This should be especially embarrassing for Trump, who boasts of his bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

*The Washington Post* pounced on Trump:

President Trump thinks he invented a term “a couple of days ago” that he has been using for months and that economists have for more than a century, and it wasn't even the least accurate thing he said in his latest interview.

Now, everyone is understandably laughing at Trump's history of the phrase “priming the pump.” That, of course, is the long-standing idea that the government should fight recessions by cutting taxes and increasing spending. It really entered the lexicon in the 1930s — that's the [first time](#) *The Economist* used the term — but it goes back to at least 1916 [citing journalist William Hard, then concluding: “The phrase has since been used so much that it has become a cliché.”]. Trump, though, has some alternative facts. “Have you heard that expression used before?” he asked *The Economist*, before explaining that “I haven't heard it ... I came up with it a couple of days ago and I thought it was good.” This is puzzling. First off, Trump's question doesn't make any sense on its own terms. How could they have heard of it if he just came up with it? And second, how could he think he just coined it when he used the very words “priming the pump” back in [March](#) [2017] and [December](#) [2016]?

Matt O'Brien, "Trump can't stop saying things that aren't true," [Washington Post](#), 12 May 2017.

One interpretation is this error is another appearance of Trump's narcissistic character flaw, in which he takes credit for anything good. Some of the articles cited below also expose other errors by Trump in the interview with *The Economist*:

- "Who coined 'prime the pump'? Definitely not Donald Trump," [CNN Money](#), 11 May 2017.
- "Trump says he invented an 84-year-old phrase. But, why?," [Washington Post](#), 11 May 2017.
- "Merriam-Webster reminds President Trump that he didn't invent 'prime the pump'," [Los Angeles Times](#), 14:39 PDT, 11 May 2017. (The Times does not cite Webster's dictionary [tweet](#) that says: “The phrase 'priming the pump' dates to the early 19th century.”)
- "AP FACT CHECK: No, Trump didn't invent 'prime the pump'," [Associated Press](#), 11 May 2017.
- "Priming the Pump: The Economic Metaphor Trump ‘Came Up With’," [New York Times](#), 11 May 2017.
- "Donald Trump flunks 'pump priming' economics test with The Economist," [Australian Financial Review](#), 12 May 2017.
- "AP FACT CHECK: Trump adrift on tax rates, Canada, econ lingo" [Associated Press](#), 12 May 2017.
- "Trump just took credit for something China did in 2014," [Washington Post](#), 12 May 2017.

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**15 May 2017: Trump disclosed classified information**

On 10 May 2017, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, and the Russian Ambassador to the USA, Sergey Kislyak, met with Trump at the White House. See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#). (The meeting with Russians was the day after Trump terminated the Director of the FBI, in what was an unfortunate coincidence for Trump. Subsequently, it appears that Trump may have fired Comey to interfere with Comey's investigation of Russian influence on the 2016 election.)

On the evening of 15 May 2017, *The Washington Post* revealed that Trump had disclosed highly classified information to the Russians at the 10 May meeting.

President Trump revealed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in a White House meeting last week, according to current and former U.S. officials, who said Trump's disclosures jeopardized a critical source of intelligence on the Islamic State.

The information the president relayed had been provided by a U.S. partner through an intelligence-sharing arrangement considered so sensitive that details have been withheld from allies and tightly restricted even within the U.S. government, officials said.

The partner had not given the United States permission to share the material with Russia, and officials said Trump's decision to do so endangers cooperation from an ally that has access to the inner workings of the Islamic State.

....

.... It was during that [10 May] meeting [with Lavrov and Kislyak], officials said, that Trump went off script and began describing details of an Islamic State terrorist [threat](#) related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft.

....

In his [meeting](#) with Lavrov, Trump seemed to be boasting about his inside knowledge of the looming threat. "I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day," the president said, according to an official with knowledge of the exchange.

Trump went on to discuss aspects of the threat that the United States learned only through the espionage capabilities of a key partner. He did not reveal the specific intelligence-gathering method, but he described how the Islamic State was pursuing elements of a specific plot and how much harm such an attack could cause under varying circumstances. Most alarmingly, officials said, Trump revealed the city in the Islamic State's territory where the U.S. intelligence partner detected the threat.

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The identification of the location was seen as particularly problematic, officials said, because Russia could use that detail to help identify the U.S. ally or intelligence capability involved. Officials said the capability could be useful for other purposes,



possibly providing intelligence on Russia's presence in Syria. Moscow would be keenly interested in identifying that source and perhaps disrupting it.

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At a more fundamental level, the information wasn't the United States' to provide to others. Under the rules of espionage, governments — and even individual agencies — are given significant control over whether and how the information they gather is disseminated, even after it has been shared. Violating that practice undercuts trust considered essential to sharing secrets. The officials declined to identify the ally but said it has previously voiced frustration with Washington's inability to safeguard sensitive information related to Iraq and Syria.

Greg Miller & Greg Jaffe, "Trump revealed highly classified information to Russian foreign minister and ambassador," [Washington Press](#), 19:45 EDT, 15 May 2017.

The article in the *Post* was confirmed by [Reuters](#).

This disclosure of classified information should be especially embarrassing to Trump, because in 2016 Trump excoriated Hillary Clinton for storing classified e-mails on a private server in the basement of her home. It appears that both Clinton and Trump were reckless in handling classified information. The [New York Times](#) reported: "But there was never any indication that Mrs. Clinton exposed sensitive information from an ally or gave it to an adversary."

On 15 May, the White House responded to the article in *The Washington Post* by sending Trump's National Security Advisor, General McMaster, to tell journalists that the *Post* article was "false" and saying "I was in the room. It didn't happen." I looked at the White House website on 16 May at 10:30 and 17:06, but the White House did *not* post a copy of McMaster's statement to journalists. Glenn Kessler at the [Washington Post](#) provided a critical analysis of McMaster's statements.

At 07:03 EDT of 16 May, Trump himself [tweeted](#): "As President I wanted to share with Russia (at an openly scheduled W.H. meeting) which I have the absolute right to do, facts pertaining...." And at 07:13 EDT, Trump finished his [tweet](#): "...to terrorism and airline flight safety. Humanitarian reasons, plus I want Russia to greatly step up their fight against ISIS & terrorism."

As in the [Comey](#) firing, Trump himself contradicted the White House propaganda. [Washington Post](#). And, while Trump has the authority to release U.S. secrets, what Trump disclosed to Lavrov on 10 May was a secret from a foreign nation. That foreign nation is now probably reluctant to share more secrets with the USA. Note that Trump does *not* admit that the information he disclosed was top secret. Furthermore, the source of the secret information may be endangered by Trump's disclosure to Russia.

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**Breaking Point for Republicans in Congress**

During January 2017 through early May 2017, the Republican majority in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, as well as Republicans in the executive branch of the U.S. Government, refused to consider appointing an independent prosecutor to investigate the Russian influence on the 2016 election. And those Republicans in Congress ignored misconduct by Trump and his associates that is chronicled above.

But Trump's controversial dismissal of Comey on 9 May, followed on 15 May by the revelation that Trump had disclosed highly classified information to Lavrov, seemed to convince Republicans in Congress to do something about Trump. On 16 May 2017, Republicans in Congress began to demand documents from the White House and Justice Department about the dismissal of Comey. [Politico](#); [The Hill](#); [ABC News](#); [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#). Also on 16 May, it was disclosed that Trump had asked Comey in February to end the investigation of Flynn, which may be obstruction of justice by Trump.

I have organized this essay into sections, with one section for each distinct topic. But on 16 May 2017, public concern about the following three topics all merged into one overwhelming issue:

1. Trump's 9 May termination of [Comey](#),
2. Trump's disclosure of [classified](#) information to Russia, and
3. the [FBI investigation](#) of Russian influence on the 2016 presidential election.

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## Trump's Low Approval by Voters

When I was a physics student in 1970, I read a statistical analysis textbook that mentioned one could ask 100 people about the height of the Queen of Siam, then calculate an average and standard deviation. But then the textbook mentioned the problem is that Siam does *not* have a Queen. Since then I have not taken opinion polls seriously. <smile> There is *no* guarantee that the people polled will be well informed about Trump's performance. Let's be honest here — most people have neither the time nor the desire to spend hours each day reading *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*. If some of the people polled are not well informed, then the poll has little significance.

Because professional politicians (e.g., members of the U.S. Congress) take opinion polls seriously, sustained low approval ratings for Trump might help persuade Congress to impeach and convict Trump.

A new president's approval rating in opinion polls typically starts at a relatively high value, perhaps expressing the hope of citizens. But then the president's approval rating slowly declines, as unpopular events occur. This initial high approval is often called a "honeymoon" by professional pollsters. But Trump is *not* a typical new president — he had *no* honeymoon. In early February 2009 the Gallup poll found a 64% approval rating for Obama, but in early February 2017 only a 40% approval rating for Trump. Trump's initial approval rating was not only the lowest of any president since 1953, but also Trump's initial approval rating was 21% less than the average for presidents in early February after their inauguration. [Gallup](#).

One can find details of opinion polls at:

- [Real Clear Politics](#) summaries of polls
- [Gallup](#)
- [Pew Research Center](#)
- [Quinnipiac Univ.](#)
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Here are some news articles — mostly from *The Washington Post* — on Trump's low approval in opinion polls during his presidency.

- Lydia Saad, "Trump Sets New Low Point for Inaugural Approval Rating," [Gallup](#), 23 Jan 2017. (45% approval rating: "Trump first elected president with initial sub-50% approval rating")
- Philip Bump, "Trump's initial approval ratings are setting new, unhappy records," [Washington Post](#), 25 Jan 2017. ("Trump's approval rating is lower than any prior new president.")
- John Sides, "How low can Donald Trump's approval rating go?," [Washington Post](#), 7 Feb 2017. ("Since his inauguration, Donald Trump's net approval rating — already at a historic low for an incoming president — has taken a further hit.")
- Aaron Blake, "Trump's approval rating just hit a new low. What if it doesn't really matter?," [Washington Post](#), 17 Feb 2017. (Trump's statement at a press conference "reveals something else about Trump: He isn't terribly concerned about being unpopular. All he truly feels the need to do is keep his base happy. And he's doing just fine on that count.")
- Philip Bump, "Trump's approval hits a new low of 36 percent — but that's not the bad news," [Washington Post](#), 27 March 2017. (Commenting on weekly average of Gallup polls: "... last week [Trump] hit a new low as well of 39 percent — after all the [daily] volatility is smoothed out. That's lower than Obama ever saw during any single week.")
- Dan Balz & Scott Clement, "Nearing 100 days, Trump's approval at record lows but his base is holding," [Washington Post](#), 23 April 2017.
- Aaron Blake, "More bad news for Trump: His poll numbers just hit a bunch of new lows," [Washington Post](#), 10 May 2017. (Quinnipiac poll shows 51% strongly disapprove of Trump, while only 25% strongly approve. Overall, Trump has a 36% job

approval rating.)

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## Russia's Hacking of Campaign e-mails

This section chronicles the U.S. Government's investigation into hacking of Democratic party campaign e-mails and other influence on the 2016 presidential election. The FBI investigation also includes contacts between Russians and members of Trump's campaign staff.

During the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, Russia hacked into Democratic party e-mails and posted those private e-mails on the public WikiLeaks website. Here is a terse synopsis of what happened:

1. 22 July 2016: WikiLeaks website posts 19,252 e-mails stolen from the Democratic National Committee.
2. 7 Oct 2016: U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security say Russia hacked the e-mails at the Democratic National Committee: "The U.S. Intelligence Community (USIC) is confident that the Russian Government directed the recent compromises of e-mails from US persons and institutions, including from US political organizations. .... These thefts and disclosures are intended to interfere with the U.S. election process."
3. 7 Oct 2016: WikiLeaks begins to post thousands of e-mails stolen from the private Google mail account belonging to John Podesta, who was Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman.
4. 9 Dec 2016: CIA Report says Russia helped Trump defeat Hillary Clinton.
5. 29 Dec 2016: Obama issues new sanctions on Russia, to punish Russia for interfering with the U.S. presidential election.

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- Tom Hamburger & Karen Tumulty, "WikiLeaks releases thousands of documents about Clinton and internal deliberations," [Washington Post](#), 22 July 2016.
- Aaron Blake, "Here are the latest, most damaging things in the DNC's leaked emails," [Washington Post](#), 25 July 2016.

- David E. Sanger & Eric Schmitt, "Spy Agency Consensus Grows That Russia Hacked D.N.C.," [New York Times](#), 27 July 2016.
- "Joint DHS and ODNI Election Security Statement," [dni.gov](#), 7 Oct 2016. (quoted above)
- Ellen Nakashima, "U.S. government officially accuses Russia of hacking campaign to interfere with elections," [Washington Post](#), 7 Oct 2016.
- David E. Sanger & Charlie Savage, "U.S. Says Russia Directed Hacks to Influence Elections," [New York Times](#), 7 Oct 2016.
- Amy Chozick, "John Podesta Says Russian Spies Hacked His Emails to Sway Election," [New York Times](#), 11 Oct 2016. ("In his first remarks since WikiLeaks began releasing thousands of his hacked emails, John D. Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, said Tuesday [11 Oct] that Russian intelligence officials intent on swaying the election to Donald J. Trump had been responsible for the illegal breach into his account.")
- Abby Phillip & John Wagner, "Hacked WikiLeaks emails show concerns about Clinton candidacy, email server," [Washington Post](#), 12 Oct 2016. ("WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy organization, began releasing new messages last Friday [7 Oct] from the personal email account of Clinton's campaign chairman, John Podesta, and has promised to issue tens of thousands more.")
- Adam Entous, Ellen Nakashima, & Greg Miller, "Secret CIA assessment says Russia was trying to help Trump win White House," [Washington Post](#), 9 Dec 2016.
- Elise Viebeck, "Trump denies CIA report that Russia intervened to help him win election," [Washington Post](#), 11 Dec 2016.
- Eric Lipton, David E. Sanger, & Scott Shane, "The Perfect Weapon: How Russian Cyberpower Invaded the U.S.," [New York Times](#), 13 Dec 2016. ("An examination by The Times of the Russian operation — based on interviews with dozens of players targeted in the attack, intelligence officials who investigated it and Obama administration officials who deliberated over the best response — reveals a series of missed signals, slow responses and a continuing underestimation of the seriousness of the cyberattack.")
- Adam Entous & Ellen Nakashima, "FBI in agreement with CIA that Russia aimed to help Trump win White House," [Washington Post](#), 16 Dec 2016.
- Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment," [White House](#), 29 Dec 2016.
- David E. Sanger, "Obama Strikes Back at Russia for Election Hacking," [New York Times](#), 29 Dec 2016.

- John Wagner & Karoun Demirjian, "After Obama sanctions Russia, Trump says it's time 'to move on to bigger and better things'," [Washington Post](#), 29 Dec 2016. (Trump's casual reaction to Obama's sanctions.)
- "Background to "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections": The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution," [dni.gov](#), 6 Jan 2017. (unclassified version of report by The Central Intelligence Agency, The Federal Bureau of Investigation, and The National Security Agency)
- "Priebus says Democrats to blame for email hack, thinks Trump accepts intel findings," [Fox News](#), 8 Jan 2017.
- Kevin Robillard, "Priebus claims Trump accepts Russia's role in hack," [Politico](#), 8 Jan 2017.
- Dan Balz, "Russia is the slow burn of the Trump administration, and it's not going away," [Washington Post](#), 4 March 2017. ("The overarching issue is the attempt by a foreign government to disrupt an American election and thereby undermine confidence in the world's leading democratic government. Just as important is answering the question of whether there was any collusion or cooperation between the Trump campaign and the Russians in attempting to undermine Clinton's campaign.")
- Andrew Blake, "Roger Stone, Trump confidant, acknowledges 'innocuous' Twitter conversation with DNC hackers," [Washington Times](#), 10 March 2017. ("Roger Stone, President Trump's former campaign advisor, ... [in August 2016 communicated with 'Guccifer 2.0,' a pseudonymous entity] involved in hacking the Democratic National Committee, [Stone] told *The Washington Times* Friday [10 Mar], but insisted the conversations were 'completely innocuous.'")
- Eileen Sullivan & Eric Tucker, "FBI probing possible links between Russia, Trump associates," [Associated Press](#), 16:16 EDT, 20 Mar 2017. (Director of FBI testified before House Intelligence Committee that FBI is continuing to investigate possible collusion between Russia and Trump campaign staff in 2016.)
- Ned Parker, Jonathan Landay, & Warren Strobel, "Exclusive: Trump campaign had at least 18 undisclosed contacts with Russians — sources," [Reuters](#), 07:19 EDT, 18 May 2017. ("Michael Flynn and other advisers to Donald Trump's campaign were in contact with Russian officials and others with Kremlin ties in at least 18 calls and emails during the last seven months of the 2016 presidential race [April through October 2016], current and former U.S. officials familiar with the exchanges told Reuters.")
- Gloria Borger, Pamela Brown, Jim Sciutto, Marshall Cohen, & Eric Lichtblau, "First on CNN: Russian officials bragged they could use Flynn to influence Trump, sources say," [CNN](#), updated 21:03 EDT, 19 May 2017. ("Russian officials bragged in conversations during the presidential campaign that they had cultivated a strong relationship with former Trump adviser retired Gen. Michael Flynn and believed they could use him to influence Donald Trump and his team, sources told CNN.")

My bibliography [above](#) for the Flynn debacle cites several news articles that mention contacts by Trump campaign staff with Russians.

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### **This is a joke to Trump**

Unauthorized entry into someone's computer is a crime. Publishing private e-mails found on someone's computer is arguably an invasion of privacy, as well as copyright infringement. Instead of condemning the Russian theft of e-mails from Hillary Clinton's campaign, on 27 July 2016 Trump asked Russia to find Hillary's missing State Department e-mails from her private server. [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Politico](#). Trump may have been joking, but computer crime that interferes with the U.S. presidential election is *not* a good subject for jokes, especially by the beneficiary of the disclosure of the e-mails.

Notice also that in December 2016, Trump did *not* believe that Russia had hacked the computers of the Democratic National Committee and Podesta's personal e-mail account. Trump has been astoundingly casual about this serious series of computer crimes by Russia.

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### **Other Russian criminal hacking in USA**

Vladimir Drinkman — a Russian hacker who stole more than 160 million credit card numbers during hacks of business computers in the USA — was arrested in the Netherlands on 28 June 2012. In February 2015, Vladimir was extradited to stand trial in Newark, NJ. [DoJ](#); [Star-Ledger](#). On 15 Sep 2015, Vladimir pled guilty to what the U.S. Department of Justice called the "Largest Known Data Breach Conspiracy Ever Prosecuted", which caused *more than* US\$ 300 million in losses to U.S. businesses. [DoJ](#). Three other Russian hackers in this gang evaded justice in the USA, simply by remaining inside Russia.

On 16 Sep 2015, Dmitriy Smilianets of Moscow pled guilty in a U.S. court to selling stolen information that was obtained by the Drinkman gang in the previous paragraph. Smilianets was arrested in the Netherlands on 28 June 2012 and was extradited to federal court in New Jersey on 7 Sep 2012. [DoJ](#).

On 29 Sep 2015, Dimitry Belorossoff — a Russian hacker who in 2011 developed the Citadel malware to invade bank accounts, to initiate unauthorized electronic transfers, and to steal credit card information — was sentenced to U.S. Prison. Dimitry was arrested in Spain. [DoJ](#).

On 25 Aug 2016, Roman Valerevich Seleznev — a Russian hacker who between October 2009 and October 2013 stole at least 1.7 million credit card numbers from point-of-sale computers in the USA — was found guilty by a jury in federal court in Seattle. The [DoJ](#) said: "Testimony at trial revealed that Seleznev's scheme caused 3,700 financial institutions more than \$169 million in losses." Seleznev was arrested in July 2014 in the Maldives. Roman Seleznev is the son of a member of the Russian Parliament. [Seattle Times](#).

On 21 Oct 2016, it was announced that Yevgeniy Aleksandrovich Nikulin had been arrested



while on vacation in Prague, Czech Republic, on 5 October and charged in the USA with hacking computers at LinkedIn, Dropbox, and Formspring in 2012. [Doj](#); [New York Times](#).

On 15 March 2017, the U.S. Justice Department announced an indictment against two Russian government espionage agents and two Russian hackers for stealing data from the Yahoo online service in 2014. [DoJ](#); [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Karim Baratov, one of the hackers, was arrested at his home in Canada on 14 March. [Toronto Star](#); [Hamilton Spectator](#); [Globe&Mail](#); [CBC](#). There is *no* connection between the Yahoo hack and the alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, except to show that the Russian government was sponsoring hacking into computers in the USA.

These hacking incidents also show that Russia is *no* friend of the USA, and show Trump is poorly informed when he wants better relations with Russia. In my view, wanting better relations with Russia is like wanting better relations with a Mexican drug cartel.

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## Trump's Deals with Russians

The following material is introduction for what I hope will be a future investigation into Trump's relationship with Russians, and into the relationship of Trump's associates with Russia.

### Trump's Denials

Several times, Trump has publicly denied he had any contact with Russians and denied any business deals in Russia. See, e.g.,

1. On 27 July 2016, Trump was asked whether Russians were trying to help Trump win the election. Trump responded: "I mean I have nothing to do with Russia. I don't have any jobs in Russia. I'm all over the world but we're not involved in Russia. .... But I have nothing to do with Russia, nothing to do, I never met Putin, I have nothing to do with Russia whatsoever." [CBS Miami](#); [CBS News](#).
2. On 10 Nov 2016, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, and Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, both told journalists that there were contacts between Trump's campaign and the Russian government. Hope Hicks, Trump's campaign spokeswoman, immediately denied such contacts: "It never happened. There was no communication between the campaign and any foreign entity during the campaign." [Associated Press](#).
3. On 11 Jan 2017, Trump [tweeted](#): "Russia has never tried to use leverage over me. I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH RUSSIA — NO DEALS, NO LOANS, NO NOTHING!"
4. On 7 Feb 2017, Trump [tweeted](#): "I don't know Putin, have no deals in Russia, and the haters are going crazy — ...."

5. 16 Feb 2017 press conference at [White House](#), Trump said: “And I can tell you, speaking for myself, I own nothing in Russia. I have no loans in Russia. I don't have any deals in Russia. .... I have nothing to do with Russia. I told you, I have no deals there. I have no anything. .... I have nothing to do with Russia. To the best of my knowledge, no person that I deal with does.”
6. On 11 May 2017, during an interview with Lester Holt of NBC News, Trump said: “I have no investments in Russia, none whatsoever. I don't have property in Russia — a lot of people thought I owned office buildings in Moscow. I don't have property in Russia. ... I'm in total compliance in every way.” [RCP](#).
- 7.

On 5 March 2017, I looked at Trump's campaign website in an attempt to find more denials of contacts with Russians, but all of the press releases prior to 1 Jan 2017 had been deleted from that website.

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### Trump's Actual Dealings with Russians

We do *not* know if Trump has deals in Russia, because Trump — unlike other presidential candidates in modern history — refuses to publicly release his federal income tax returns.

It *may* be true that Trump currently has no deals in Russia. But Trump did profit from his Miss Universe pageant in Moscow in 2013, and Russians have purchased real estate from Trump in the USA. During the past 30 years, Trump has attempted to do deals in Russia, as the following paragraphs show.

On 17 June 2016, *The Washington Post* reported:

Trump's relationship with Putin and his warm views toward Russia, which began in the 1980s when the country was still part of the Soviet Union, have emerged as one of the more curious aspects of his presidential campaign.

The overwhelming consensus among American political and national security leaders has held that Putin is a pariah who disregards human rights and has violated international norms in seeking to regain influence and territory in the former Soviet bloc. In 2012, one year before Trump brought his beauty pageant to Moscow, then-Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney called Russia the United States' top geopolitical threat — an assessment that has only gained currency since then.

Trump has conveyed a different view, informed in part through his business ambitions. Since the 1980s, Trump and his family members have made numerous trips to Moscow in search of business opportunities, and they have relied on Russian investors to buy their properties around the world.

“Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets,” Trump's son, Donald Jr., told a real estate conference in 2008, according to an account

posted on the website of eTurboNews, a trade publication. “We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia.”

Tom Hamburger, Rosalind S. Helderman, & Michael Birnbaum, "Inside Trump's financial ties to Russia and his unusual flattery of Vladimir Putin," [Washington Post](#), 17 June 2016.

On 25 July 2016, Prof. Daniel Drezner, writing in *The Washington Post*, said:

... as [Spoiler Alerts](#) discussed last month, “I’m beginning to wonder if [Trump’s] motivation to win now is less about making America great again and more about avoiding yet another Trump bankruptcy.” Cozying up to Russia and Russian money would certainly be one way of bolstering his finances. And one wonders if the reason that Trump won’t release his tax returns is because it would expose Trump’s reliance on foreign money to prop up his companies.

Daniel W. Drezner, "Is Donald Trump a Putin patsy? What to make of allegations that Putin is assisting Donald Trump's campaign." [Washington Post](#), 25 July 2016.

On 27 July 2016, *The Washington Post* reported:

“I have nothing to with Russia. I have nothing to do with Russia — for anything.”

Donald Trump, news conference, July 27, 2016

In a news conference responding to evidence suggesting Russian agencies hacked the email accounts of the Democratic National Committee, the GOP presidential nominee insisted that he had no business dealings in Russia — with one single exception.

As he put it: “What do I have to do with Russia? You know the closest I came to Russia, I bought a house a number of years ago in Palm Beach, Florida. Palm Beach is a very expensive place. There was a man who went bankrupt and I bought the house for \$40 million and I sold it to a Russian for \$100 million including brokerage commissions. So I sold it. So I bought it for 40, I sold it for 100 to a Russian. That was a number of years ago. I guess probably I sell condos to Russians, okay?”

....

Trump’s remarks are artfully deceiving. He says he had nothing to do with Russia, pointing only to a Florida real estate sale. It may be possible that he has no current investments in Russia, but not for lack of trying.

The evidence is clear, from his own words and those of his associates, that he has been eager to business in Russia. One of his sons traveled six times in 18 months trying to do deals — and [said](#) [in Sep 2008] “[...] Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets [; ....]” The Trump Organization’s general counsel also confirmed that the company has looked at deals in Russia.

Glenn Kessler, "Fact Checker: Trump's claim that 'I have nothing to do with Russia'," [Washington Post](#), 27 July 2016.

On 28 July 2016, NBC News reported:

Donald Trump on Wednesday [27 July] said that he doesn't know and has never met

Russian leader Vladimir Putin, [contradicting](#) many of his own claims during the campaign that he has a good relationship with the Russian strongman.

MSNBC's Thomas Roberts interviewed Trump about his relationship with Putin back in 2013 in Moscow, when Roberts served as the co-host for a show that was a joint production of NBC Entertainment and the Trump Organization.

"Do you have a relationship with Vladimir Putin? A conversational relationship or anything that you feel you have sway or influence over his government?" Roberts asked.

The real estate mogul responded in the affirmative. "I do have a relationship and I can tell you that he's very interested in what we're doing here today," Trump said at the time. "He's probably very interested in what ... I am saying today, and I'm sure he's going to be seeing it in some form."

....

"Trump and Putin Tried to Meet in Moscow Three Years Ago: Source," [NBC News](#), 28 July 2016.

On 30 July 2016, [The Guardian](#) published a long article, titled "Donald Trump and Russia: a web that grows more tangled all the time", about Trump's — and his associates' — relationships with Russians.

On 15 August 2016, *Time* magazine reported:

... as major banks in America stopped lending him money following his many bankruptcies, the Trump organization was forced to seek financing from non-traditional institutions. Several had direct ties to Russian financial interests in ways that have raised eyebrows. What's more, several of Trump's senior advisors have business ties to Russia or its satellite politicians.

Jeff Nesbit, "Donald Trump's Many, Many, Many, Many Ties to Russia," [Time](#), 2 Aug 2016, updated 15 Aug 2016.

On 10 November 2016, the Associated Press reported on contacts between the Russian government and Trump's campaign:

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told The Associated Press in an interview in New York that Russian experts had contacts with people in both the Trump and Clinton campaigns. He said such contacts are "quite natural, quite normal."

"And our experts, our specialists on the U.S., on international affairs ... Of course they are constantly speaking to their counterparts here, including those from Mr. Trump's group," Peskov said.

....

Earlier, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as telling the Interfax news agency that "there were contacts" with influential people in Trump's circle. "I

don't say that all of them, but a whole array of them supported contacts with Russian representatives."

....

The U.S. government believes Putin might have interfered in the presidential election. The intelligence community has concluded that Russia was responsible for hacking into the emails of the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta and gave them to WikiLeaks, which released them. Some embarrassed and damaged the Clinton campaign.

Jim Heintz & Matthew Lee, "Russia eyes better ties with Trump; says contacts underway," [Associated Press](#), 19:07 EST, 10 Nov 2016.

On 10 November 2016, *The Washington Post* reported the same news about contacts between the Russian government and Trump's campaign:

Russian government officials conferred with members of Donald Trump's campaign team, a senior Russian diplomat said Thursday, a disclosure that could reopen scrutiny of the Kremlin's role in the president-elect's bitter race against Hillary Clinton.

The statement came from Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who said in an interview with the Interfax news agency that "there were contacts" with the Trump team. "Obviously, we know most of the people from his entourage," Ryabkov said.

"We have just begun to consider ways of building dialogue with the future Donald Trump administration and channels we will be using for those purposes," Ryabkov was quoted as saying.

Ryabkov provided no further details, and his remarks drew a swift denial from Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks, who said the campaign had "no contact with Russian officials" before Tuesday's [8 Nov] election.

....

Speaking to Bloomberg News, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said staffers at the Russian Embassy in Washington met with members of Trump's campaign — meetings she described as "normal practice." Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's campaign refused similar requests for meetings, Zakharova told the agency.

David Filipov and Andrew Roth, "Moscow had contacts with Trump team during campaign, Russian diplomat says," [Washington Post](#), 10 Nov 2016.

See also [NY Times](#), 10 Nov 2016.

My comment is that the Russian government says it wants a better relationship with the U.S. Government, and an end to U.S. sanctions. Given that Russian goal, it is very unlikely that Ryabkov and Peskov would make a false statement about contacts with the Trump campaign, when it was easily foreseeable that public disclosure of Russian contacts would damage president-elect Trump.

On 11 Jan 2017, *The Washington Post* summarized Trump's 30 years of business dealings in Russia:

.... But a look at Trump's record since the 1980s shows that he and his family long have been interested in trying to do business there. The connection became a matter of curiosity during the 2016 presidential race. A Russian official was quoted saying his government had been in contact with Trump's campaign, and the candidate repeatedly praised Russian President Vladimir Putin while urging the country's leaders to hack into his opponent's emails.

The connections go back 30 years. Trump first visited Moscow in 1987 in an effort to make real estate deals. ....

.....

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the Interfax news agency that his country had "contacts" with Trump's campaign. "Obviously, we know most of the people from his entourage," Ryabkov [said](#). The campaign denied such talks.

Ryabkov did not say who Russia talked to. Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort managed an investment fund for a Putin ally, and he was cited in a corruption probe in Ukraine, where investigators were looking into illegal payments from a pro-Russian party that had hired Manafort when he was a political consultant. Manafort denied wrongdoing and said that he had not received improper payments. He also said he had nothing to do with weakening of the Republican Party platform language that suggested U.S. military support for Ukraine.

Michael Kranish, "Trump says he has 'nothing to do with Russia.' The past 30 years show otherwise." [Washington Post](#), 11 Jan 2017.

On 16 Jan 2017, *The New York Times* reported:

Mr. Trump repeatedly sought business in Russia as far back as 1987, when he traveled there to explore building a hotel. He applied for his trademark in the country as early as 1996. And his children and associates have appeared in Moscow over and over in search of joint ventures, meeting with developers and government officials.

During a trip in 2006, Mr. Sater and two of Mr. Trump's children, Donald Jr. and Ivanka, stayed at the historic Hotel National Moscow opposite the Kremlin, connecting with potential partners over the course of several days.

As recently as 2013, Mr. Trump himself was in Moscow. He had sold Russian real estate developers the right to host his Miss Universe pageant that year, and he used the visit as a chance to discuss development deals, writing on Twitter at the time: "TRUMP TOWER-MOSCOW is next."

As the Russian market opened up in the post-Soviet era, Mr. Trump and his partners pursued Russians who were newly flush with cash to buy apartments in Trump Towers in New York and Florida, sales that he boasted about in a 2014 interview. "I know the Russians better than anybody," Mr. Trump told Michael D'Antonio, a Trump

[biographer](#) who shared unpublished interview transcripts with The New York Times.

....

Donald Trump Jr. became a regular presence in Russia. Speaking at a 2008 Manhattan real estate conference, he confessed to fears of doing business in Russia, saying there is “an issue of ‘Will I ever see my money back out of that deal or can I actually trust the person I am doing the deal with?’” according to coverage of his remarks in eTurboNews.

But he told the Manhattan audience that “I really prefer Moscow over all cities in the world” and that he had visited Russia a half-dozen times in 18 months.

In 2011, he was still at it. “Heading to the airport to go to Moscow for business,” he tweeted that year.

Mr. Trump himself was back in Moscow in 2013, attending the Miss Universe pageant, which he owned with NBC.

Megan Twohey & Steve Eder, "For Trump, Three Decades of Chasing Deals in Russia," [NY Times](#), 16 Jan 2017.

On 22 Feb 2017, [PolitiFact](#) reported on Trump's possible ties to Russia. PolitiFact explicitly notes that some of the information is from anonymous sources, which can *not* be confirmed. This PolitiFact article is too long to quote here, so I am linking to it.

On 3 March 2017, *The Washington Post* mentioned 10 people in Trump's campaign, advisers, or appointees who had/have a known or possible relationship with either the Russian ambassador to the USA, Russian government, or Russian businesses. Trump's Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Commerce are three of the ten. *The Post* explicitly says: "none of the relationships above are intended to show misbehavior by those involved."

On 4 March 2017, *The Washington Post* reported:

It is unclear why the White House has consistently denied contacts with Russian officials if the meetings that took place were innocuous.

As a result, the confirmations of the encounters have trickled out through a series of news stories that have proved increasingly damaging to the Trump administration, with some Trump associates appearing to shift their accounts over time.

Rosalind S. Helderman, "Despite early denials, growing list of Trump camp contacts with Russians haunts White House," [Washington Post](#) 4 March 2017.

05 March 2017, Jennifer Rubin, the conservative columnist for *The Washington Post*, wrote: ... news [reports](#) have suggested, as a TIME story did, that “as major banks in America stopped lending him money following his many bankruptcies, the Trump organization was forced to seek financing from non-traditional institutions. Several had direct ties to Russian financial interests in ways that have raised eyebrows.” (Trump denies he has any ties to Russia. “I can tell you, speaking for myself, I own nothing in Russia. I have



no loans in Russia. I don't have any deals in Russia," he said recently, leaving open the possibility that he and/or his sons have ties to Russians operating outside of Russia.) Jennifer Rubin, "Trump: Bonkers, paranoid or trapped?," [Washington Post](#), 5 March 2017.

On 3 April 2017, *The Washington Post* disclosed:

The United Arab Emirates arranged a secret meeting in [The Seychelles on 11] January [2017] between Blackwater founder Erik Prince and a Russian close to President Vladimir Putin as part of an apparent effort to establish a back-channel line of communication between Moscow and President-elect Donald Trump, according to U.S., European and Arab officials.

....

Though Prince had no formal role with the Trump campaign or transition team, he presented himself as an unofficial envoy for Trump to high-ranking Emiratis involved in setting up his meeting with the Putin confidant, according to the officials, who did not identify the Russian.

....

The Seychelles encounter, which one official said spanned two days, adds to an expanding web of connections between Russia and Americans with ties to Trump — contacts that the White House has been reluctant to acknowledge or explain until they have been exposed by news organizations.

Adam Entous, Greg Miller, Kevin Sieff, & Karen DeYoung, "Blackwater founder held secret Seychelles meeting to establish Trump-Putin back channel," [Washington Post](#), 16:29 EDT, 3 Apr 2017.

[NBC News](#) confirmed the meeting in the Seychelles and added: "According to intelligence reports filed at the time, no Trump transition people were directly involved and it is unclear if the meeting was undertaken on behalf of Trump's people or was a UAE initiative, the [anonymous U.S. intelligence] official said."

On 12 May 2017, the White House released an 8 March 2017 one-page [letter](#) to Trump from two of Trump's attorneys that stated they had reviewed 10 years of Trump's income tax returns and concluded that Trump had *no* income from Russia, with some exceptions. That is a backhanded way of saying Trump had some income from Russia. *The New York Times* reported the exceptions were:

1. \$95 million paid by a Russian billionaire for a Trump-owned estate in Florida,
2. \$12.2 million in payments in connection with holding the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow in 2013,
3. undisclosed payments over 10 years from Russians for hotel rooms, rounds of golf or Trump-licensed products, like wine, ties or mattresses.

....

[The letter] leaves other questions unanswered, including whether Mr. Trump or his firms received Russian income or loans from entities registered elsewhere or whether he derived income from Russian-linked partnerships that file their own returns.

“This is an artfully written letter, covering a limited time period,” said David Cay Johnston, an expert on taxes and a former New York Times reporter who has written extensively about Mr. Trump. “Much of what we need to know about Trump and Russian money — and that includes money from Kazakhstan, Turkey and other places where Russian oligarchs operate — involves transactions prior to 10 years ago.”

....

Some tax-law experts questioned key parts of the letter, including how the lawyers defined “Russian” sources and lenders. Major companies in Russia frequently use subsidiaries in other jurisdictions, like Cyprus, the Netherlands or the British Virgin Islands, to conduct overseas business. Moreover, it was unclear what the lawyers meant by asserting that the tax returns did not “reflect” any income from Russian sources.

Mark Landler & Eric Lipton, "Trump Lawyers Say He Had No Russian Income or Debt, With Some Exceptions," [New York Times](#), 12 May 2017.

*The Washington Post* reported:

Daniel Shapiro, a tax-law expert at New York University, said that without additional information on Trump’s tax returns and income, the letter from the lawyers is “meaningless garbage.”

....

[Shapiro] said the fact that the White House would release such a letter with no verification “makes me more suspicious, not less, of the president’s financial ties.”

....

Critics have raised questions about whether Russians have funneled money through Trump or his projects into the United States. The letter is less clear about whether Trump has borrowed or received any money from Russian sources. It says his tax returns do not reflect any “debt” to Russian lenders, but, depending on the type of debt, it would not necessarily be listed on a tax return.

....

Trump and his aides have been promising for several days that they would send a certified letter from Trump’s attorneys to [U.S. Senator] Graham showing that the president has no business ties with Russia. “Certified” refers to the class of mail used to send the document, but does not offer any outside assurance that the contents of the document are accurate.

Rosalind S. Helderman and Damian Paletta, "Trump lawyers outline president’s Russian income but provide no documents," [Washington Post](#), 12 May 2017.

See also [Wall Street Journal](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

My bibliography [above](#) for the Flynn debacle cites several news articles that mention contacts by Trump campaign staff with Russians.

### **Conclusion to Trump's Deals in Russia**

Before the Russian hacking of Democrats became public in July 2016, Trump boasted of his business connections in Russia. But after the Russian hacking, Trump began to minimize or deny his past connections to Russia. This change gives the appearance that Trump desires to cover-up his past connections with Russia.

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## **Conclusion**

There are two ways that Trump misuses facts:

1. Apparently, Trump decides on his opinion, then creates fictitious "facts" to support his opinion. When one ignores Trump's fictitious "facts", Trump's assertions have *no* factual basis. That makes Trump's opinions based on fantasy or delusions.
2. Additionally, Trump creates fictitious "facts" to boast about strong majority admiration for him, which some psychiatrists have suggested is a narcissistic character flaw.

Each of these misuses of facts is a defect in Trump's thought process.

Worse, months after journalists have exposed the errors in Trump's so-called "facts". Trump continues to cite the same discredited "facts". Trump's refusal to learn from his mistakes shows his disdain for the Truth.

Furthermore, I presented above examples of Trump making an inflammatory accusation without citing any facts (not even citing fictitious "facts"), and without citing any sources. At colleges with decent academic standards, students are required to write term papers with footnotes and a bibliography, to teach the students how to think like an educated person. Assertions without reasons are worthless.

Trump repeatedly asserted that journalists are failing to report important news (e.g., voting fraud, Islamic terror attacks, high murder rate in the USA). Worse, Trump repeatedly characterized journalists as "dishonest" and providers of "fake news". Trump's war with the news media is not only unbecoming to the president, but also gives journalists incentive to expose Trump's factual errors.

In my opinion, it is incredibly dangerous to have a president of the USA — in charge of a powerful military with a large arsenal of nuclear weapons — who has a defective thought process.

I believe Trump is unfit to be president, because he can not distinguish between delusions and facts. Trump should be impeached and removed from office. But that probably will not happen until 2019, after an election in which Democrats might become the majority party in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

### **Proposed Constitutional Amendment**

The U.S. Constitution specifies only two requirements for the U.S. president: he must be born in the USA and he must be at least 35 years old. We need an Amendment to the Constitution to also specify that any candidate for president or vice-president have served either at least six years in the U.S. Senate, at least four years in the U.S. House of Representatives, *or* at least one full term as governor of any state in the USA. That requirement would have several benefits:

1. give candidates either experience at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, or experience as a governor working with a legislature.
2. develop a track record that will clearly expose candidates who are unable to work successfully in government.
3. expose candidates who have a character flaw, personality disorder, or some other condition that makes them unfit to be president.

Note that *all* of the U.S. presidents between 1961 and 2016 pass this proposed test. It is *not* an unusual test.

### **Reform Electoral College**

Additionally, Congress should consider replacing the Electoral College with direct popular vote. The Electoral College gives too much weight to states with a small population (e.g., Wyoming, Vermont). The real reason, of course, is Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in 2016.

On the other hand, perhaps a better solution is to return the Electoral College to its original purpose: voters would elect local Electors, and the Electors alone would decide who would become president and vice-president. In the 2016 election, voters in the USA had access to abundant information about Trump's narcissistic character flaw, Trump's inability to cite facts, and Trump's absolute lack of experience in government — but voters elected Trump anyway. What does that say about voters? In my opinion, Trump's victory says voters were either poorly informed or lacked critical thinking skills. That conclusion makes the direct popular vote an unreliable way of choosing a president.

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## **Removal of Trump from Presidency**

There are three possible ways to remove a U.S. president from office:

1. **Impeachment** by U.S. House of Representatives and conviction by U.S. Senate. (U.S. Constitution, Article I, §3, clause 6)
2. **Declaration of Inability** by the Vice-President and a majority of the Cabinet members. (U.S. Constitution, 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment, §4)
3. **Resignation** by the president.

Of the three ways, I think resignation is the most likely for Trump. After a year or two, Trump may become frustrated with Congress and the Judiciary blocking his programs. At some point, Trump might resign and return to being a real-estate mogul.

Moreover, Trump will surely become tired of relentless criticism by journalists, commentators, politicians, and opinion leaders. Trump has never before worked in a government, where criticism from someone is routine. This is also Trump's highest profile job in his 70 year life. For both reasons, Trump is experiencing high levels of stress from criticism in the year 2017. It is unknown how Trump will react to the incessant criticism. However, the criticism will surely affect Trump's narcissistic craving for strong majority admiration.

### **Bibliography on Trump Unfit**

The following politicians, mental health professionals, and commentators have suggested that Trump is unfit to be president:

- David L. Brooks, "No, Not Trump, Not Ever," [NY Times](#), 18 Mar 2016. ("Trump is perhaps the most dishonest person to run for high office in our lifetimes. All politicians stretch the truth, but Trump has a steady obliviousness to accuracy.")
- Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore in Joint Press Conference," [White House](#), 2 Aug 2016. ("Yes, I think the Republican nominee [Trump] is unfit to serve as President. I said so last week, and he keeps on proving it. ..., the fact that he doesn't appear to have basic knowledge around critical issues in Europe, in the Middle East, in Asia, means that he's woefully unprepared to do this job. And this is not just my opinion. I think what's been interesting is the repeated denunciations of his statements by leading Republicans, including the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader, and prominent Republicans like John McCain.")
- Callum Borchers, "The latest media obsession: 'Could there be something ... neurologically wrong' with Donald Trump?," [Washington Post](#), 3 August 2016.
- Charles Krauthammer, "Donald Trump and the fitness threshold," [Washington Post](#), 4 August 2016. (Quoted [above](#).)
- 50 former Republican National Security Officials, "A Letter From G.O.P. National

- Security Officials Opposing Donald Trump," [NY Times](#), 8 Aug 2016. ("In our judgment, Mr. Trump has none of these critical qualities. He is unable or unwilling to separate truth from falsehood. .... He lacks self-control and acts impetuously. He cannot tolerate personal criticism.")
- David L. Brooks, "The View From Trump Tower," [NY Times](#), 11 Nov 2016. ("... [Trump's] main problem is going to be his own attention span, ignorance and incompetence. .... [Trump] will probably resign or be impeached within a year.")
  - David L. Brooks, "The Internal Invasion," [NY Times](#), 20 Jan 2017. ("We've never had a major national leader as professionally unprepared, intellectually ill informed, morally compromised and temperamentally unfit as [Trump].")
  - Jennifer Rubin, "Trump's emotional tailspin was predictable," [Washington Post](#), 24 Jan 2017. ("That reality — the rotten poll numbers, the low turnout at his inauguration, the massive turnout at worldwide protests, his widely panned appearance at the CIA and his press secretary Sean Spicer's disastrous debut with the White House press corps on Saturday [21 Jan] — seems to have thrown the narcissistic ex-mogul into an emotional tailspin. .... The obsession with replaying the election and concocting a phony excuse for losing the popular vote reminds us that despite mockery for constant lying, Trump cannot help himself. He lies because reality won't conform to his narcissistic view of the world.")
  - Rachel Hosie, "'Malignant Narcissism': Donald Trump displays classic traits of mental illness, claim psychologists," [The Independent](#) in U.K., 30 Jan 2017.
  - "Rep. Maxine Waters: Trump's actions 'leading himself' to impeachment," [CNN](#), 6 Feb 2017.
  - Kathleen Parker, "Trump's two-year presidency," [Washington Post](#), 20:03 EST, 10 Feb 2017.
  - Lance Dodes, Joseph Schachter, & 33 other mental health professionals, Letter, "Mental Health Professionals Warn About Trump," [NY Times](#), 13 Feb 2017. ("Mr. Trump's speech and actions demonstrate an inability to tolerate views different from his own, leading to rage reactions. .... We believe that the grave emotional instability indicated by Mr. Trump's speech and actions makes him incapable of serving safely as president.")
  - E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Admit it: Trump is unfit to serve," [Washington Post](#), 19:30 EST, 15 Feb 2017. ("Senators such as John McCain and Lindsey Graham seem to know it is only a matter of time before the GOP will have to confront Trump's unfitness.")
  - Cristina Marcos, "Kentucky Dem lawmaker questions Trump's mental health," [The Hill](#), 22 Feb 2017. ("Trump is 'totally unfit for the office he serves in,' [Rep. John] Yarmuth (D-KY) said in remarks to a local NAACP chapter.... 'He is, in my opinion, a dangerous president. I'm not sure of his mental state, but I know that he doesn't portray someone who is in control of his faculties,' Yarmuth said in comments first

highlighted by [CNN](#).)

- Jenna Portnoy, "Is Trump unfit to serve? This congressman has a bill for that." [Washington Post](#), 12 May 2017. (Jamie Raskin, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Maryland, on 6 April 2017 submitted a [bill](#) to form a commission of 8 physicians and 2 former government officials to examine Trump's fitness to be president.)
- Jacquie Slater, "Mental Health Professionals call for Trump to be removed from office," [WTNH](#), 20 April 2017. (Conference of approximately two dozen mental health professionals at Yale School of Medicine. Dr. John Gartner: "Worse than just being a liar or a narcissist, in addition [Trump] is paranoid, delusional and grandiose thinking and he proved that to the country the first day he was President.") Also see [The Independent](#).
- George F. Will, "Trump has a dangerous disability," [Washington Post](#), 19:36 EDT, 3 May 2017. ("It is urgent for Americans to think and speak clearly about President Trump's inability to do either. This seems to be not a mere disinclination but a disability. It is not merely the result of intellectual sloth but of an untrained mind bereft of information and married to stratospheric self-confidence." "... it is up to the public to quarantine this presidency by insistently communicating to its elected representatives a steady, rational fear of this man whose combination of impulsivity and credulity render him uniquely unfit to take the nation into a military conflict.")
- Patricia Mazzei, "Miami lawmaker was first Republican to suggest Trump could be impeached," [Miami Herald](#), 16:20 EDT, 17 May 2017. (Rep. Carlos Curbelo of Florida became the first Republican in Congress to publicly suggest the impeachment of Trump, *if* it is true that Trump told Comey to end the investigation of Flynn.)
- Cristina Marcos, "First Republicans talk possibility of impeachment for Trump," [The Hill](#), updated 15:38 EDT, 17 May 2017. (Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan became the second Republican in Congress to publicly say, *if* it is true that Trump told Comey to end the investigation of Flynn, then Trump should be impeached.)
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