



AIM REPORT

For Fairness, Balance and Accuracy in News Reporting

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Donald Trump: The Myth The Record

By Brian McNicoll

Carlos Lozado, the Washington Post's chief book reviewer, took a crack at the current bestseller, the tell-all book known as *"Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House."*

There was a lot to be said about the contents of the book, which author Michael Wolff said he obtained by sitting on a couch for weeks on end in the White House's West Wing. But Lozado picked up on a curious point – that President Trump has no idea what he wants to get done while he is in office.

"Disheveled political books ... are typically assailed for centering on palace machinations at the expense of policy substance, for privileging White House turf battles over meaningful debates about national challenges," Lozado writes. "In keeping with the tradition, the pages of Wolff's book are loitered with insults and intrigue, backstabbing and dysfunction.

"In this case, however, such focus seems sadly appropriate. If there is one thing we've learned during the first year of the Trump presidency – something that *"Fire and Fury"* affirms – it is that in this White House, the intrigue is the thing; substance is almost incidental, while policy is often just a weapon wielded in the service of careerism, vanity, personal advantage and brand management.

"The president himself appears driven by insecurity, ego and a constant fear of ridicule and failure more than by ideological conviction. 'He hopelessly personalized everything,' Wolff writes of Trump's first nine months in the Oval Office. 'He saw the world in commercial and show business terms: someone else was always trying one-up you, someone else was always trying to take the limelight.'"

Say what you will about the Trump administration – and some dysfunction has occurred as it does in all administrations and probably was magnified by the added exposure that comes to this administration through the president's unprecedented use of Twitter. But the notion that it has no agenda, no set of policy objectives that it has pursued and seen enacted, does not hold water.

The president said on the campaign trail that he wanted to repeal and replace Obamacare. Congress did not cooperate, but the president rendered it basically dead through regulatory

changes, then struck a knockout punch when he got included in the tax reform legislation a provision that ends the individual mandate that requires Americans to buy health insurance.

He said he would cut taxes and grow the economy, and he kept that promise, raising consumer confidence to 20-year highs, driving unemployment to 17-year lows and the black unemployment rate to its lowest level since the statistic has been gathered. America lost 16,000 manufacturing jobs during President Obama's last year in office; it has gained 171,000 in Trump's first year.

He delivered on his tax cut promise in December, and employers across the country quickly rewarded their employees with raises and bonuses.

He has neutered the unconstitutional and rogue Consumer Finance Protection Bureau. He has ended the kangaroo courts at colleges that ruled on rape accusations – which put ruinous items on men's resumes without due process.

He will have reduced the White House payroll by \$22 million in four years and has eviscerated entire floors of bureaucrats at the State Department, the Department of Energy, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Environmental Protection Agency.

He has expanded energy production, approved a series of critical pipeline projects, approved a significant mining project in Alaska and opened land in Alaska and water off both coasts to energy exploration.

The 22 missiles he ordered fired at a Syrian military facility have at least temporarily halted the Syrians' use of chemical weapons against their own people.

He has defeated ISIS and taken at least 98 percent of its territory, which is critical because, as a declared caliphate, ISIS' leaders had power only if they held territory. ISIS once num-

FIRE AND FURY INSIDE THE TRUMP WHITE HOUSE



MICHAEL WOLFF

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AIM

in the News

AIM CEO **Don Irvine** was recently interviewed by **WJLA.com** on the subject of President Trump and the media after the president told the New York Times that the media basically have to let me win in 2020."

Irvine told the local Washington, DC news website that in 2016 the media couldn't get enough of Donald Trump the candidate because he was great for their ratings and their bottom line, but now that he is president and regularly exposing the liberal media for what they are, they will likely try to minimize their coverage of him in 2020, unless it's negative news.

Mr. Irvine also appeared on the **Alan Nathan** radio program to discuss the media's charge that Trump is infringing on the First Amendment with his constant complaints about their news coverage of his administration.

Irvine pointed out that it is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the media to hide behind the First Amendment when attacking the president, only to complain that Trump is violating it when he exercises his rights under the First Amendment to criticize them and their biased coverage.

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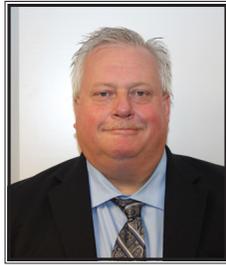
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Editor's Message



Dear Fellow Media Watchdogs:

You may have heard recently about the most remarkable meeting at the White House between President Trump and congressional leaders of both parties about immigration.

There was the president, with Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., seated on one side of him and Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., the minority whip, on the other, exchanging views with members, trying to find middle ground on thorny issues about immigration.

But as some have noted, there are ancillary benefits to such a meeting. By most accounts, the president seemed engaged, informed and on point. He knew the subject matter, set out clear priorities and opened a dialogue that will give no one everything they want but most of those in the room something they can hang their hats on.

That creates a problem for the left's latest attack line against President Trump – that he is mentally incapacitated to the point that the 25th Amendment should be invoked and Vice President Mike Pence elevated to the top spot.

It also creates doubt about the narrative in Michael Wolff's book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" that the president is aloof and doesn't understand policy details.

To be sure, the president is briefed on many of the matters before him, but so are all other presidents. But although the previous president rarely spoke without the comfort of a teleprompter, this president has demonstrated an ability to speak at length off the cuff on most of the areas on which he focuses – as attendees at his rallies will attest.

The too-crazy-to-serve narrative tried to draw strength from President Trump's tweets regarding North Korea. The big-button tweet, in which he responded to a statement by Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea, that he had a nuclear button on his desk by saying he had a bigger button that actually works, drew particular criticism.

But it appears to be working as well. An adviser to the president of South Korea said on CNN International yesterday that President Trump's statements and the way he has changed the posture of the United States toward the Korean peninsula formed the impetus to a warming in recent days of relations between the two Koreas.

South Korea invited North Korea's athletes to participate in the Olympics, which begin next month in South Korea, and the U.S. has agreed to put off scheduled military exercises with South Korea to reduce tension.

The Trump-is-crazy narrative seems destined for the same dustbin of history as the Trump-should-resign-because-of-20-year-old-sexual-harassment-accusations initiative. Which joined the doesn't-have-proper-dignity criticism and the you-can't-say-that about Rosie O'Donnell/John McCain/Khizr Khan/Hillary Clinton line of argument.

With the investigators themselves becoming the focus of the Mueller investigation because of a lack of indication Trump in any way colluded with the Russians, it's time for the left and its friends in the mainstream media to accept that he's going to be president for at least the next three years – and, at this point, quite possibly longer. •

For Accuracy in Media

Brian McNicoll

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bered more than 45,000 soldiers; now there are fewer than 1,000.

In Afghanistan, he dropped the Mother of All Bombs, killing, in the words of James Lewis of the American Thinker, “a hundred or more of the worst human beings since Hitler ... in one big explosion.”

He has grown the military for the first time in eight years and signed three laws to improve veterans’ health care and access to services.

He has moved the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and abandoned any UN organization found to be anti-Semitic. He has gotten Saudi Arabia and Egypt to work with Israel, gotten Gulf states to renounce terrorism funding by both governments and private individuals and even convinced them to censure each other over this when necessary.

In keeping with campaign promises, he has pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accords and a variety of United Nations directorates, most of which were engaged in global warming activities. He

has deported thousands of illegal immigrants, many of them members of gangs. Border crossings were down as much as 40 percent through the year as immigrants realized the U.S. finally was serious about border enforcement.

He has not built his big, beautiful wall along the Mexican border, but he has increased security measures, bolstered border control agencies and chosen a design for the wall when funding is obtained.

He has honored his promises to protect the unborn by reinstating the Mexico City Policy, which forbids U.S. funding of abortions overseas and ordered the Department of Health and Human Services to include in its new strategic plan that life begins at conception.

He has stopped the IRS’ targeting of conservative groups, reversed the Justice Department’s position in a class action lawsuit by those groups challenging the discrimination and helped those groups get a “very substantial” settlement. He also has ended the practice, housed mainly at the Consumer Finance Protec-

tion Bureau and EPA, of fining conservative groups then giving the money to leftist groups without congressional approval.

But to Wolff, the action was all about *Reince Preibus v. Steve Bannon v. Jared Kushner* – all competing for the president’s attention, all trying to keep his “frenetic, distracted, uninterested mind” from wandering off. Trump, wrote Wolff, “simply hoped that the difficult decisions would make themselves.”

Lozado dismissed Trump’s claims that his press treatment is without precedent. “He had reviewed the treatment of all other presidents in the media and there was nothing like this, ever, even of Nixon who was treated very unfairly,” he quotes from Wolff’s book. “It’s vintage Trump: He must claim he’s the best at being treated the worst.”

And there is nothing like Wolff’s book – and Lozado’s review – to make the point that, yet again, the president is right and his detractors are not. •

Media Bungled Accuracy in 2017

By Spencer Irvine

On Dec. 1, Brian Ross of ABC News reported President Trump had told Michael Flynn to make contact with Russian officials before the 2016 election. Later that night, he read a “clarification” on ABC World News Tonight that said the president had told Flynn to make contact with the Russians after the election.

It was one word, but it was more than a minor distinction. Reaching out to a foreign government before taking power could endanger national security, create confusion among other countries about who speaks for the U.S. and trigger criminal penalties. Reaching out afterward is a normal part of the diplomacy involved when a new U.S. administration takes power.

The network apologized in full the next day and suspended Ross, who has a history of mistaken reports, for four weeks. But the president let it known he was not pleased.

He tweeted his “congratulations” to ABC News for “suspending Ross for his horrendously inaccurate and dishonest report on the Russia, Russia, Russia Witch Hunt.” His children and others

labeled it fake news.

President Trump later claimed in a tweet that Ross’s mistake caused the market to drop by 350 points. The POTUS suggested that investors hurt by this market drop should consider suing.

It was a fitting coda to a year in which the media attempted to bury Trump under an avalanche of negative coverage and scandal mongering but found themselves squaring off against a president who did not back down.

The attack was relentless. A Harvard study found more than 90 percent of coverage of President Trump by the mainstream media leaders was negative. CNN and NBC put a negative spin on Trump coverage 93 percent of the time, and the New York Times and Washington Post were both in the 80s. Even Fox News cast 52 percent of its stories about Trump in a negative way.

The battle left both sides bloodied – the president is 12 points under water even in the conservative-friendly Ras-

The Washington Times



mussen Poll, but 46 percent of Americans now believe the media makes up false stories about the president.

But the victims are Americans who want honest coverage of their government and know their largest media outlets cannot be relied upon for this.

If it’s not Ross getting the sequence of Flynn’s contact with the Russians wrong, it’s CNN misreporting the date of an e-mail involved in the Trump-Russia probe. (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/939485131693322240>)

Or it’s Washington Post reporter David Weigel tweeting out the wrong photo of a Trump rally in Pensacola, Fla.

In early December, President Trump held a rally in Pensacola, near the Alabama border, in support of Alabama senatorial candidate Roy Moore. After the president tweeted that the crowd was

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“packed to the rafters,” Weigel tweeted a photo of the arena at less than 20 percent capacity and mocked the president by using his caption against him.

Only the photo was taken hours before the event, which was packed with hundreds outside trying to get in when President Trump took the stage.

David Martosko of the Daily Mail called out Weigel on the tweet, and he took it down with a note saying it was a mistake but it was fair to take exception.

Only what was the mistake? By the time Weigel posted the photo, he knew it was not representative of the size of the crowd because the quote he mocked was not released until the arena was full.

Later in the month, the president condemned as fake news a New York Times report that he watched four and some-

times eight hours of cable TV news per day.

In June, CNN ran a story based on a single unnamed source that who said Anthony Scaramucci, a short-lived White House aide, had discussed with the Russians lifting U.S. sanctions before Trump took office. Scaramucci threatened to sue, the network retracted the story, and the three “journalists” involved resigned in disgrace.

The threat of a libel suit forced that retraction, but many of the stories fell into the exceedingly petty category.

There was the mocking of the president on his Asia trip when he dumped a box of fish food into a koi pond. Video was edited to show Trump dumping out his fish food but omitting footage showing that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo

Abe had dumped in all of his koi food moments earlier and told Trump to do the same.

There was the accusation that Ivanka Trump plagiarized her own speech. There was the New York Times again asserting Sarah Palin was responsible for the shooting of Gabby Giffords. And there was the Washington Post lying, misleading and concealing favorable poll numbers for Trump.

In short, journalists debased themselves in 2017. It was not enough to hold the administration accountable on behalf of the American people. They had to resort to lies, baseless attacks and pettiness. And it would be nice if they made a resolution to do better, but it is unlikely they will. •

Media Bury Obamacare Failure

By Malcolm A. Kline



When congressional Republicans tried in their awkward way to actually deliver on a campaign promise to “repeal and replace” Obamacare in 2017, they, were predictably, were pilloried by the media, along with the president.

Even the one network thought to be a trumpet for the administration, Fox News, would echo the allegations, mostly from career Democrats at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) that millions would lose coverage with “repeal and replace.” Juan Williams, one of the house liberals at Fox, repeated this one a lot.

“The CBO said repeal would cause the number of uninsured people to rise by 18 million next year and by 32 million by 2026,” Juliet Epstein, Sean Sullivan and Ed O’Keefe reported in The Washington Post last July. Consequently, “a trio of moderate Republicans quashed the idea, saying it would irresponsibly snatch insurance coverage from millions

of Americans.”

“I did not come to Washington to hurt people,” tweeted Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who joined Senators. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) in opposing immediate repeal.”

Few bothered to inquire what the sacred CBO numbers were based on. Since I have been reading CBO estimates for decades, I know exactly what they are. Indeed, when you look at the estimates and compare them to what actually happens, you might find that CBO analysts may have a worse track record than fortune tellers and horoscopes.

Meanwhile, all of the above largely ignored the question of how much of Obamacare still exists and, more importantly, the number of people who have already lost coverage under the program when key components of it failed, before President Trump even took the oath of office.

“July has been rough for Obamacare’s non-profit co-op health plans. Four closed after running out of money — three in just one week,” Sally Pipes wrote in Forbes in the middle of 2016.

“Those seven all lost money last year — and may yet go out of business before the calendar turns to 2017.”

Obamacare set up exchanges, and, through them, co-ops to deliver health care. So what happened to the people

who signed up for affordable care through them? I actually asked this question of congressional Republican economists who admitted it was a worthwhile inquiry. They also admitted they didn’t know the answer. Arguably, they’ve had nearly a decade to find out.

“Seventeen Obamacare co-ops have now failed,” Alexander Hendrie wrote on the Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) web site in September of 2016. “The Health Republic insurance of New Jersey yesterday announced it would close, leaving 35,000 members without coverage next year.”

“The New Jersey co-op, which received almost \$110 million in taxpayer loans now joins a list of 16 other Obamacare co-ops that have collapsed since Obamacare has been implemented. In all, failed co-ops have now cost taxpayers more than \$1.8 billion in funds that may never be recovered.”

As it turns out, 35,000 uninsured is a low end number. “In July, co-ops in Oregon and Illinois collapsed leaving close to 100,000 without insurance,” Hendrie wrote. Multiplying 35,000 by the number of co-ops that crashed is a very dreary mathematical exercise, particularly since it involves real people with real medical needs. •

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