

John Kelly's Full-Throated Confirmation Of Trump's Ugliest Comments, Parsed

Kelly Finally Went On The Record To Make Clear That, Yes, Trump Did Say Those Things About Veterans And Wounded Soldiers

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Among The Many Controversies Donald Trump Has Courted During His Time In Politics, Perhaps None Engender The Kinds Of Emotions As His Comments — And Reported Comments — Denigrating Veterans And The War-Wounded. But Some Of The Most Serious Reports About What He's Said Have Gone Largely Unconfirmed By Key Players.

That Changed In A Major Way On Monday.

Former Trump White House Chief Of Staff John F Kelly Delivered A Blistering Statement To CNN's Jake Tapper That, For The First Time, Served To Confirm Years-Old Comments Attributed To Trump And For Which Kelly Was Present.

Kelly, Like Many Former Top Trump Administration Officials, Has Criticized Trump Somewhat In The Past, But His New Statement Takes Things To Another Level And Fills Out The Picture Of Some Of Trump's Ugliest Alleged Comments.

Let's Take Kelly's Statement From CNN, Piece By Piece.

“What Can I Add That Has Not Already Been Said? Kelly Said, Calling Trump A “Person That Thinks Those Who Defend Their Country In Uniform, Or Are Shot Down Or Seriously Wounded In Combat, Or Spend Years Being Tortured As POWs Are All ‘Suckers’ Because ‘There Is Nothing In It For Them.’”

Kelly’s Reference To “Being Tortured As POWs” Is An Obvious Reference To The Late Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz), Whose War-Hero Status Trump Publicly Cast Doubt Upon During The 2016 Campaign, Saying: “I Like People That Weren’t Captured.”

But “Suckers” And “There’s Nothing In It For Them” — In Quotation Marks — Refer To Jeffrey Goldberg’s 2020 Atlantic Piece. It Quoted Trump Using The Former Word To Refer To The 1,800 Marines Who Died At Belleau Wood In France During World War I. It Also Quoted Him Saying Something Similar To The Latter While Standing Next To The Grave Of Kelly’s Own Son, Who Was Killed In Afghanistan.

Kelly Was Described In The Story As Being Present For Each Remark, But He Declined To Comment At The Time. A Close Kelly Ally And Former Top White House Aide Later Said That He — The Ally, Not Kelly — Hadn’t Personally Heard Trump Use The Word “Suckers” And Suggested The Reporting Had “Conflated” Certain Events. But Here Is Kelly Himself Confirming Trump Said These Things.

Trump Campaign Spokesman Steven Cheung Responded Monday Night: “John Kelly Has Totally Clowned Himself With These Debunked Stories He’s Made Up Because He Didn’t Serve His President Well While Working As Chief Of Staff.”

“A Person That Did Not Want To Be Seen In The Presence Of Military Amputees Because ‘It Doesn’t Look Good For Me.’ A Person Who Demonstrated Open Contempt For A Gold Star Family — For All Gold Star Families — On TV During The 2016 Campaign, And Rants That Most Of Our Precious Heroes Who Gave Their Lives In America’s Defense Are ‘Losers’ And Wouldn’t Visit Their Graves In France.”

The First Part Refers To A 2022 Book From Susan B Glasser And Peter Baker Which Quoted Trump Saying — Again, In The Presence Of Kelly — That He Didn’t Want “Any Wounded Guys” In His Big Independence Day Parade.

The Second Refers To Trump’s Public Comments During The 2016 Democratic National Convention, Attacking A Gold Star Family That Had Been Critical Of Him.

(Kelly, Notably, Later Defended Trump After A Democratic Congresswoman Cited Insensitive Comments Allegedly Made To A Gold Star Family During A Private Phone Call. But Kelly Also Seemed To Confirm The Nature Of Trump’s Comments On The Call.)

The Part About “Losers” And Not Wanting To Visit Gravesites Is Again Confirming Of The 2020 Atlantic Piece, In Which Trump Allegedly Said: “Why Should I Go To That Cemetery? It’s Filled With Losers.

The White House At The Time Flatly Denied This. Trump Himself Added: “To Think That I Would Make Statements To Our Military And Fallen Heroes When Nobody Has Done What I’ve Done” For The Military Was “A Total Lie... It’s A Disgrace.”

A Man Who Was Present For These Key Events Now Effectively Says That It Not Only Happened, But That It Happened Over And Over Again.

(Another Recent Story From Goldberg Described Trump Telling The Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff, Gen Mark A Milley, In 2019, That “No One Wants To See That, The Wounded” After A Severely Injured Army Captain Sang “God Bless America” At An Event. Trump Allegedly Told Milley Not To Have The Man Appear In Public Again. Trump Has Denied The Remarks.)

“A Person Who Is Not Truthful Regarding His Position On The Protection Of Unborn Life, On Women, On Minorities, On Evangelical Christians, On Jews, On Working Men And Women.”

This Is Where The Statement Starts Going Beyond Veterans And Mere Confirmation Of Things Already Reported. Kelly Suggests Trump Doesn’t Just Denigrate Veterans, But Also Holds Very Different Views Than He Portrays Publicly About These Issues And Groups — And Perhaps Denigrates Them, Too.

It’s The Kind Of Comment That Seems To Invite Further Elaboration.

“A Person That Has No Idea What America Stands For And Has No Idea What America Is All About. A Person Who Cavalierly Suggests That A Selfless Warrior Who Has Served His Country For 40 Years In Peacetime And War Should Lose His Life For Treason — In Expectation That Someone Will Take Action.”

Again, The Subtext Here Is Striking. This Refers To Trump's Recent Comments Accusing Milley Of Treason. Trump Added That Milley's Actions Were "So Egregious That, In Times Gone By, The Punishment Would Have Been DEATH!"

Kelly's Comment That Trump Was Saying This "In Expectation That Someone Will Take Action" Sure Sounds Like He Is Accusing Trump Of Attempting To Incite Violence Against Now-Retired Milley.

"A Person Who Admires Autocrats And Murderous Dictators. A Person That Has Nothing But Contempt For Our Democratic Institutions, Our Constitution, And The Rule Of Law."

"There Is Nothing More That Can Be Said," Kelly Concluded. "God Help Us."

Kelly Has Criticized Trump Before, But His Starkest Comments Have Often Been Reported Secondhand. You Can Now Add Him To The List Of Former Top Aides Warning In Some Very Strong Terms About Another Trump Term — And Effectively Labeling Trump A Clear And Present Danger.

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