

TRUMP IS LYING TO THE U.S. MILITARY

He Demonstrates Contempt For Americans In Uniform While Claiming To Adore Them — But Wants Service Members To “Revolt” For Him At The Ballot Box.

By Tom Nichols Staff Writer, *The Atlantic*
10 June 2024

Donald Trump Has Yet Again Denied That He Called People Who Gave Their Life In The Service Of Their Country “Suckers” And “Losers.” But He Said Those Things — And Now He Wants To Goad The Military Into Voting For Him As A “Revolt.”

His Military

Donald Trump Routinely Attacks The Institutions Of American Government, Especially When He Feels That Those Institutions Have Not Served His Personal Interests. He Has, For Example, Repeatedly Claimed That American Elections Are Corrupt And Rigged, Thus Smearing The State, County, And Local Volunteers And Officials Who Make American Democracy A Model For The World. He Plans To Gut The Apolitical U.S. Civil Service And Place It Under His Political Control. And He Long Harbored A Special Hatred — Compounded By His New Status As A Convicted Felon — For Courts And The Rule Of Law. This Weekend, At A Rally In Las Vegas, He Continued His Attacks On The Justice And Referred To Special Counsel Jack Smith As “Deranged” And A “Dumb Son Of A Bitch.”

Give The 45th President Credit For Being Candid About His Scorn For Most Of America's Institutions. He Looks Down Upon The Members Of The United States Armed Forces As Well, But Where The Military Is Concerned, **Trump** Engages In A Monumental Hypocrisy: He Has Repeatedly Disdain And Even Disgust For Americans In The Military While Claiming To Adore Them. In Las Vegas, **Trump** Said Yet Again That No One Loves The Military More, Or Has Done More For Them, Than Him. Such Constructions — “No Has Done More For Group X; No One Loves Group Y; No One Understands Subject Z More Than I Do” — Are A Routine Part Of Trump's Mad Libs Approach To Public Speaking.

But These Bursts Of Verbal Chaff Are Especially Meaningless In The Context Of **Trump's** Well-Documented Contempt For The Military. Think Of His 2015 Shot At John McCain's Time As A Prisoner Of War (“I Like People Who Weren't Captured”), His Comments Floating The Idea Of *Executing* Former Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff General Mark Milley, And His Sneering Earlier This Year About Nikki Haley's Husband (An Army Officer Who Was Serving In Africa At The Time). As Michael Hirsh Wrote In 2020 In *Foreign Policy*, Even When **Trump** Was At The Military School Where His Parents Effectively Exiled Him When He Was A Teenager, He Showed, According To One Of His Fellow Students, “Contempt For Military Service, Discipline, And Tradition” And An “Ungoverned Sense Of Entitlement” That Included, According To Some Students, The Cardinal Military Sin Of Wearing Decorations And Medals He Had Not Earned.

This Weekend, He Was Particularly Incensed (Read: Humiliated) By The Resurfacing Of *Atlantic* Editor In Chief Jeffrey Goldberg's Reporting About **Trump** Referring To Dead American Soldiers As “*Losers*” And “*Suckers*.” Goldberg's Article Gained Renewed

Attention During Coverage Of President Joe Biden's D-Day Speeches In Europe, When Some Media Outlets Pointed Out The Obvious Differences Between The Two President's, Noting **Trump's** Unwillingness In 2018 To Visit An American Military Cemetery In France. At The Vegas Rally, **Trump** Fumed (As He Has For Years) At *The Atlantic's* Reporting On His Vulgar Disrespect For The Fallen, Calling It "A Made Up Deal From A Magazine That's Failing, Financial Disaster." He Also Referred To Goldberg As "A Horrible, Radical-Left Lunatic."

(These Are, Of Course, Standard **Trump** Insults, But For The Record, *The Atlantic Is Profitable*, And Though I Have Not Formally Interviewed Our Editor On His Political Views, I Suspect Most Readers Of His Work Would Not Place Him On The "Radical Left.")

"Now, Think Of It," **Trump** Continued, Referring To His Own Comments Disparaging The U.S. Military. "Unless You're A Psycho Or A Crazy Person Or A Very Stupid Person, Who Would Say That, Anyway? But Who Would Say It To Military People?"

Sometimes, A Rhetorical Question Is A Little Too Tempting. But Let's Move On.

The Fact Of The Matter Is That **Trump** *Did* Say Some Of This To A General, The Retired Four-Star Marine John Kelly, Who Served As His White House Chief Of Staff. In 2017, Trump, According To Goldberg's Reporting, Was Standing With Kelly In Arlington National Cemetery At The Grave Of Kelly's Son, A Marine Killed In Afghanistan. "I Don't Get It," The New President Said, Standing Among The Headstones. "What Was In It For Them?" A Year And A Half Later, **Trump** Went To Europe, Where He Referred To An

American Military As “FILLED WITH LOSERS.” On The Same Trip, He Said That More 1,800 Marines Who Lost Their Lives At Belleau Wood In World War I Were “SUCKERS” For Getting Killed.

Since Goldberg’s Initial Scoop, Kelly Has Confirmed All Of This *On The Record* (And Others Have Affirmed That They Heard Similar Comments As Well). But **Trump’s** Disgraces Don’t End With His Insults To The Dead And Their Families: Kelly Also Confirmed *The Atlantic’s* Reporting That Trump Didn’t Want To Be Seen At A Military Parade With Wounded Veterans, Including Amputees. Goldberg Reported, In A Separate Article, That **Trump** Objected To Appearing At An Event That Featured A Singing Performance By A Wounded Warrior, Captain Luis Avila. “Why Do You Bring People Like That Here?” **Trump** Said To Milley. “No One Wants To See That, The Wounded.” He Then Told Milley Never To Let Avila Appear In Public Again. (WHEN MILLEY RETIRED, HE INVITED AVILA TO SING AT HIS FAREWELL CEREMONY.) The Writers Peter Baker And Susan Glasser, In Their 2022 Book, *The Divider*, Relate A Similar Story: After Seeing A Bastille Day Parade In France In 2017, **Trump** Told Kelly He Wanted To Stage A Similar Military Parade, But Without Any Wounded Veterans. “I Don’t Want Them,” **Trump** Said. “IT DOESN’T LOOK GOOD FOR ME.”

Trump Followed His Angry Denials In Las Vegas With Some Burbling About Russia And Ukraine And Hoaxes, And Then Added A Direct Appeal To U.S. Servicepeople: “I Hope The Military Revolts At The Voting Booth And Just Says, ‘We’re Not Gonna Take It.’”

The Political Neutrality Of America's Armed Forces Has Been A Sacred Principle Of Civil-Military Relations In The United States Since George Washington First Took Command Of The Embryonic Continental Army In 1775. (For Years, Many Active-Duty Military Officers, Including Generals Dwight Eisenhower And George C Marshall, Have Refused As A Matter Of Principle Even To Vote.) And Although Politicians Have Often Made Promises To Military Families — Better Pay, Living Standards, Equipment — None Has Asked For An Electoral “Revolt.”

When Most Americans Refer To “The Military,” They Mean The Fellow Citizens Who Have Chosen To Serve The Nation. Trump Wants To Use “The Military” To Mean A Coherent And Tightly Bound Interest Group Of Armed People That Sees Itself As Distinct From American Society **AND LOYAL, ABOVE ALL ELSE, TO DONALD TRUMP.** (Think Of Some Of The Late-20th-Century Latin American Militaries Or The Uniformed Commissars Of The Former Soviet Union.)

Trump Distrusts The Senior Officer Corps Even More Deeply After The January 6 Insurrection. As I Wrote Last Winter, He Felt That They Thwarted His Efforts To Stay In Power. He Wants A “Revolt” From *His* Military That Will Empower Him, As The 47th President, To Purge The *Other* Military — THE ONE LOYAL TO THE CONSTITUTION. Despite All Of His Hypocrisy About The U.S. Armed Forces, **Trump** Is Being Up Front About At Least One Thing: If He Returns To The Oval Office, He Intends To Treat The Men And Women Of The American Military Not As Citizen-Soldiers Of A Democracy But **AS AN ARMED CONSTITUENCY THAT EXISTS TO SERVE ONLY ONE MAN AND HIS PERSONAL WHIMS.**