Thursday, August 15, 2024 / The late, great Hannibal Lecter

[HALF SECOND OF SILENCE]

[BILLBOARD]

MARGARET HARTMANN (senior editor at *New York* magazine’s site Intelligencer): Hi, I'm Margaret Hartmann. I'm a senior editor at *New York* magazine’s site Intelligencer. And my beat for the past few years has been Donald Trump being weird.

SEAN RAMESWARAM (host): [laughs]

SCORING IN <The Silence of the Lambs - main theme>

MARGARET: I've been writing a lot about strange rants that he keeps repeating at his rallies. And some of those include, claiming that magnets don't work underwater.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkIKEJPAUzM)*> Donald Trump: Gimme a glass of water, let me drop it in the magnets, that’s the end of the magnets.*

MARGARET: He did a bit of a pirate impression …   
 SEAN: <chortles>   
  
MARGARET: … when he was trying to describe something Robert E. Lee said, which the general did not actually say.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/atrupar/status/1779310887825809538)*> Donald Trump: And they were fighting, ‘Never fight uphill, me boys!’ But it was too late.*

MARGARET: And most recently, he has been praising:

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.c-span.org/video/?c5122328/donald-trump-late-great-hannibal-lecter)*> Donald Trump: … the late, great Hannibal Lecter.*

MARGARET: And that's a rant that just makes no sense on any level, no matter how you cut it.

SEAN: [laughs]

MARGARET: So I decided to dig into that recently.

SEAN: What Margaret found as she dug… and what it tells us about where the former president / convicted felon / Republican candidate is at these days, coming up on *Today, Explained*.

[THEME]

*<*[*BUMPER*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HieEiOaHxjI)*> The Silence of the Lambs Soundtrack - "Quid Pro Quo"*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLBotH5Bki8)*> Hannibal Lecter: You still wake up sometimes, don't you? You wake up in the dark and hear ~~–~~*

*Avishay Artsy: Today, Explained.*

*Clarice Starling: Yes.*

SEAN: Okay, Margaret. For people who don't watch, you know, early 90s seminal suspense thrillers…

MARGARET: Yep.

SEAN: …could you just tell people who Hannibal Lecter is?

MARGARET: Sure. So in 1991, there was a movie starring Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1710777385153368153)*> Donald Trump: Has anybody seen Silence … of the Lambs?*

MARGARET: It was about a serial killer who was also a cannibal named Hannibal Lecter.

*<CLIP> The Silence of the Lambs:*

*Jodie Foster: Who’s our subject?*

*Scott Glenn: The psychiatrist, Hannibal Lecter.*

*Jodie Foster: “Hannibal the Cannibal.”*

MARGARET: It's a great film, and it won a lot of Academy Awards.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28ZkmJJ8320)*> Elizabeth Taylor, 1992: And the Oscar goes to [drumroll] The Silence of the Lambs! [applause]*

MARGARET: You know, you’ve probably seen the image of Hannibal completely restrained in a straight jacket with a mask over his face. This is not really reflective of any way that mentally ill people are actually treated. This is really a fantasy. And, that's why it's so weird that Trump keeps citing it.

SEAN: [laughs]

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: The late, great Hannibal Lecter!*

SEAN: Can you kind of break down the basic components of Trump's riff on Hannibal Lecter? How does it usually go?

SCORING IN <Nazi Mayor (BMC)>

MARGARET: So there's a part in Trump's stump speech, which is about vilifying migrants…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: We have people that are being released into our country that we don’t want in our country.*

MARGARET: … and he says that they are coming from prisons…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: They’re coming from prisons and jails…*

MARGARET: …they're coming from mental institutions…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: …mental institutions and insane asylums...*

MARGARET: That was originally the part of the stump speech that in, he’d just say that and move on. He's trying to scare people, make them think of migrants not as normal people with families fleeing persecution, trying to get into the United States to create a new home for themselves and their families. It's another variation on Mexicans are rapists, which, like, kicked off his whole political career.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1syqkd1uf8w)*> Donald Trump: They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.*

MARGARET: So when he gets to the part of his stump speech where he says that migrants are coming from prisons and mental institutions, he stops himself and says, actually, they're coming from insane asylums, and that's worse than mental institutions.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sikEBPEa8WY)*> Donald Trump: They always say, ‘Sir, please don't use the term insane asylum.’*

MARGARET: Then he asks:

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: Silence of the Lamb! Has anyone ever seen The Silence of the Lambs? The late, great Hannibal Lecter.*

MARGARET: And then he sometimes adds more into that and says that he's a great man.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: He’s a wonderful man.*

MARGARET: Then he'll repeat lines from the movie…

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: He oftentimes would have a friend for dinner. [crowd laughs] Remember the last scene? ‘Excuse me, I’m about to have a friend for dinner’ as this poor doctor walked by…*

MARGARET: And then the crowd chuckles and Trump moves on.

SCORING OUT

SEAN: When did he start doing this bit about Hannibal Lecter in his stump speeches?

MARGARET: So the press first noticed him doing this in October of 2023.

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsFOVEnx8Qc)> *Donald Trump: You know, insane asylum is like Silence of the Lambs stuff. That’s serious stuff.*

MARGARET: That was the first time that anyone caught him praising Hannibal Lecter…

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsFOVEnx8Qc)> *Donald Trump: Hannibal Lecter. How good an actor was he?*

MARGARET: …but it didn't really get that much coverage because it actually weirdly coincided with the Hamas attack on Israel. So obviously the news was focused elsewhere.

SEAN: Ah-huh.

MARGARET: He kept saying it for many months, and then it really started to catch on in May of 2024, during a rally in Wildwood, New Jersey.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1789431010209182195)*> Donald Trump: The late, great Hannibal Lecter!*

MARGARET: And then he just kept running with it and kept repeating it and repeating it, and eventually he mentioned it during his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention last month.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/atrupar/status/1814142837501342081)*> Donald Trump, RNC: You know, the press is always on me cuz I say this, has anyone seen Silence of the Lambs?*

MARGARET: My mouth just dropped open. It was very late at night and I thought, like, am I hallucinating? What is happening right now? How is he possibly saying this at the Republican National Convention?

SEAN: [laughs] I guess I have to ask, do we know if the president realizes that Hannibal Lecter is not a real person?

MARGARET: At times it seems that he does not know, but I'm pretty sure he does. I don't think he knows the name of the actor who plays Hannibal Lecter, so he'll say:

<[CLIP](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1710777385153368153)> *Donald Trump: Hannibal Lecter. How great an actor was he?*

MARGARET: I believe he is referring to Anthony Hopkins.

SEAN: <laughs>

MARGARET: One of the, well, funny or troubling things about this rant is none of the actors who played Hannibal Lecter have ever praised Trump. I believe that he's mixing up Jon Voight and Anthony Hopkins.

SEAN: Huh!

MARGARET: Because Jon Voight is a Trump fan.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13E3OiTo1Yc)*> Jon Voight: President Trump is the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln.*

MARGARET: But at one point, Trump said that he has to praise Hannibal Lecter, meaning the actor, because he went on TV and said that he loves Trump.

<[CLIP](https://x.com/Acyn/status/1710777385153368153)> *Donald Trump: He said that a long time ago and once he said that he was in my camp, I was in his camp. I don’t care if he was the worst actor, I’d say he was great to me.*

MARGARET: And Anthony Hopkins has said nothing of the sort. But Jon Voight is a very prominent Republican in Hollywood, so I believe that's who he's picturing.

SEAN: Well, out of respect to Anthony Hopkins, *Sir* Anthony Hopkins…

MARGARET: Yes.

SEAN: Do we know how Sir Tony feels about the former president?

MARGARET: We do. So years ago, he had said that he doesn't vote. He doesn't really pay attention to Trump. That was the nicest thing he'd ever said about Trump was that he doesn't pay attention to him.

SEAN: Hm.

MARGARET: But when he found out a few months ago that he had become a part of Trump's stump speech, he started laughing, said he didn't know that. And then he said, “Hannibal, that's a long time ago movie. God, that was over 30 years ago. I'm shocked and appalled. What you've told me about Trump.”

SEAN: [laughs]

MARGARET: That was his comment on it.

SEAN: [laughs] So maybe not a huge fan.

MARGARET: No, it does not seem so.

SEAN: And we should note here that Sir Anthony Hopkins is alive. Is the character Hannibal Lecter dead? Is that why he's the late, great Hannibal Lecter?

MARGARET: Why Trump keeps saying he's dead is a bit of a mystery. The character is not dead in any of the movies, any of the books, any of the TV series. I have no idea what he's referring to. Very sadly, one of the five actors who played Lecter has passed away, but it was a French actor who played him in a kind of obscure Hannibal film. So I don't think that Trump is referring to that. I think he's just confused.

SEAN: Okay. Do we have any idea why the former president is doing this? Do you have theories? You're probably the person who has spent the most time thinking about this on the planet.

MARGARET: Yes. Maybe, unfortunately.

SCORING IN <Neutral Betty (BMC)>

MARGARET: So a theory has been going around the past few weeks online that Trump started saying this because he's confused about the asylum process in immigration versus insane asylums, and that that's why he just started ranting about Lecter.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUgZQRG90js)*> The Project (Australia): “He’s confusing asylum seekers with the people from nuthouses…” “Yeah.” “…in South America coming across the border. And everytime he mentions asylum, he thinks of Hannibal Lecter.” “Yeah.”*

MARGARET: I do not think that that is the case, if you look at how this evolved. A lot of Trump riffs evolve because he's doing these stump speeches, he's doing these interviews, and he just, like, kind of like a stand up comedian, he just keeps repeating and repeating and repeating and adding little embellishments. So I went back through a lot of speeches he's made over the past two years, and you can see when the claim that migrants are coming from prisons and institutions first emerges. That's the base of this strange rant. In January 2023, he started saying that Central American countries are emptying out their prisons …

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/JimGBoyle/status/1620467246987620354)*> Donald Trump: … and they’re emptying out their mental institutions.*

MARGARET: Then a few months later, he started mentioning Silence of the Lambs and commenting, they don't want me to say insane asylums.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.c-span.org/video/?c5061885/user-clip-trumps-insane-mental-asylum-rant)*> Donald Trump: … a word you’re not supposed to use anymore, words you’re not supposed to use.*

MARGARET: Somehow he thinks that insane asylums are a much worse version of mental institutions.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/realsandibachom/status/1765089433072591296)*> Donald Trump: An insane asylum is a mental institution on steroids.*

MARGARET: Of course, it's just an outdated term for the same thing. So then he just threw out the name …

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/realsandibachom/status/1765089433072591296)*> Donald Trump: Hannibal Lecter!*

MARGARET: … but he wouldn't really elaborate on it. He'd just throw out the name as a reference to kind of get a scary picture in listeners’ minds.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/atrupar/status/1818797254330728931/video/1)*> Donald Trump: Hannibal Lecter was a serious psycho, right?*

MARGARET: He's not just talking about people in regular mental institutions. He's talking about the scariest, most terrifying villains you can think of.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/atrupar/status/1818797254330728931/video/1)*> Donald Trump: They’re coming into our country.*

MARGARET: He just kept adding to that rant and adding to that rant. And over many months, we got to the point last October where he is full-on praising Hannibal Lecter.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/VABVOX/status/1789442824993144834/video/1)*> Donald Trump: The late, great Hannibal Lecter. He’s a wonderful man.*

SCORING OUT

MARGARET: So the central thing he's saying is a, just something completely vile, but it has the cadence of a joke. He's saying that Central American countries are sending people from insane asylums who they know are horrifying criminals who are going to commit violence against Americans. There is no evidence for that.

SEAN: Huh!

MARGARET: Multiple outlets have fact checked that. It seems to have grown out of actually something Fidel Castro did, but way back in 1980. So in 1980, there was something called the Mariel boatlift. And Fidel Castro did send some people from mental institutions to the United States, and they wound up in Florida.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwuuAplCSpc)*> 1980 news clip: U.S. officials say that among the 120,000 Mariel refugees were hundreds of hardened criminals and mental patients, placed in the flotilla by Cuban government officials.*

MARGARET: So you can see the Mariel boatlift was referenced in a piece Tucker Carlson did on Fox News in 2022, where he was advocating for the great replacement theory.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLI2LWcO6Cc)*> Tucker Carlson: So, let’s say you wanted to harm the United States. What would you do? Well, what did Fidel Castro do in 1980 with the Mariel boatlift? He opened his prisons and mental hospitals and sent them to Miami, thereby changing Miami forever.*

MARGARET: He's talking about how Central American countries are emptying out their prisons and mental institutions.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLI2LWcO6Cc)*> Tucker Carlson: Venezuela is doing something very similar. Venezuela is opening its prisons and sending them here.*

MARGARET: There's no evidence that this is actually true, but that kind of got into the right wing rhetoric and started appearing in Trump's rally speech.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/atrupar/status/1818797254330728931/video/1)*> Donald Trump: And they’re coming in from insane asylums which are closing all over the world. It’s not just South America.*

MARGARET: As much as it's ridiculous and you want to laugh at it, it's really horrific what he's saying. But that's kind of like Trump in a nutshell. He's saying absolutely appalling things, but somehow making you want to laugh along with him. And that's kind of the weird dichotomy we've been dealing with throughout his political campaign.

SCORING IN <After These Messages (BMC)>

MARGARET: The wildest part to me is that by the end of the movie, Hannibal has escaped a U.S. asylum and he's stalking his next victim in the Bahamas. So at its core, this is a story about the U.S. exporting or unleashing its most dangerous criminals to a foreign country.

SEAN: [laughs]

MARGARET: Not the opposite.

SCORING BUMP

SEAN: Margaret Hartman, *Intelligencer*, *New York* magazine. You can subscribe at N Y mag dot com. We reached out to the Trump campaign to see if they could help us understand the Hannibal riff. We were being very demure. Very mindful. Anyway, they never wrote back. So when *we’re* back on *Today, Explained*, we’re gonna ask a health and science journalist what this whole bit tells us about how the former president’s doing these days.

[BREAK]

*<BUMPER> 4 Note Theme\_\_Viola Shorty*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9zyvQusm-a/?igsh=MWQ1ZGUxMzBkMA==)*> Donald Trump: I mean, I see this, it’s so incredible. Ding ding ding ding ding ding. Bong. Ok. Pssshing. Pooom.*

SEAN: *Today, Explained* is back and Gideon Gil is with us. He’s the managing editor at STAT.

GIDEON GIL (managing editor at STAT): So we're a digital news health site. We cover medicine, life sciences, health care. But we also, we cover a lot about health policy and politics as well. So we do from time to time write about the president.

SEAN: STAT’s been writing about the former president for a while now.

GIDEON: Yes. So we actually, as far back as 2017, we wrote a story that was a linguistic analysis of then, the new President Trump. And we talked to experts in cognition and linguistics and psychology who noted that his speech patterns had changed quite a bit since, you know, since the 1970s and 80s, when he would speak in complete sentences and fairly complex sentences.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apvHr6PALIc)*> Donald Trump, 1980: Becoming wealthy or becoming successful or becoming whatever the word is when you say becoming anything, I think it largely has to do with incentive and drive and enthusiasm.*

GIDEON: And he was now, his speech patterns were a lot of breaks and jumping around.

<[CLIP](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgNcC7f2SDQ)> *Donald Trump, 2017: And we had the most beautiful piece of chocolate cake that you've ever seen and President Xi was enjoying it and I was given the message from the generals that the ships are locked and loaded…*

GIDEON: And so we thought, well, it's been seven years. And there was a lot of discussion about President Biden's possible cognitive decline after his debate performance. And, both he and former President Trump have aged. And so we thought it was worth going back and taking a look at what's become of his speech patterns.

SEAN: And what did you find?

GIDEON: Yes. So, you know, the thinking behind this is that the presidential candidates haven't released their medical records. President Trump does say that he's taken not one, but two cognitive tests.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3eCCbVr3EU)*> Donald Trump at NABJ: I took two of them and I aced them.*

GIDEON: But he doesn't provide any details or even say what the tests were. So there's been a lot of research, actually, that changes in linguistic patterns go hand in hand with cognitive decline. And so we thought looking at his speech patterns was a window into his brain when we can't see his medical records. We talked to a number of experts on memory and cognition. And they said that from listening to various clips of Trump since, this year compared to 2017, that they've noticed a continuing increase in jumps in the middle of a sentence from one topic to another.

SEAN: So he's doing it even more than he used to.

GIDEON: He's doing it more than he used to. And there's this word they used to describe this call tangentiality.

SEAN: Huh.

GIDEON: But it basically means these sort of digressions that come out of nowhere.

SEAN: It sounds like a good descriptor for his four years in office!

GIDEON: Yeah. [laughs] Uh, I'm not going to go there.

SEAN: [laughs] I'll do it for you.

GIDEON: Okay.

SEAN: [laughs]

SCORING IN <Whizz-o (BMC)>

GIDEON: In the article, my colleague Olivia Goldhill, who was the reporter and writer in the piece, cited some examples. So one was a speech that he gave, earlier this year where he began in this passage mocking President Biden's ability to walk through sand.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNVhPEvvzM)*> Donald Trump: …when he was in the sand and he was having a hard time lifting his feet through the sand cuz you know sand is heavy…*

GIDEON: And suddenly, in mid-sentence, he shifts to talking about Cary Grant, the old Hollywood icon.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNVhPEvvzM)*> Donald Trump: …and he's sitting in the bathing suit, look at 81, do you remember Cary Grant, how good was Cary Grant right…*

GIDEON: It was just within an instant that that happened.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNVhPEvvzM)*> Donald Trump: …I don’t think Cary Grant, he was good … I don't know what happened to movie stars today…*

GIDEON: And then there was another speech he gave earlier this year where he was riffing on something called debanking,

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4JCTC97jQY)*> Donald Trump: …they want to debank you and we're going to debank, think of this…*

GIDEON: which, you know, has to do with this idea that banks are ending people's accounts because of their political ideology.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4JCTC97jQY)*> Donald Trump: …think of this, they want to take away your rights, they want to take away your country, the things they’re doing, all electric cars, give me a break…*

GIDEON: And he suddenly started talking about electric cars and the cost of electric cars.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4JCTC97jQY)*> Donald Trump: …if you want an electric car good, but they don't go far, they're very expensive, they're going to be made in China, that's why I think I'm going to get the auto workers to vote for Trump. You know we’re having great, great talks.… [FADE OUT THE END]*

SCORING OUT

SEAN: What does this tangentiality – be it about, you know, Hannibal Lecter, Cary Grant, electric cars, debanking – tell us about where the former president’s at mentally? And I know that we're talking about this without having given him a cognitive test ourselves.

GIDEON: Yeah. So because the way you speak is controlled by different parts of your brain, so your linguistic fluency, reflects in some ways the workings of your brain. So your prefrontal cortex, which is where your, the seat of your higher order cognitive functions like working memory, judgment, understanding, planning, as well as the temporal lobe, which is where, as you're speaking, you go to search for and retrieve the right word for what you want to say. Your verbal fluency reflects the functioning of those things, and as you age, it's natural for those parts of your brain to not quite work as smoothly. And so we've got to be careful because, you know, none of the experts we talked to have examined the former president. They emphasize that we can't conclusively say anything. But there is the possibility it's indicative of some sort of cognitive decline. On the other hand, you know, the explanations can be totally benign. They can range from, he's under a lot of stress, he didn't get a lot of sleep.

SEAN: Mmmm.

GIDEON: So they're very benign explanations like that. But then the possible explanations also range to, it could be early cognitive decline, possibly early dementia.

SEAN: I mean, the man was recently convicted of dozens of felonies, so presumably he's under some stress, not to mention running for president against a new candidate, poor guy!

GIDEON: [laughs]

SEAN: Do you think there's a chance this is all just part of his personality? Like, it's all a bit of an act?

GIDEON: You know, I think one feature that a number of people talked about in his speeches is repetition, which is clearly, I think, you know, maybe, related to that. He gets a laugh or applause, so he would repeat it.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://x.com/sadmonsters/status/1817627271764603244)*> Donald Trump: And he’d love to have you for dinner. You, right there. [crowd laughs] Love to have you for dinner…*

GIDEON: But I do think that it likely goes beyond that because it's progressing, according to the experts we talked to. So if it was just his conscious style that he was adopting, I don't know that it would change that much over time. You know, there are some other aspects of his speech that are actually, what they call “all or nothing” thinking, which is indicated by the use of absolute terms like always, never, completely.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEsd7esFjbw)*> Donald Trump, RNC 2024:*

*...we’ve suffered the worst inflation we’ve ever had…*

*…NAFTA, the worst trade deal ever made…*

*…there’s never been an invasion like this anywhere…*

*…withdrawal from Afghanistan, the worst humiliation in the history of our country…*

*…under my presidency, we had the most secure border and best economy in the history of our country, in the history of the world…*

GIDEON: And, we interviewed a University of Texas social psychologist named James Pennebaker, who took complete transcripts of 35 interviews that Trump has given since 2015 through this year. And he actually ran it through statistical software that looked at things like word frequency and such. And one of the things he found was that there was a roughly 60 percent increase, since 2015, in the use of these absolute terms. And that he, in addition, he now uses far fewer positive words than he previously had, and includes more references to negative emotions. And this can be, he says, a sign of depression, which is interesting to think about. But he also pointed out that another person whose “all or nothing” thinking has gone up significantly is President Biden's.

SEAN: No longer a contender for president, it turns out.

GIDEON: Indeed.

SCORING IN <Wheels Within Wheels (BMC)>

SEAN: Do you think voters should be concerned about what you guys found?

GIDEON: I don't want to tell voters what they should be concerned about. That's really not my role. But the one thing that's clear to me is he's, he's often very hard to understand. You know, even just last week, he was asked a question about the abortion pill mifepristone. And his answer was very confusing.

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgrMzNXM1jA)*> Donald Trump: Sure, you could, you could do things that will be, would, would supplement absolutely, and those things are pretty, uh open and humane. But you have to be able to have a vote and all I want to do is give everybody a vote. And the votes are taking place right now as we speak.*

GIDEON: And as a result, there have been days of articles about, ‘What did he mean?’ So that's sort of to me, the one very clear thing is his communication style can be very confusing. That's something voters should take into account.

SCORING BUMP

SEAN: Gideon Gil. STAT news dot com.

Avishay Artsy made our show today with help from Victoria Chamberlin. We were edited by Matthew Collette, fact checked by Laura Bullard, and mixed by Andrea Kristinsdottir and Rob Byers.

I’m Sean Rameswaram. The rest of the team at Today, Explained includes Haleema Shah, Miles Bryan, Hady Mawajdeh, Amanda Lewellyn, Peter Balonon-Rosen, Patrick Boyd, Amina Al-Sadi, Miranda Kennedy, and the late, great Noel King.

We use music by Breakmaster Cylinder, we’re distributed by WNYC, and we belong to *Vox*.

*<SFX> Knife sound*

*<*[*CLIP*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99Ptctl5_qQ)*> Hannibal Lecter: A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti. Fffffff.*

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[10 SECONDS OF SILENCE]