

# [***Opinion: Trump does the impossible. He sinks even lower***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B9N-37H1-DY7V-G039-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Former President Donald Trump reminded us again this weekend that there's no bottom to his vileness. This latest installment in Trump sinking to new lows came on Saturday when he was campaigning in South Carolina in advance of that state's February 24 Republican presidential primary.

Trump first alarmingly [*stated*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/trump-russia-nato/index.html) that he would encourage Russian to do "whatever the hell they want" to NATO allies that didn't meet the alliance's military spending guidelines. He then turned his attention to his GOP presidential opponent Nikki Haley.

That is when Trump did something we've never seen from a major political party candidate: Use the active military deployment of a spouse to [*ridicule*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/trump-south-carolina-primary-haley/index.html) an opponent. Trump - who never served in the US military - told the crowd that [*Haley had visited him*](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/trump-asks-whereabouts-haleys-husband-serving-overseas-rcna138247) at Mar-a-Lago along with her husband, Maj. Michael Haley, and had allegedly assured him that she would never run against him.

Trump - who is currently [*out on bail*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-georgia-surrender-indictment-08-24-23/h_850e98593c4f1a24ccc456c1ff4e8d34) in connection with criminal charges he faces in Georgia (he denies any wrongdoing) - then declared to the crowd, "Where's her husband? Oh, he's away. He's away." Trump then leaned into the mocking, quipping, "What happened to her husband? What happened to her husband?! Where is he?! He's gone. He knew. He knew."

What exactly Michael Haley "knew" is anyone's guess, especially given Trump's [*recent mental gaffes*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/21/opinions/nikki-haley-trump-mental-fitness-obeidallah/index.html) and confusion, such as bizarrely claiming Nikki Haley was in charge of security for the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 when she didn't hold any position in government. Some have [*suggested*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/10/us/politics/trump-haley-husband.html) that Trump was insinuating the major left for full time deployment - the second of his career - to "escape" Haley.

The desperation of the attack suggests Haley has gotten deep under Trump's thin skin. In recent weeks, she repeatedly has called out his gaffes - even going as far as handing out [*mental competency tests*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/trump-south-carolina-primary-haley/index.html) to voters at a recent rally - as she bucks him by continuing her campaign for the Republican nomination.

Haley responded swiftly to Trump's attack on her husband, [*whom she's described*](https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2023/06/18/nikki-haley-s-husband-begins-africa-deployment-as-she-campaigns-for-2024-gop-nomination) as her "rock," by [*posting*](https://x.com/NikkiHaley/status/1756434033108549955?s=20) on social media, "Michael is deployed serving our country, something you know nothing about." She added, "Someone who continually disrespects the sacrifices of military families has no business being commander in chief."

Haley - who has frequently [*spoken*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/04/us/politics/nikki-haley-husband-michael.html) at campaign events about her love for her husband - also addressed the comments at a rally in her home state. "If you mock the service of a combat veteran, you don't deserve a driver's license, let alone being president of the United States," she [*told*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/trump-south-carolina-primary-haley/index.html) the audience. The former US ambassador to the United Nations then challenged Trump to show the nation whether he has any guts, saying, "Donald, if you have something to say, don't say it behind my back; get on a debate stage and say it to my face."

Even Michael Haley, who typically does [*not make comments*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/04/us/politics/nikki-haley-husband-michael.html) to the media, [*responded*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/10/politics/trump-south-carolina-primary-haley/index.html) on social media to Trump's words, posting a meme that read, "The difference between humans and animals? Animals would never allow the dumbest ones to lead the pack."

Trump has a long history of ridiculing veterans and those in the military if he doesn't like what they have said about him. We saw that with his infamous comments about late Arizona GOP Sen. John McCain during the 2016 campaign, when he [*stated*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/19/politics/donald-trump-john-mccain-dead/index.html), "He's not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured."

Then there were Trump's more recent [*comments*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/28/politics/milley-donald-trump-execution-comment/index.html) appearing to accuse former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley of treason and threatening execution because Milley had given reassurances to his Chinese counterpart that the US was "100 percent steady" in the days after the January 6 attack. However, the criticism of Haley is different. This time, Trump attacked the spouse of a candidate who is an active-duty service member.

Will Trump lose support for his attack on Haley and her husband? If history is any guide, the answer is no. GOP Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida told us as much Sunday morning while appearing on CNN. Did Rubio say there is no place for using service women and men as props for political attacks? Nope.

Instead, Rubio [*gave Trump a pass*](https://www.mediaite.com/news/marco-rubio-completely-bends-the-knee-to-trump-on-border-deal-supporting-russia-and-even-attacking-haleys-husband-in-stunning-cnn-interview/), saying, this is simply part of the nastiness of American ***politics***, noting that Haley has called Trump a "grumpy old man" so it's okay that "Trump gives as good as he gets."

After years of firestorms over Trump's revolting remarks, from mocking a [*disabled*](https://www.cnn.com/video/news/2015/11/25/donald-trump-mocks-reporter-disability.cnnmoney) reporter to smears of [*Gold Star parents*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/07/31/politics/donald-trump-khizr-khan-family-controversy/index.html) to [*ridiculing*](https://www.politico.com/news/2023/09/29/trump-mocks-pelosi-family-as-he-rallies-conservative-support-in-california-00119243) Paul Pelosi - former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, who suffered a skull fracture after being brutally attacked in his home - it appears that cruelty and vileness might even be the reason that so many in the GOP base support him.

While that can be debated, one thing is certain: Trump will make even more cruel and despicable comments before the 2024 campaign is over.

Opinion by Dean Obeidallah

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