

## **Trump Overpromised And Underdelivered In Tulsa; The Viewer-In- Chief Reacts To TV Coverage; Trump's Ignorance Proves Need For Media Literacy; New Revelations From John Bolton's Book; Trump Appointee, Michael Pack Takes Control At VOA. Aired 11a-12p ET**

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**Byline:** Brian Stelter, Astead Herndon, Carl Bernstein

**Guests:** Jasmine El-Gamal, Anthony Scaramucci, Guy Snodgrass, Karen Kornbluh, Sarah Ellison

**Highlight:** President Trump's Tulsa rally fell short of expectations, all those empty seats and the crowds did not show up as expected. Carl Bernstein talks about the president as the viewer-in-chief, reading tea leaves about his own presidency via the TV. In John Bolton's book, he quotes President Trump saying the press people should be executed.

### **Body**

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BRIAN STELTER, CNN ANCHOR: Hey, I'm Brian Stelter. Happy Father's Day.

This is RELIABLE SOURCES, our weekly look at the story behind the story.

And on this Father's Day, two dads are intervening to defend their toddlers from the president. That's right. Why this distorted video shared by POTUS doubles as a demand for media literacy.

[11:00:02]

Plus, brand-new information about John Bolton's book ahead of his first sit-down TV interview. His book tour is beginning and we got details.

And later, what is going on at the Voice of America? This man, Trump appointee, Michael Pack, is making sweeping changes at America's federally funded media outlets. One person who was fired in the so- called Wednesday night massacre speaks out in just a few minutes.

But, first, we are seeing a convergence of three stories -- the pandemic, protests and politics. All of it in Tulsa, Oklahoma, all of it with a side of TikTok trolling.

That's right. From Australia to Great Britain, all around the world, headlines about President Trump's rally falling short of expectations, all those empty seats. The crowds did not show up as expected.

Why does this matter? Why is it a lead story?

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Because it matters to him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: And we expect to have -- you know, it's a record-setting crowd. We've never had an empty seat and we certainly won't in Oklahoma.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: That was a lie. There are usually empty seats at his events and there were lots of them in Tulsa. Trump set out to produce a television show, and he went out to have a campaign relaunch spectacle there, but he fell short, partly because folks are rightly concerned to be in a room with thousands of others during the coronavirus pandemic.

And it seems that one of the other reasons why there were so many empty seats is a no-show protest. A no-show protest. This all started with a video on TikTok created by Mary Jo Laupp who's been effectively called a TikTok grandma.

So, she made a video more than a week ago urging viewers to go to Trump's site, sign up to attend the rally but pointedly not show up at the rally. Her video was showed thousands of times, and her video led to others, to younger TikTok users going on posting similar videos, K- Pop fans were on there as well trying to sabotage Trump's rally.

And, look, it did seem to work to some degree. We don't know exactly how well, but Trump's campaign manager Brad Parscale was out there talking about how many people were signing up. You know, Trump was bragging there were a million people RSVP'ing, they were gathering all this data about people they can use for the campaign.

But, apparently, it was a bunch of kids, a bunch of teenagers signing up as a protest. Clearly not everybody showed up in Tulsa. Maybe people heard the huge numbers and said they didn't want to go through the hassle of the crowds.

It's unclear exactly what happened. There are multiple factors. We're going live to Tulsa in a moment.

But, first, I spoke with Mary Jo Laupp about her role in what's being called a no-show protest.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: So, Mary Jo, what happened?

MARY JO LAUPP, STARTED TIKTOK CAMPAIGN AGAINST TRUMP RALLY: I had educated myself on Black Wall Street and understood why black content creators on various platforms were really upset and frustrated with the original plan of Juneteenth rally in Tulsa.

STELTER: Yes.

LAUPP: And I posted a video late Thursday night, the 11th, that was sort of meant to be a frustrated rant. I had 1,000 followers on TikTok at that point. Most of my videos were seen a couple hundred times maybe.

STELTER: And then this went viral on multiple platforms.

LAUPP: Yes. By 7:00 the next morning, it had been seen hundreds of times, and shared hundred of times, and then the K-Pop fans jumped on from Twitter. And when they get involved, you know it's getting serious.

STELTER: So, this idea is everybody is going to sign up for tickets, claim they want to attend the rally, but then, of course, not show up.

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How much of an impact do you think this online prank actually had in Tulsa yesterday?

LAUPP: I honestly can't tell you because this is -- these social media systems are generational. So, when I shared a video, let's say my video was shared 700 times but each of those people would have people sharing their copies of it, so that's 700 more people I never saw.

STELTER: Right.

LAUPP: So, it's impossible to tell for sure just because of this generational impact that both Twitter and TikTok have.

All I know is I was at a birthday party for one of my grand kids and my phone started blowing up with friends wanting to (INAUDIBLE), I had seen what was going on and I had been paying attention.

STELTER: Right. Do you think this is how it's going to be from now on, whenever the president holds a rally, there's going to be this attempt to prank him, to troll him, to trick him?

LAUPP: I don't think it was just an issue of pranking him.

STELTER: Yes, true.

LAUPP: I think you've got a lot of kids in the younger generation, 20- year-olds and teens, who are very aware -- they're much more aware and much more self-educated when it comes to things like black culture.

So, they -- yes, they're treating it not as a prank but a lot of messages I got from parents and from their kids were, I never knew this much about black Wall Street. This is so sad.

And so, they're excited about the impact it had, but I also think it's -- they're becoming much more aware of those marginalized communities and they're learning to speak out.

STELTER: Right, it's really a form of protest, and what we've seen as a protest. And we don't know how much of an impact it had but it clearly had some impact in Tulsa.

[11:05:01]

Now, going forward you're the so-called TikTok grandma. How are these platforms changing the way you interact with the world? Like how has this changed your life?

LAUPP: I have had a lot of teenagers reach out and say that they don't feel supported by their parents because they have different political ideologies than their parents do, and so they've asked me as an adult how would I -- how should I talk to my parents to get them to understand where I'm coming from? Which I think that's -- that's a powerful question for teenagers to be able to ask, someone who's not emotionally invested in their relationship. But I think social media has made it very clear -- I posted one video and it got shared way more times than I could have done anything with it. And I think that's a very careful lesson we all need to be aware. Number one, I had no intention of going viral. So, there's the lesson, be careful what you post because you never know.

But I also think it definitely has created this huge sense of community. There's a lot of posts all over my social media of, we did it. And kids who aren't even old enough to vote in this upcoming election feel they've had a voice and a chance to say, we don't approve of some of the things that are happening in our country and this no-show protest was a way of making our voices heard.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

STELTER: And their voices were heard, indeed.

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Let's get the inside view now from Tulsa, with Astead Herndon, national political reporter for "The New York Times". And from an outside perspective, how this is view everywhere else in the world, we're going to bring in Jasmine El-Gamal in just a moment.

But, Astead, you're in Tulsa. You saw the crowds. You saw the lack of crowds.

What to you is the biggest headline from Trump's attempt to campaign relaunch in Tulsa?

ASTEAD HERNDON, CNN POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes, I think what the -- the expectations that the campaign had set, which were admittedly sky high, were just simply not met.

STELTER: Yes.

HERNDON: Not in the enthusiasm, not in the crowd size, and really not in the -- in the kind of intimidation that they were trying to give to Joe Biden and to Democrats.

I was struck earlier in the day by how the response from Black Tulsa, from Liberal Tulsa, was to just let Trump have his day. Not to have the protests, not to start that many clashes because they didn't want to give him the spectacle he desired.

And it turns out as that day went on, that looked like a fairly smart play. We were not seeing the type of clashes that some conservatives have come to expect and we also didn't see the crowds that they came to expect. That caused the focus to be intently on what was happening inside the arena, both the lack --

STELTER: Right.

HERNDON: -- of enthusiasm that we saw in there and the message.

STELTER: As you wrote in "The New York Times" website this morning, he played the hits. He played all those usual, you know, kind of narratives. Did you take precautions, Astead? Did you wear a mask? Tell me about the precautions in the age of COVID-19.

HERNDON: Yes, "The Times" has been vigilant about us reporters out going through training around wearing masks. I had an N95 on. We had training about how to interact with people and I was trying to keep that distance. But at the same time, these precautions aren't going to be held up to when the person you're speaking to is not wearing a mask and they're not doing that also.

I mean, I remember looking at some surrogates who were shaking hands, kissing babies, kissing babies, taking selfies, and that kind of typical politicking that, frankly, I haven't seen in a long time. Not only there haven't been events but even the ones I've gone to, I've seen Republicans be in Georgia and South Carolina recently, they have taken some precautions. That was not true because the president made it such a political act to do things like wearing a mask and social distancing.

Some of his supporters were saying when they received the free mask, they threw it right in the trash when they got it.

STELTER: And just one more question for you. Did you encounter a lot of COVID denialism, a lot of people in denial about the danger?

HERNDON: Uh-huh. There was some. I mean, I think it ranged on a spectrum. There were some who acknowledged the reality of the virus but just said that they did not think it was as real or built up as they blamed the media or others to do. And there were some who just flat out said, I don't think this is happening.

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One man told me about a kind of conspiracy of hospitals being paid to inflate the death numbers. You heard the name Bill Gates come up a number of times, as conservatives try to pin it on him. The denialism, it ranged but universally they stuck with the president saying the country should be opened, at the minimum.

STELTER: I wanted to bring in Jasmine, who's in London. Jasmine El- Gamal, senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, to get a sense of how the rest of the world sees these events, because when Trump holds a rally, it is a spectacle, it's a stage, a worldwide event. I mentioned newspapers in Australia, networks in Great Britain, the whole world watches these things.

So, Jasmine, how do you think these events are seen outside the U.S.?

JASMINE EL-GAMAL, SENIOR FELLOW, ATLANTIC COUNCIL: Thanks, Brian.

I mean, one thing that truly struck me in watching these rallies and watching everything that's unfolding in the U.S. is how different it feels watching it from the outside than actually being in it. And watching it from the outside, whether it's myself or whether it's anybody here in London or in other countries, it feels kind of surreal.

It doesn't actually feel like you're watching the United States. [11:10:01]

This idea that everybody has of America, of the way American presidents behave, of the way narratives unfold in the country, it's been really shocking to see how it's devolved over -- whether it's the last few years or just the last few weeks in terms of what the president is saying, both to Americans but also about Americans.

It kind of feels being here in London like I could be watching any other country, honestly. That's what's so disturbing about it. I could be watching, you know, the president, whether it's in Venezuela, Egypt or Syria, the types of narratives are being used to kind of pit people against each other. I think it's something we haven't really seen before to this extent and it's incredibly vivid watching it from the outside.

And the reason that's so disturbing, I think, to me and to many others as well watching from the outside, is the types of narratives the president is using. Even his son, Eric Trump, yesterday, called some of the protesters animals. The type --

STELTER: Yes, let me read the quote. Here's the exact quote.

He said: We're going to keep the moral fabric of this country because when you watch the nonsense on TV, when you see these animals literally taking over our cities, burning down churches, this isn't America. That's not what Americans do.

He's using the word animals in relationship to some of the anti-racist protests that have gone on. Of course, there was sporadic looting weeks ago. We saw that in a number of cities. I guess that's what he's talking about in this quote. But the use of the word animals, the dehumanization that's going on, I feel like that sounds -- you hear that differently than maybe even some folks in the United States do.

EL-GAMAL: I do. I hear it differently for a couple of reasons. But not least of all, I mean, I worked at the Department of Defense for eight years. And we -- our job was to kind of, whether it was at the Pentagon or White House or State Department, to look at other countries and monitor unrest and look at how, you know, leaders were speaking to their populations, what they were saying about their opponents but also how people are speaking about each other and what affect that had on the events that were unfolding.

And one of the things that, you know, time and time again that really aggravated the situation in any of these countries that we would look at, is the use of these dehumanizing terms like animal. You know, you could talk about looters in a number of different way. You could talk about protesters in a number of different ways. But when you say the word animal, it kind of creates this sort of space between the person and the opponent to where you don't even -- as human anymore and that makes you do things to them you would normally never do to your neighbor, to your coworker or even to your political opponent.

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Once you have that word animal in your head, once that dehumanization kind of sets in, that's when the really bad stuff starts to happen. I think so far we've always thought, especially -- I mean, as Americans that we were kind of immune from that. That wasn't something that happened to us.

But again, (AUDIO GAP) from the outside, I do see it now as something that's happening to the U.S. and I feel like it's something I haven't really seen before. It's really worrying, to be honest.

STELTER: And we have to stay on guard when we see those authoritarian impulses.

Real quick, Astead, is there another rally scheduled? Has Trump announced another rally or is this for now?

HERNDON: We don't know kind of what's next. We know this was billed as the restart of the campaign. Where he pivots to now is unknown.

We know the president was looking for this weekend to lift his mood, particularly after several bad polls had come out with Joe Biden. I don't think the scene yesterday is going to do that. So, there's intense focus on the White House right now, what comes next and what does the president do next to give the life to his campaign that he was expecting this weekend to do.

STELTER: Astead and Jasmine, thank you both.

Up next here, Carl Bernstein on the president as the viewer in chief, reading tea leaves about his own presidency via the TV.

[11:18:21]

STELTER: Now to the coronavirus crisis and something you should see from, Ft. Worth, Texas. This is the full front page editorial in today's "Star Telegram" newspaper, saying: If you love Ft. Worth, put on a mask. If you want the end the pandemic, wear a mask. If you want the economy to recover, wear a mask.

Of course, the president resolutely will not. He's not the role model on this. But he's not really the reality show star in chief or producer in chief either.

Lately he's been the viewer in chief. He just watches and reacts. And watches and reacts.

CNN's Kevin Liptak and Kaitlan Collins report this weekend that Trump was watching cable yesterday, Saturday, looking to see massive lines in Tulsa and he was disappointed when he saw the coverage in Southern District of New York instead. And then later in the day, he found out six campaign staffers in Tulsa tested positive for COVID. Hopefully, they're all on a mend.

Trump initially dismissed that revelation. But then when the positive tests were reported in the media, Trump erupted. That's according to a source familiar with his reaction.

I wanted to bring in now the legendary Carl Bernstein.

Carl, I remember a time not that long ago when a president's moods were not newsworthy, but now they are. You know, your reaction to this reporting that he's watching, he's erupting, the cycle repeats and repeats?

CARL BERNSTEIN, CNN POLITICAL ANALYST: I think the big underlying story about Donald Trump in many regards are what his moods, and what his closest advisers, his former chief of staff, his former national security advisers, McMaster, General Kelly, Secretary Mattis, all concluded that he's unstable.

[11:20:00]

That he acts in an authoritarian way, his authoritarian impulses come into play, particularly as a result of his moods and it's all one story. His mood, his physical health, which we don't know about either because of his visit to Walter

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Reed Hospital earlier in the year that has been covered up and why he went there, looking at the president's mental state, especially what his friends are seeing now.

And they're very concerned about his conduct. They say he's out of control. Some of those I talked to, that's their words, out of control. This is a danger to our security in this country if, indeed, the president is unstable.

STELTER: And there are different examples on different fronts.

Let me ask the control room to pull up a list we made this week. It's about a minute long. But the point is the length. This takes a while just to go through all the examples of unhinged or inaccurate comments from the president this week.

Among many, he threatened the protesters ahead of the Tulsa rally. He offered help taking back Seattle, which doesn't need help.

He said making Juneteenth very famous because nobody had heard of it before he's scheduled his rally on that day. That's insulting, of course, to tens of millions of people. We know all about the holiday. He evidently didn't know the White House had put out an annual statement about the holiday.

He said nobody ever put tariffs on China. There's been tariffs for centuries.

He attacked John Bolton who he hired as a whacko and as a weirdo and a sick puppy. He said Bolton disagreed with the China travel restrictions but Bolton wasn't in the White House anymore.

He said coronavirus is dying out when it's not. He claimed COVID testing is overrated and a double-edged sword because it makes us look bad.

He said polls that show Biden winning are suppression polls. He tweeted out a photo of a Biden rally, which was not a rally at all. He was so troubled by critics who made fun of his walking that he defended his walking at length. You can see the rest of the list there.

Carl, my point is, how is the press supposed to convey all of this when, you know, you can barely read the size of the font and it takes time to get through all the falsehoods that came up in a single week?

BERNSTEIN: I think we have to point out the falsehoods but I think there's a bigger story underneath all of this, and that is the president's words and actions. And we need to get into the room with him. We need to get as reporters to his chiefs of staff and those he serves with, who serve with him and let's get their accounts of what's really going on with this president of the United States.

That is the reporting we need to do. We need to understand why he is acting the way he does in the view of those who are closest to him.

We also very much need to look at these autocratic, authoritarian measures that right now are front and center of all of us, including the firing of the Southern District of New York U.S. attorney, including the firing of inspector generals and all of this goes in part to his moods, according to those who are around him. So, we have a big story to do, which really is classic reporting, the best (INAUDIBLE) version of the truth.

(CROSSTALK)

STELTER: Yes. And staying on coronavirus, back in March, CBS correspondent Weijia Jiang who was born in China, who's Chinese- American, she said a White House official described the coronavirus to her as "Kung-Flu", a racist term. They said "Kung-Flu" to her face.

She never revealed who at the White House said this to her. And a lot of conservatives tried to say she made it up or suggested she made it up.

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Well, last night at the rally, Trump himself used the term, a racist term at his rally. It makes me wonder if the president was the White House official who said this to Weijia. We don't know. She's never revealed it.

But that kind of behavior, right, using a racist term, I feel like that would be a lead story for three days in any other presidency. And I just want us to recognize how unusual this environment is that that kind of racist behavior just barely gets noticed the next day.

It was noticed by Jake Tapper on his program this morning, it does get pointed out, but not to the degree that it should.

BERNSTEIN: I think we do recognize his racist behavior and the story of his racism. I think that it has been on our air at CNN. I think it has been on the front page of most of the papers in this country and on their Web sites. It is one of the big issues of this campaign and the president's obvious racism, demonstrable, fact in terms of his actions, fact in terms of the way he refused to rent to black people in the apartments that he owns and the Justice Department had to come in. His history of racism, his bringing up the birther question with Obama.

It's all out there in our reporting. I'm not sure I agree that we're ignoring that story. I think it's very much one of the great issues in this campaign.

[11:25:00]

It might even decide the election in some way.

But we need to keep reporting on it. And particularly his use of dog whistles and trying to foment actual racial conflict as we saw in his remarks this weekend.

STELTER: Carl, thank you very much. Great to have you on the program.

BERNSTEIN: Good to be with you.

STELTER: I want to take a quick break and then tell everybody about the Trump campaign, remember last week, it sent CNN that threatening letter about Joe Biden leading Trump in the poll. Well, you will never believe which media outlet is now reporting the exact same thing.

[11:30:00]

STELTER: President Trump is a walking, talking ad for media literacy. Let me show you how. Earlier this month, CNN published a poll showing Joe Biden widening his lead over Trump, a 14-point lead. Trump legal advisor Jenna Ellis was on this program last week claiming the poll was off base, yelling at me saying I'm an activist.

Well, there's a new poll this week from a very different news source showing Biden ahead, way ahead by 12 points. It's from Fox News. While Trump has not to our knowledge sent a cease and desist letter to his favorite network, he did call the poll phony. He said it was done by the same group of haters and said Fox is terrible. This is where media literacy comes in.

Fox News actually has a very reliable, well respected polling unit with a really great track record and a-minus rating from FiveThirtyEight. And like I said, Fox's poll findings were right in line with CNN findings the week before. Fox's poll included interviews with 1,343 randomly chosen registered voters nationwide. That mirrors CNN poll which had a sample of 1259 respondents. This is how scientific polls have worked for decades.

But Trump then goes to his events, goes out there and calls polls, suppression polls. He tries to deny the negative news, tries to tell his fans not to believe anything they hear or read, even in this case from Fox News, and he ends up spreading his ignorance to other people.



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That's why we need media literacy about how polls work, how they're not perfect. They're snapshots in time, but they do give us a sense of what's going on in the world, or in this case, what's going on in the country.

And then there's this trolling video that the President shared the other day on Twitter, a CNN segment that was clearly fake, right. You can tell just by the photoshopping here. It's pretty elementary photoshopping. But it was supposed to suggest that CNN makes up news and distorts the truth. So Twitter decided to label this as manipulated media, because some folks could still be fooled by it. Again, we need media literacy so no one gets fooled by obviously fake photoshopped videos.

But here's the twist the fathers of these two cute toddlers. They filed a copyright claim. They got the video taken down from Facebook and Twitter, and they denounced Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DON LEMON, CNN ANCHOR: Did you think it was funny?

DAN MCKENNA, FATHER OF TODDLER IN MANIPULATED VIDEO TWEETED BY TRUMP: Not at all, no. I thought it was propaganda. I couldn't understand how someone would share something like that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: In a world of presidential trolling, that's the world now, right, the President's a troll, media literacy is even more essential. Because he often tries to say he's just joking, and he's just pretending, he's playing around and fun showing me memes. But it's important to see that people take these seriously, including the people that are in them.

The subjects of the videos, say, hey, this is propaganda. This isn't a joke. It's not a meme. It's propaganda. It's a really interesting response from those fathers because it shows what it's like when you're a private person suddenly thrust into the public sphere. And frankly, you need literacy for that too, an immediate literacy to know how to handle those moments when suddenly you're going viral for all the worst reasons.

Let's talk more about this with Anthony Scaramucci, briefly, formerly a White House communications director. And now, Mooch, you look at the president his rally in Tulsa and you say there's going to be more rage more anger between now and November. It sounds to me like you're just forecasting more of the same between now and Election Day. Is that right?

ANTHONY SCARAMUCCI, FORMER WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: It's -- if you look at a Venn diagram, Brian, there's really only one strategy left for him, and that is to propel that rage and anger and try to split the society and see if he can have a tribal leadership win here. He's got to get that base turning out in exponential levels to where it was in 2016, otherwise, he's going to get annihilated.

And so, you know, the polls are accurate. I know the polls are accurate. There were several disgusting things that he did last night, but the one that upset me the most was with Representative Ilhan Omar I don't understand what he's saying. He's talking about her wanting to run the country like Somalia. So that is a racist, nativist trope that has been propelled in the society for 150 years.

He's then saying that he doesn't want to test people, because if you test people, then the numbers go up, but yet, we're getting more and more numbers. If you look at the flatlining, that happened in Europe, or other places around the world, it was a direct result of the testing and the contact tracing and quarantining.

So what's happening is the rap has gotten fatiguing. People are tired of it. They also don't want to get sick, so they don't want to show up at these places and get themselves or their families hurt or the loved ones. And so, he's going to have a very, very hard time coming into the fall.

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Last point. There's a wonderful mosaic of Americans that are coming together and binding together to beat him. And so that will happen, but you know, people need to stay vigilant because he's tough Turkey and, you know, he's a full-blown racist, and he's going to pull every racist trope that he can from now until November.

[11:35:09]

STELTER: I'm sure he'll love hearing you say is a tough Turkey. It's a memorable phrase. But you mentioned Ilhan Omar, and that stands out to me because the lawmaker's father passed away a few days ago of COVID- 19 complications.

And you would think that on Father's Day, on Father's Day weekend, you would think that the President would refrain from attacking a woman whose dad just died, but instead, he leaned right into it. And I guess it just goes to show there is nobody in the room where it happens to try to help him avoid those kinds of mistakes and errors and just wasteful things.

SCARAMUCCI: He attacks -- he attacks suburban housewives. I mean, come on the guy -- the guy doesn't care who he attacks. His heart is like solid icy rock. And by the way, you know, when he was going after those women, those the squad, if you call them that, last summer, I was like, OK, that is enough.

OK, my Italian and American grandmother heard that nonsense, go back to the country that you originally came from 100 years ago. And I've told my Italian American friends, I'm not going to disavow my personal life history or my personal integrity to support that nonsense, OK. It is enough.

And so what's going to happen, Brian is there's five to seven percent of those Republicans, that's why we started the right side pack, that's why we're working with the Lincoln Project, we're going to peel five to seven percent of those Republicans the way you would peel an orange, Brian. We just going to peel him right off, OK, to make sure that he loses in November.

And we're going to go into those white ethnic areas, and we're just going to explain to people why he is a systemic danger to their society. And so, we can rebuild the economy, we can regrow the system, and we can make the system fairer and more inclusive for people. And when we do that, and more and more people feel aspirational about their society, we'll all do better.

And so, there's an opportunity right now to rebuild, renew, and regrow America, but it's not with this man and we've got to get him out of office. And so, we will end up doing that. And all he's got to do is keep talking, Brian, because the more he keeps talking, the more ads can be clipped to explain what he's doing to the mosaic and the wonderful colors of America.

STELTER: Anthony, thank you for coming on. Happy Father's Day.

SCARAMUCCI: Hey, Happy Father's Day to you too. Good to be here.

STELTER: Thanks. A quick break here, and then the John Bolton book headlines you might have missed. Plus, a key page of the book that my next guests can confirm is true. It is about killing journalists.

[11:40:00]

STELTER: Bookstores are reopening around the country slowly but surely and they will soon be full of titles that President Trump doesn't want you to buy. Like this tell-all coming in July by Trump's own niece Mary Trump, a psycho psychologist, who says he is the world's most dangerous man.

There's also a forthcoming book by former National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, and an untitled new work by Bob Woodward coming in September. But right now, you probably guessed the top-selling book in the country is The Room Where It Happened. That is John Bolton's disturbing account of the Trump White House.

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So I think this is one of the great things about America. You know that the former advisor can go out, can write a book can get it published, despite the Trump Justice Department's attempts to stop him. He can tell his own story.

You know, it's been a really interesting back and forth for months now about whether there's classified material in this book, whether it should be published. Bolton was able to fight back against the DOJ's attempt to stop it from being published winning kind of round one in court. But there will be more rounds to come and Bolton may end up having to forego the profits from the book.

You have to wonder if the entire lawsuit was really about intimidation, about warning future would-be authors not to write a book about Trump, not to speak out against Trump. Because otherwise, you know, it seems like this lawsuit was not going to succeed in its initial attempt to block the book from being published.

That fold -- Simon and Schuster is the publisher of this book. The CEO of Simon Schuster, Jonathan Karp said in a statement that he believes that the real attempt of the Trump administration was to shield the president from an unflattering portion of his leadership. Karp was saying this was not about national security interests, it was just about Trump's ego.

Full disclosure, I also have a forthcoming book coming out from Simon and Schuster called Hoax. It comes out in August. We'll talk about that some other time because right now, we're talking about Bolton's work. Frankly, there is a week's worth of news just in this one book.

So let's bring in Commander Guy Snodgrass. He's a retired U.S. Navy fighter pilot, who served as Director of Communications and Chief Speechwriter to former Secretary of Defense James Mattis. And he authored the book Holding the Line: Inside Trump's Pentagon with Secretary Mattis. Guy, you heard my theory about what these lawsuits about intimidation. What do you think it's about?

GUY SNODGRASS, CEO, DEFENSE ANALYTICS: Yes, I think the initial salvo is certainly about intimidation and as we've seen reported. I mean, man, if you're this administration and if you want to try and keep a lid on this story, that's probably the worst way to do it. I think that's what rocketed Ambassador Bolton's book to the top of the bestseller list. It caused a lot of undue attention to it. And of course, we've seen the excerpt splashed across pretty much every news channel in the world.

STELTER: Yes, it's now the number one nonfiction book of the year so far on Amazon, and it's of course, you know, not even out till Tuesday. Let me read, Guy, from page 433 and see if you can verify this. It describes a meeting and the President had in Bedminster with Bolton and others. He says Trump shifted again to complaining about leaks including that CNN had earlier reported about the meeting at Bedminster.

He says these people should be executed. They are scumbags, Trump said. Look, this is according to Bolton's account, OK. Then, he observed that was on a bad and the news was out, blah, blah, blah. This is like one of Trump's favorite legal gambits. Justice Department arrest reporters, force them to serve time in jail, and then demand they disclose their sources. Only then, Bolton says, then the leaks would stop.

So this is the president fantasizing about both jailing reporters and also according to Bolton, having them killed. Did you ever hear the President talk like that when you were in these rooms where it happened?

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SNODGRASS: I did. And that's one of the reasons why I just simply sent a message out a few days ago saying, hey, that part certainly aligns with reality. There's been a number of us in this administration who have heard the President firsthand say such things. In my case, it was the very first time that President Trump came to the Pentagon for a briefing with Secretary Mattis, then the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and economic adviser Gary Cohn.

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And it was all about the importance of allies and partners around the world. And we get maybe 10 minutes into the President's portion to speak and he goes completely off the rails and wants to talk about a story in the Washington Post he didn't agree with, how that reporter should be thrown in jail.

And as he does this 10-minute tirade, what he ultimately winds up at the end saying is, you know, in the good old days, if you had a traitor, you know what you do, you just line them up in the street and have them shot. So whether it's in the public eye or in the private meeting, you know, that kind of language, of course, is not something you want to hear your commander in chief saying about freedom of the press, and about the members of the press who are seeking to inform the American public.

STELTER: I think you present a way forward when Trump claims these but these books are full of lies. One way is to talk to others and see if they can account for similar comments. And in this case, unfortunately, you can. Guy, thank you very much for coming on.

SNODGRASS: You bet. Thanks, Brian.

STELTER: His book is titled Holding the Line. For the very latest on this book launch coming up on Tuesday and much more, sign up for our nightly newsletter. Go to [reliablesources.com](https://reliablesources.com) for the latest. A quick break here on the program, and then the very latest about the U.S. Agency for Global Media, a Trump shake up. what's going on there. We're going to talk with one of the people that was fired this week in just a moment.

[11:50:00]

STELTER: The U.S. Agency for global media spreads America's values around the world. It is a federally funded group overseeing a network of these entities. You can see them on screen, Radio Free Asia, the Open Technology Fund, and the global news organization called Voice of America.

Trump allies like Steve Bannon have been trying to take control of VOA and other parts of the agency like Radio Free Europe and -- ever since Inauguration Day, really. This has been going on for years. But the Senate slow-rolled the White House.

And earlier this month, not until earlier this month, did Michael Pack get confirmed as the new Trump appointed CEO of the agency. Well, now heads have rolled and Trump loyalists are taking the place of some of the ousted organization heads.

One of the many people that was ousted in recent days is Karen Kornbluh. She is joining me now to talk more about this, along with Washington Post reporter Sarah Ellison who's been all over this story. Karen, just tell us briefly like, why should viewers care about what happens at USAGM?

KAREN KORNBLUH, FORMER BOARD MEMBER, USAGM: Well, make no mistake, Brian. What happened Wednesday night is a win for America's adversaries. The CEOs were fired were racking up big wins against China, Russia, Iran, North Korea. For instance, they had a 24 seven Russian language global digital and broadcasting network that was broadcasting to Russians what was really happening. This is really concerning.

And you know, as you've covered the disinformation battle has come home. When Voice of America and these other entities were created, they were created to fight fascism and communism overseas. What's concerning is that instead of Voice of America, we could wind up with voice Bannon and some kind of propaganda entity that's muddying up the information debate here in the U.S. as well.

STELTER: Sara, do you -- do you say that that's an accurate assessment of what's going on? You know, I would think that any, any administration when it gets to takeover, it's going to appoint its own people. So is this really that different?

SARAH ELLISON, STAFF WRITER, THE WASHINGTON POST: Well, yes, in the sense that new people take over, and they can appoint who they want. But if you look at the language that Michael Pack and his -- and his deputies

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have used in the few days that they've been in office, this is now really an agency at war with itself, attacking and denigrating the previous -- the previous leadership.

And that kind of antipathy and that kind of sort of war on these institutions is just sort of part and parcel of a certain brand of Trumpism. And so I think that this is definitely different than just a normal change changeover in power.

STELTER: Yes. What is expected to happen next? Do we have a sense?

ELLISON: Well, I think that what you'll see -- I mean, one of the things Amanda Bennett and all these other very well respected people have left the agency, I think you'll expect to see more departures and more, you know, sort of more conflict within the agency.

And I think that the most difficult thing is that for the people who are they're trying to do their jobs, this kind of turnover is really distracting and undermining. So I think what you'll see is a lot of it is out of -- out of our view, because much of what VOA does is international, and that's one of the things that's most concerning about it.

STELTER: Yes. It seems like -- Karen, the danger is, you know, you don't want people -- well, I think we might have just lost Karen actually, unfortunately. But Sarah, the problem is, you don't want people around the world to view this as a propaganda machine. In fact, they have to fight against that perception already. So if this becomes like a pro-Trump propaganda machine, it's going to -- it's going to prove its detractors right, essentially.

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ELLISON: And one of the things that we've talked about a lot is how much Donald Trump is very obsessed with the media. And to have this idea that there's a taxpayer funded but completely independent news organization, which is what the agency is supposed to be, to see that not as the Ministry of Information is very important. And so these early changes don't give people a lot of competence that that's the case.

STELTER: Right, that's the issue. Don't let it be ministry of misinformation. Sarah, thank you. Karen, I'm sorry, we run out of time and we lost your shot. We would love to have you back out in the future. And by the way, we did ask Michael Pack for an interview and he did not respond.

Before we go, make sure to sign up for a brand-new podcast from CNN. Don Lemon hosts Silence is not an Option. It's a remarkable new podcast. You can find it on Apple podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you please. We'll see you right back here this time next week.

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