

Trump continues far-right agitation in Phoenix speech

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President Donald Trump delivered a right-wing tirade to supporters in Phoenix, Arizona on Tuesday night. The speech followed last week's firing of chief strategist Stephen Bannon and a Monday night address in which Trump bowed to pressure from the military to announce an open-ended escalation in Afghanistan.

Trump once again attacked the Republican as well as the Democratic Party establishments and defended his pro-fascist statements following the neo-Nazi rampage in Charlottesville, Virginia. The rambling 77-minute speech made clear that the removal of Bannon and consolidation of Pentagon and Wall Street control over the administration will not halt Trump's efforts to build an extra-parliamentary, fascistic base of support.

Trump went ahead with the rally, which attracted thousands to the Phoenix Convention Center as well as thousands of anti-Trump demonstrators, despite pleas from the Democratic mayor to postpone the event. The rally was boycotted by Republican Governor Doug Ducey as well as the state's two Republican senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake.

Trump spent nearly half of his remarks defending his response to the August 12 fascist riot in Charlottesville and attacking the media, which he accused of misrepresenting his statements regarding those events. The rest of the speech was a compendium of the ultra-nationalist, militarist and far-right themes, combined with demagogic appeals to social anger over the destruction of jobs and living standards, which were at the center of his election campaign and have dominated his period in office.

He set the tone at the beginning of his remarks, declaring: "We love our country. We celebrate our troops. We embrace our freedom. We respect our flag. We are proud of our history. We cherish our Constitution, including, by the way, the Second

Amendment. We fully protect religious liberty. We believe in law and order. And we support the incredible men of law enforcement. And we pledge our allegiance to one nation under God."

On immigration, Trump praised former Maricopa County, Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted last month of criminal contempt for ignoring a federal judge's order to stop detaining people on mere suspicion of their being undocumented immigrants. The White House press office had announced earlier on Tuesday that Trump would not, as he had threatened, announce a pardon for Arpaio, who is awaiting sentencing. Instead, Trump made clear that Arpaio had nothing to fear and that he was prepared to pardon the fascistic ex-sheriff, even though he was holding off from an official announcement.

The president declared, "We are cracking down on these sanctuary cities that shield criminal aliens," and reiterated his plans to build a border wall separating the US from Mexico. He threatened to veto a federal funding bill for the new fiscal year, which begins October 1, shutting down the government, if the Democrats blocked money for construction of the wall.

On economic protectionism, Trump hailed his pullout from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and cited the opening of negotiations with Canada and Mexico on revising the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), saying he expected the talks would fail and he would scrap the treaty altogether.

He repeated the previous night's paean to the military as the model of American patriotism and the central force for holding the country together, and boasted of passing a major increase in military spending.

Without naming names, he once again attacked senators McCain and Flake, both of whom have criticized Trump for his response to Charlottesville and

his reluctance to escalate the confrontation with Russia. Trump blamed McCain for blocking the repeal of Obamacare and broadly hinted that he might support a challenge to Flake's re-election next year from ultra-right former state lawmaker Kelli Ward.

As for the Democrats, who have largely attacked Trump from the right for his supposed "softness" toward Russia and led the praise for the generals who have virtually taken over the administration, Trump made the absurd charge that they were promoting socialism "and maybe, frankly, a step beyond socialism..."

This was combined with empty claims that he was heading up a revival of American manufacturing and restoring the jobs and wages of workers, supposedly ravaged by foreign countries and foreign workers.

Media criticism of the speech centered on its "divisiveness," which was counterposed to the "unifying" tone Trump was said to have struck in his Afghanistan policy speech the previous night. Reflecting fears within the ruling class of the potential for social and political upheavals, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told CNN after the Phoenix event that Trump's speech was "downright scary and disturbing." He questioned Trump's fitness to rule.

The counter-protests continued throughout the day without incident, until police carried out unprovoked gas canister attacks on demonstrators after the Trump rally had ended. Four anti-Trump protesters were arrested, and two have been charged with assaulting a police officer.



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