

As president delivers fascistic speech in Dallas

Democrats link Trump impeachment drive to dissent in military over Syria pullback

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The furor within the US political establishment over President Donald Trump's withdrawal of troops from northern Syria has brought to the fore the right-wing and anti-democratic basis of the Democrats' impeachment inquiry, even as Trump responds by stepping up his appeals to anti-immigrant racism and his denunciations of socialism.

The Democrats and allied media outlets such as the *New York Times* are linking the impeachment drive to denunciations of Trump from disaffected sections of the military brass, who consider his pullback in Syria a major blow to American imperialist interests in the Middle East and a disastrous ceding of influence in the region to Russia and Iran.

On Thursday night, Trump followed up last week's campaign speeches in Minnesota and Louisiana with a similar fascistic diatribe in Dallas, Texas. He once again invoked anti-immigrant xenophobia, boasted of allocating more than \$2.5 trillion to "rebuild our military," praised the police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), attacked the media, and incited violence against his political opponents, accusing them of treason.

He declared: "We are fighting a campaign against leftist socialists and globalists who want to return to open borders, rampant crime and disastrous one-way trade deals... Our political opposition made its fortune selling out our nation and its citizens... The do-nothing Democrats have betrayed our country."

It was reported that police detained a man wearing body armor and carrying a weapon who was standing near anti-Trump protesters outside the American Airlines Center in Dallas, where the rally was held. The person was taken to a hospital and released.

As at the previous rallies, Trump sought to exploit the opposition of the Democrats and the sections of the intelligence, military and foreign policy establishment with which they are allied to any military pullback in the Middle East by posturing as an opponent of "forever wars." He defended his withdrawal of troops from northeastern Syria in advance of the Turkish invasion as "putting a stop to the catastrophic era of endless wars," adding that it was time to "bring our soldiers back home."

The same evening, the *New York Times*, which has been spearheading the impeachment drive and denouncing Trump for betraying US interests in Syria, published an extraordinary op-ed column by retired Admiral William H. McRaven headlined "Our Republic Is Under Attack From the President."

McRaven spent his entire 37-year career in the Navy in Special Operations, including the Navy Seals. As commander of the Joint Special Operations Command in 2006-2008 and commander of the US Special Operations Command from August 2011 to August 2014, he played a leading role in overseeing the operations of Washington's military death squads throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including in the regime-change wars in Libya and Syria that took hundreds of thousands of lives and turned millions into stateless refugees.

He was credited with organizing and overseeing Operation Neptune Spear, the special ops raid that killed Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011. A 2013 Freedom of Information request revealed that he played a key role in the cover-up of bin Laden's murder, which contradicted the official version of his death. Less than two weeks after the May 2, 2011 raid, he sent

an email instructing recipients that “all photos [of bin Laden’s remains] should have been turned over to the CIA; if you still have them destroy them immediately” or “get them to” a person whose name was redacted.

McRaven begins his piece in the *Times* by citing two events of the previous week, a change of command ceremony for an Army unit at Fort Bragg and an annual gala for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Society, which “recognizes past and present members of the intelligence and Special Operations community for their heroism and sacrifice to the nation.”

He writes: “What struck me was the stark contrast between the words and deeds heralded at those events—and the words and deeds emanating from the White House... The America that they believed in was under attack, not from without, but from within.”

He proceeds to denounce Trump for his “assaults on our institutions: on the intelligence and law enforcement community, the State Department and the press.” Condemning Trump for abandoning Washington’s Kurdish allies in the regime-change war in Syria, he makes a case for US military intervention around the world without limits in time or space, asking: “... what will happen to the Kurds, the Iraqis, the Afghans, the Syrians, the Rohingyas, the South Sudanese and the millions of people under the boot of tyranny or left abandoned by their failing states?”

He concludes with a call for Trump’s removal, “the sooner, the better.” Saying Trump’s replacement could be “Republican, Democrat or independent,” he leaves open how and by whom the president is to be removed from office, by implication not ruling out a coup by elements within the state “institutions” he praises.

Earlier this week, the foreign affairs columnist for the *Washington Post*, David Ignatius, published a column on the same OSS Society event of which McRaven wrote, citing an Army officer who fought in Syria as saying of Trump’s pullout, “It will go down in infamy. This will go down as a stain on the American reputation for decades.”

Furthermore, at Thursday night’s Al Smith Memorial Foundation dinner in New York, retired General James Mattis, who resigned as secretary of defense last December in protest over Trump’s pledge to withdraw US troops from Syria, responded to Trump’s mocking of him as “the most overrated general” by pointing to the president’s evasion of military service during the

Vietnam War because of bone spurs. He said, “I earned my spurs on the battlefield. Donald Trump earned his spurs in a letter from a doctor.”

The Democrats are more and more openly focusing on the foreign policy differences that have underlain their campaign against Trump from the time of his nomination as Republican presidential candidate in 2016 to their current impeachment inquiry. An acrimonious White House meeting on Wednesday to discuss Trump’s withdrawal from northern Syria ended with a walkout by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer.

Trump expressed his contempt for Congress and rejection of congressional oversight by calling the House speaker a “third-grade politician” during the meeting. Pelosi all but accused Trump of being a traitor and Russian agent, standing, pointing a finger at him and asking why “all roads lead to Putin.”

In the meeting, Schumer quoted Mattis to refute Trump’s assertions that the conflict in Syria had nothing to do with the US and that ISIS was not a danger to Americans because it was 7,000 miles away, prompting Trump’s swipe at his former defense secretary. Representative Liz Cheney, head of the Republican caucus in the House and daughter of Bush’s vice president and arch war criminal Dick Cheney, spoke up to support Schumer.

Underlining the war-mongering standpoint of the Democrats, Schumer said of Trump after the meeting, “He’s very tough with the media, with his letters. But when it comes face to face, he’s week-kneed.”



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