# Political furor erupts over Trump slurs against dead and wounded US soldiers

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In a carefully prepared political land mine for the reelection campaign of President Trump, the *Atlantic* magazine published a report last week about disparaging comments Trump made about US soldiers killed or wounded in the course of the wars waged by US imperialism over the past century.

The report, followed by heated denials and denunciations from the White House and cynical declarations of shock and anger from the Democrats, has dominated the US presidential election campaign for the past five days. The corporate media has used the furor to push to the side such questions as the coronavirus pandemic, the Depression-level jobless total and the mass protests against police violence and murder.

The report by Jeffrey Goldberg, the magazine's editor-in-chief, cites four anonymous sources, all allegedly former Trump administration insiders, giving details of Trump's remarks over a two-year period in 2017 and 2018, in which the president described US soldiers killed in World War I as "losers" and "suckers" and applied similar labels to US soldiers in Vietnam.

There is little doubt that the allegations made in the *Atlantic* are true. Key details have been confirmed by the Associated Press, the *Washington Post* and, most significantly, Jennifer Griffin of Fox News, a bastion of pro-Trump propaganda, all citing sources who wish to remain anonymous for fear of White House retaliation. Trump confirmed the validity of those fears by tweeting out a demand that Fox News fire Griffin for her reporting.

The denials from the White House are so over-the-top that they tend to add rather than detract from the credibility of the article. For example, Trump flatly declared that he had never called the late Senator John McCain a "loser" because as a Navy pilot he was shot down over North Vietnam and captured, although the videotape of that 2015 statement is widely available.

Particularly damaging was Griffin's confirmation that Trump had told aides, during the preparation of July 4 activities in Washington in 2019, that wounded veterans should not be included in a planned parade because the sight of the gory consequences of war was "not a good look."

As always with Trump, there are elements of grotesque narcissism and vulgarity in the various incidents cited. He apparently was concerned that going to the American cemetery near Belleau Wood, outside Paris, in the rain would have unfortunate consequences for his hair. He told his senior aides, "Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers." He later described the 1,800 Marines killed in the ferocious 1918 battle with German troops as "suckers," and questioned why the United States had intervened in the war as it did.

The latter issue may have occurred to Trump because his father Fred, a first-generation German-American who grew up speaking German at home, would have preferred that American imperialism sided with Germany rather than Britain and France in World War I. His mother, however, was an immigrant from Scotland.

But in voicing his contempt for those sent by the US ruling class to do its dirty work, to kill and be killed on battlefields all over the world, Trump is speaking not just for himself. He expresses the class sentiment of Wall Street and corporate America as a whole towards those, drawn disproportionately from the working class, whose lives are deemed expendable in the cause of advancing the profit interests of the giant banks and corporations and the strategic interests of American

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imperialism.

Trump's Manhattan colleague, hotel billionaire Leona Helmsley, became notorious for her pronouncement that "only the little people pay taxes." Trump gained exemption from the Vietnam War draft by claiming "bone spurs," and derided those who enlisted or were drafted because they did not have his advantages as "chumps." His motto might well have been, "Only the little people fight wars."

A half-dozen current and former Trump aides have flatly denounced the *Atlantic* report, but no high-ranking military official, either current or former, has done so. Trump himself suggested that his former chief of staff John Kelly, a retired four-star general, was a source for the article. If true, that would only underscore the intensity of the conflict within the American capitalist state and its military establishment, provoked mainly by differences over foreign policy relating to Syria and Russia.

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden leaped at the chance to attack Trump from the right and posture as a greater admirer of the American military than the "commander-in-chief." "I just think it is sick. It is deplorable—so un-American, so unpatriotic," he sputtered. "I've just never been as disappointed in my whole career with a leader that I've worked with, president or otherwise."

That statement is itself remarkable, given Biden's long career. Taken literally, it would mean that Trump's verbal slurs against US soldiers are worse than the decision of George W. Bush to go to war in Iraq based on lies about weapons of mass destruction, which led to the deaths of more than 4,000 US soldiers and more than a million Iraqis.

Biden linked Trump's disparagement of the military with his decision not to raise with Russian President Vladimir Putin the claims by intelligence agencies, made public by the *New York Times*, that Russia had offered bounties to Taliban fighters in Afghanistan for any American soldiers killed.

Biden, who ends every public speech with the phrase, "And may God protect our troops," added that for the US government, "we only have one truly sacred obligation—to prepare and equip those we send into harm's way, and to care for them and their families." So much for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, civil rights, or freedom of speech!

*Atlantic* report is clearly part of a coordinated attack on Trump involving sections of the military, the media and the Democratic Party. It is a continuation of the effort since Trump first took office to divert the enormous popular opposition to Trump into right-wing, pro-imperialist channels. Like the *Washington Post*, owned by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, the *Atlantic* is the personal property of a billionaire, with Laurene Powell Jobs, widow of Apple founder Steve Jobs, the controlling shareholder. Jobs gave the largest possible donation to the Biden Victory Fund in June.

Within hours of the article's publication, VoteVets had released an online ad in which the parents of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan speak out on the claims that Trump had disparaged their sons and daughters. VoteVets is the political action committee that has sponsored the rise of the "CIA Democrats," the rapidly growing caucus of Democratic military-intelligence operatives who have won seats in the House of Representatives.

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