

Trump denounces media criticism as “illegal” in Justice Department rant

Patrick Martin
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In an hour-long campaign-style speech to his own appointees and aides at the Department of Justice, President Donald Trump threatened to jail his political opponents in the Democratic Party and declared that criticism of himself on television and in the corporate media should be “illegal.”

As with his two previous major addresses since taking office, at his inauguration January 20 and to a joint session of Congress March 4, Trump combined self-praise, non-stop lies, and apparent moments of brain fog, producing the overall impression of a senile tyrant raging against his enemies, while claiming unrivaled personal popularity.

If one judges the American ruling class by its last two presidents—Trump, followed by Biden, followed by Trump again—one would have to conclude that the financial oligarchy has scraped the bottom of the barrel in the selection of its leading personnel. Corruption vies with decrepitude and sheer ignorance. This is whom the ruling class has entrusted with the management of its global and domestic political affairs, including the proverbial finger on the nuclear button.

Trump’s remarks were largely recycled from the two previous speeches, particularly the address to Congress, and need not be examined in detail, as the WSWS has already done so, here and here. But Trump broke new ground by giving such a speech at the headquarters of the Department of Justice, which he never visited during his first term, frustrated by the unwillingness of both of his selections for attorney general, Jeff Sessions and William Barr, to act as direct instruments of the White House in persecuting his political opponents.

There is no such reluctance on the part of those he has chosen to run the DoJ in his second term. They consist almost entirely of his own personal attorneys in the countless legal cases he has faced, ranging from

impeachment to instigating the January 6, 2021 attack on Capitol Hill to numerous episodes of financial corruption.

Attorney General Pam Bondi was one of Trump’s representatives in his first impeachment trial, while her top deputies, Todd Blanche and Emil Bove, were his defense attorneys in his federal prosecution over the January 6 attack, the Georgia case over his efforts to steal that state’s electoral votes in 2020, and his falsification of New York business records to cover up a payoff to porn star Stormy Daniels.

Trump paid tribute to all three of them, as well as to Kash Patel, now FBI director and acting director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Patel occupied a critical position in the Pentagon on January 6, 2021, when for three hours the military blocked dispatch of National Guard troops to defend the Capitol from the mob of armed Trump supporters attacking it.

The 78-year-old Trump, the oldest man ever inaugurated as president, appeared to suffer a significant episode of confusion during his remarks, as he boasted of firing James Comey as FBI director before appointing Patel. He seemed to have forgotten that he fired Comey in 2017, during the first year of his first term, an action that triggered a political uproar. He appointed Christopher Wray to replace Comey, and Wray held the position more than seven years, resigning only days before Trump took office to begin his second term, on January 20, 2025.

As usual with Trump, he accused his political opponents of all the criminal and anti-democratic methods in which he himself is engaged, claiming that “a corrupt group of hacks and radicals” had “weaponized the vast powers of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to try and thwart the will of the American people.”

Trump boasted, “And that’s why on day one, I signed an executive order banning all government censorship and directing the removal of every bureaucrat who conspired to attack free speech and many other things and values in America.” He had the gall to make this claim at the end of a week in which the White House sought to censor and suppress all political opposition to the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, including detaining Columbia graduate student Mahmoud Khalil and seeking his deportation.

He continued, “these are people that are bad people, really bad people. They tried to turn America into a corrupt communist and third world country.” This was the first of several references to “communists” and “Marxists,” as Trump continuously gave expression to the fear of the working class and socialism that is the nightmare of the financial oligarchy.

Perhaps the most notable addition to his litany of threats was Trump’s claim that the media had been guilty of “tremendous abuse” against Judge Aileen Cannon—the Trump-appointed judge who threw out the federal case against him for removing classified documents from the White House after he left office—as well as in criticizing Supreme Court justices for their ruling in favor of presidential immunity from prosecution, handed down last July.

Trump said, “It’s truly interference, in my opinion. And it should be illegal, and it probably is illegal in some form.”

He continued, “I believe that CNN and [MSNBC], who literally write 97.6 percent bad about me, are political arms of the Democrat Party, and in my opinion, they’re really corrupt and they’re illegal. What they do is illegal. ... It has to be illegal. It’s influencing judges and it’s really changing law and it just cannot be legal. I don’t believe it’s legal and they do it in total coordination with each other.”

He went on to repeat his long-discredited lies that the 2020 election was rigged, while adding the demand—highly significant given where he was speaking—that “the people who did this to us should go to jail. They should go to jail.”

The repeated ovations Trump received demonstrate that the political thugs and fascists he has installed at the FBI and DoJ represent a direct threat to the democratic rights of working people and youth.

The Democratic Party will do nothing to stop such

attacks, as Senate Democrats showed the same day by voting to approve a six-month budget resolution giving Trump everything he wants for his attacks on social programs and federal workers. The defense of democratic rights requires the independent political intervention of the working class.



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