White House Correspondents Association dinner

Trump berates the press, with little response

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The number one enemy of the First Amendment spewed bitterness and insults against the media and his political opponents Friday night, drawing little or no response from 700 journalists in attendance at a second iteration of the White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) annual dinner.

The dinner was originally set for April but was called off abruptly after a gunman broke through a security barrier and rushed towards the ballroom before being overpowered by police and Secret Service agents. The rescheduled dinner was moved to a much smaller location, with an attendance of only one-quarter of the 3,000 who turned out two months before.

It was Donald Trump's first appearance as president before a WHCA dinner, an annual event where corporate media bosses and celebrity journalists rub shoulders with officials of the current administration, members of Congress, nominally celebrating "freedom of the press" and the supposedly adversarial relation between the press and the government.

The ceremonial function of the WHCA dinner is to give awards to selected print and broadcast journalists, supposedly celebrating the oppositional role of the "Fourth Estate." But over the decades, the real relationship of the corporate media to the American government—as dutiful stenographer and peddler of imperialist propaganda—has become more and more pronounced.

This was symbolized by the prominent role given to CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer, an adamant defender of Israeli genocide in Gaza and a reliable mouthpiece for the Pentagon in every American war of the 21st century.

Blitzer handed out the WHCA's top honor, the Katharine Graham Award, to a team of reporters from the *Wall Street Journal* who brought to light Trump's letter to sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein on the occasion of Epstein's 50th birthday. He noted that Trump had responded to the exposé by filing a $20 billion lawsuit against the *Journal.*

No mention was made of Trump's many other assaults on the press, including suits against ABC, CBS, CNN and the British BBC, some of them settled for substantial contributions by the media companies to Trump's future presidential library. Only days before the dinner, the Department of Justice withdrew subpoenas issued this month against *New York Times* journalists who reported on security issues plaguing the $200 million jet given to Trump by the government of Qatar to serve as his new Air Force One.

Outgoing WHCA President Weijia Jiang of CBS made only a passing reference to this sordid record in introducing Trump, saying, "There is an existential difference between criticizing the press and trying to undermine it." But she extended an olive branch to the fascist president, saying, "I've covered you for a long time and so have many reporters in this room. We ask questions and you push back. Then we push back. You've always been a deal guy. Well, the First Amendment is a done deal."

Trump's remarks were a noxious mixture of crude insults, some disguised as badly scripted jokes, entire paragraphs lifted from his speeches at MAGA rallies and asides that appeared to be expressions of senile dementia. He rehashed attacks on Joe Biden, Adam Schiff, Gavin Newsom, JB Pritzker and Ilhan Omar, as well as journalists like Kaitlan Collins and Jake Tapper of CNN.

He also hailed the takeover of CBS by billionaire David Ellison, who installed arch-Zionist Bari Weiss to conduct a purge of the CBS News staff, beginning with most of the presenters from *60 Minutes*, the top-rated

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news magazine program. Ellison is expected to complete the takeover of CNN's parent company soon, although it is not clear whether he will gain control of the network as part of the deal.

Trump's meandering address extended for an excruciating hour and 15 minutes, with the only saving grace that the performance was delivered so poorly that long stretches were simply incomprehensible.

The audience reaction was largely one of silence, punctuated by a few groans and raucous applause from a handful of tables populated by Trump lackeys like White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and acting Attorney General Todd Blanche.

Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio did not attend nor did congressional leaders, Republican or Democratic, in some cases citing security concerns.

No matter how brazen the lies or how disgusting the insults Trump delivered, no one in the audience had the political principle or simple self-respect to get up and walk out, or to denounce the speech as a diatribe against press freedom. This only demonstrates that the corporate media is not Trump's enemy but rather his facilitator. Or to put it more precisely, whatever their opinion of the present occupant of the White House may be, it is not allowed to disrupt the relationship of the corporate media to the capitalist state as a whole.

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