



January 2018, Issue 78 – *Special Edition*
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Truth

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it -- always.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

For nearly nine years we've reported to you on the history of our battalion and brigade and the Sky Soldiers with whom we served in Vietnam, and troopers who currently serve, as well as matters relating to our military, war and issues of all kinds affecting veterans, including political issues though limited to those which have a real or potential impact on our military and/or vets. But above all else, we've strived to bring you the truth, correcting our reporting whenever we make mistakes.

Yesterday and today, January 16 & 17, 2018, two U.S. Senators addressed the importance of truth and a free press in their speech and written word directed in the main to our Commander in Chief, Donald J. Trump, and to all members of Congress and citizens of our country. We invite you to study their remarks which follow...many of you fought, some of you gave limbs and minds, and many of our guys died to preserve that of which they speak.

AATW!

Lew "Smitty" Smith
Newsletter Editor



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“The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.”

As warned by George Orwell

“Arizona Senator Jeff Flake gave a speech on the Senate floor Wednesday (Jan. 17, 2018), delivering his message to President Trump that assaults on the media and freedom of speech have the potential to cause damage beyond America's borders. The speech comes on the same day that Mr. Trump says he will announce a set of ‘Fake News Awards,’ addressing what he sees as bias in the mainstream media.”

(Above reported by CBS News on-line: www.cbsnews.com/news/jeff-flake-speech-trump-rebuke-senate-full-transcript/) (Photos added)



Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, (Republican), during earlier speech on Senate floor
(web photo)

Mr. President, near the beginning of the document that made us free, our Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”* So, from our very beginnings, our freedom has been predicated on truth. The founders were visionary in this regard, understanding well that good faith and shared facts between the governed and the government would be the very basis of this ongoing idea of America.

As the distinguished former member of this body, Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, famously said: *“Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.”*

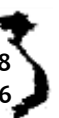
During the past year, I am alarmed to say that Senator Moynihan’s proposition has likely been tested more severely than at any time in our history. It is for that reason that I rise today, to talk about the truth, and its relationship to democracy. For without truth, and a principled fidelity to truth and to shared facts, Mr. President, our democracy will not last.

2017 was a year which saw the truth – objective, empirical, evidence-based truth -- more battered and abused than any other in the history of our country, at the hands of the most powerful figure in our government. It was a year which saw the White House enshrine *“alternative facts”* into the American lexicon, as justification for what used to be known simply as good old-fashioned falsehoods. It was the year in which an unrelenting daily assault on the constitutionally-protected free press was launched by that same White House, an assault that is as unprecedented as it is unwarranted. *“The enemy of the people,”* was what the president of the United States called the free press in 2017.

Mr. President, it is a testament to the condition of our democracy that our own president uses words infamously spoken by Josef Stalin to describe his enemies. It bears noting that so fraught with malice was the phrase *“enemy of the people,”* that even Nikita Khrushchev forbade its use, telling the Soviet Communist Party that the phrase had been introduced by Stalin for the purpose of *“annihilating such individuals”* who disagreed with the supreme leader. This alone should be a source of great shame for us in this body, especially for those of us in the president’s party. For they are shameful, repulsive statements. And, of course, the president has it precisely backward – despotism is the enemy of the people. The free press is the despot’s enemy, which makes the free press the guardian of democracy. When a figure in power reflexively calls any press that doesn’t suit him *“fake news,”* it is that person who should be the figure of suspicion, not the press.

I dare say that anyone who has the privilege and awesome responsibility to serve in this chamber knows that these reflexive slurs of *“fake news”* are dubious, at best. Those of us who travel overseas, especially to war zones and other troubled areas around the globe, encounter members of U.S. based media who risk their lives, and sometimes lose their lives, reporting on the truth. To dismiss their work as fake news is an affront to their commitment and their sacrifice.

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According to the International Federation of Journalists, 80 journalists were killed in 2017, and a new report from the Committee to Protect Journalists documents that the number of journalists imprisoned around the world has reached 262, which is a new record. This total includes 21 reporters who are being held on “false news” charges.

Mr. President, so powerful is the presidency that the damage done by the sustained attack on the truth will not be confined to the president’s time in office. Here in America, we do not pay obeisance to the powerful – in fact, we question the powerful most ardently – to do so is our birthright and a requirement of our citizenship -- and so, we know well that no matter how powerful, no president will ever have dominion over objective reality.

No politician will ever get to tell us what the truth is and is not. And anyone who presumes to try to attack or manipulate the truth to his own purposes should be made to realize the mistake and be held to account. That is our job here. And that is just as Madison, Hamilton, and Jay would have it.

Of course, a major difference between politicians and the free press is that the press usually corrects itself when it gets something wrong. Politicians don’t.

No longer can we compound attacks on truth with our silent acquiescence. No longer can we turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to these assaults on our institutions. And Mr. President, an American president who cannot take criticism – who must constantly deflect and distort and distract – who must find someone else to blame -- is charting a very dangerous path. And a Congress that fails to act as a check on the president adds to the danger.

Now, we are told via twitter that today the president intends to announce his choice for the “*most corrupt and dishonest*” media awards. It beggars belief that an American president would engage in such a spectacle. But here we are.

And so, 2018 must be the year in which the truth takes a stand against power that would weaken it. In this effort, the choice is quite simple. And in this effort, the truth needs as many allies as possible. Together, my colleagues, we are powerful. Together, we have it within us to turn back these attacks, right these wrongs, repair this damage, restore reverence for our institutions, and prevent further moral vandalism.

Together, united in the purpose to do our jobs under the Constitution, without regard to party or party loyalty, let us resolve to be allies of the truth -- and not partners in its destruction.

It is not my purpose here to inventory all of the official untruths of the past year. But a brief survey is in order. Some untruths are trivial – such as the bizarre contention regarding the crowd size at last year’s inaugural. But many untruths are not at all trivial – such as the seminal untruth of the president’s political career - the oft-repeated conspiracy about the birthplace of President Obama. Also not trivial are the equally pernicious fantasies about rigged elections and massive voter fraud, which are as destructive as they are inaccurate – to the effort to undermine confidence in the federal courts, federal law enforcement, the intelligence community and the free press, to perhaps the most vexing untruth of all – the supposed “hoax” at the heart of special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation.

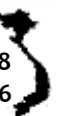
To be very clear, to call the Russia matter a “hoax” – as the president has many times – is a falsehood. We know that the attacks orchestrated by the Russian government during the election were real and constitute a grave threat to both American sovereignty and to our national security. It is in the interest of every American to get to the bottom of this matter, wherever the investigation leads.

Ignoring or denying the truth about hostile Russian intentions toward the United States leaves us vulnerable to further attacks. We are told by our intelligence agencies that those attacks are ongoing, yet it has recently been reported that there has not been a single cabinet-level meeting regarding Russian interference and how to defend America against these attacks. Not one. What might seem like a casual and routine untruth – so casual and routine that it has by now become the white noise of Washington - is in fact a serious lapse in the defense of our country.

Mr. President, let us be clear. The impulses underlying the dissemination of such untruths are not benign. They have the effect of eroding trust in our vital institutions and conditioning the public to no longer trust them. The destructive effect of this kind of behavior on our democracy cannot be overstated.

Mr. President, every word that a president utters projects American values around the world. The values of free expression and a reverence for the free press have been our global hallmark, for it is our ability to freely air the truth that keeps our government honest and keeps a people free. Between the mighty and the modest, truth is the great leveler.

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And so, respect for freedom of the press has always been one of our most important exports.

But a recent report published in our free press should raise an alarm. Reading from the story: *"In February...Syrian President Bashar Assad brushed off an Amnesty International report that some 13,000 people had been killed at one of his military prisons by saying, 'You can forge anything these days, we are living in a fake news era.'"*

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has complained of being *"demonized"* by *"fake news."* Last month, the report continues, with our President, quote *"laughing by his side"* Duterte called reporters *"spies."* In July, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro complained to the Russian propaganda outlet, that the world media had *"spread lots of false versions, lots of lies"* about his country, adding, *"This is what we call 'fake news' today, isn't it?"*

A state official in Myanmar recently said, *"There is no such thing as Rohingya. It is fake news,"* referring to the persecuted ethnic group.

Leaders in Singapore, a country known for restricting free speech, have promised *"fake news"* legislation in the new year. And on and on.

This feedback loop is disgraceful, Mr. President. Not only has the past year seen an American president borrow despotic language to refer to the free press, but it seems he has in turn inspired dictators and authoritarians with his own language. This is reprehensible.

We are not in a *"fake news"* era, as Bashar Assad says. We are, rather, in an era in which the authoritarian impulse is reasserting itself, to challenge free people and free societies, everywhere.

In our own country, from the trivial to the truly dangerous, it is the range and regularity of the untruths we see that should be cause for profound alarm, and spur to action. Add to that the by-now predictable habit of calling true things false, and false things true, and we have a recipe for disaster. As George Orwell warned, *"The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it."*

Any of us who have spent time in public life have endured news coverage we felt was jaded or unfair. But in our positions, to employ even idle threats to use laws or regulations to stifle criticism is corrosive to our democratic institutions. Simply put: it is the press's obligation to uncover the truth about power. It is the people's right to criticize their government. And it is our job to take it.

What is the goal of laying siege to the truth? President John F. Kennedy, in a stirring speech on the

20th anniversary of the Voice of America, was eloquent in answer to that question:

"We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people."

Mr. President, the question of why the truth is now under such assault may well be for historians to determine. But for those who cherish American constitutional democracy, what matters is the effect on America and her people and her standing in an increasingly unstable world -- made all the more unstable by these very fabrications. What matters is the daily disassembling of our democratic institutions. We are a mature democracy -- it is well past time that we stop excusing or ignoring -- or worse, endorsing -- these attacks on the truth. For if we compromise the truth for the sake of our politics, we are lost.

I sincerely thank my colleagues for their indulgence today. I will close by borrowing the words of an early adherent to my faith that I find has special resonance at this moment. His name was John Jacques, and as a young missionary in England he contemplated the question: *"What is truth?"* His search was expressed in poetry and ultimately in a hymn that I grew up with, titled *"Oh Say, What is Truth."* It ends as follows:

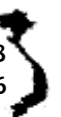
"Then say, what is truth? 'Tis the last and the first, for the limits of time it steps o'er, tho the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst. Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst, Eternal... unchanged... evermore."

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

"He's not criticizing the president because he's against oppression, he's criticizing the president because he has terrible poll numbers and he is looking for some attention," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee-Sanders' retort to speech. Source: www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/01/17/arizona-republican-sen-jeff-flake-blasts-trump-for-attacks-on-press-in-fiery-senate-floor-speech.html



Commander in Chief, Leader of the Free World



“Only truth and transparency can guarantee freedom.”

Sen. John McCain

Mr. President, Stop attacking the press

By John McCain

January 16, 2018

John McCain, a Republican, represents Arizona in the U.S. Senate



“Trump continues his unrelenting attacks on the integrity of American journalists and news outlets. This has provided cover for repressive regimes to follow suit,” Sen. John McCain wrote. (Web photo)

After leaving office, President Ronald Reagan created the Ronald Reagan Freedom Award to recognize individuals who have fought to spread liberty worldwide. Nancy Reagan continued the tradition after her husband’s death, and in 2008 she bestowed the honor on human rights icon Natan Sharansky, who credited Reagan’s strong defense of freedom for his own survival in Soviet gulags. Reagan recognized that as leader of the free world, his words carried enormous weight, and he used them to inspire the unprecedented spread of democracy around the world.

President Trump does not seem to understand that his rhetoric and actions reverberate in the same way. He has threatened to continue his attempt to discredit the free press by bestowing “fake news awards” upon reporters and news outlets whose coverage he disagrees with. Whether Trump knows it or not, these efforts are being closely watched by foreign leaders who are already using his words as cover as they silence and shutter one of the key pillars of democracy.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017 was one of the most dangerous years to be a journalist. Last year, the organization documented 262 cases of journalists being imprisoned for their work. Reporters around the world face intimidation, threats of violence, harassment, persecution and sometimes even death as governments resort to brutal censorship to silence the truth.

The committee’s report revealed a bleak global climate for press freedom, as more governments seek to control access to information and limit freedom of opinion and expression. They do this not only by arresting journalists but also by fostering distrust of media coverage and accusing reporters of undermining national security and pride. Governments dub the press the “*enemy of the people*,” weaken or eliminate their independence, and exploit the lack of serious scrutiny to encroach on individual liberties and freedoms.

This assault on journalism and free speech proceeds apace in places such as Russia, Turkey, China, Egypt, Venezuela and many others. Yet even more troubling is the growing number of attacks on press freedom in traditionally free and open societies, where censorship in the name of national security is becoming more common. Britain passed a surveillance law that experts warn chills free speech, and countries from France to Germany are looking to do the same. In Malta, a prominent journalist was brutally murdered in October after uncovering systemic government corruption. In Poland, an independent news outlet was fined (later rescinded) nearly half a million dollars for broadcasting images of an anti-government protest.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration’s attitude toward such behavior has been inconsistent at best and hypocritical at worst. While administration officials often condemn violence against reporters abroad, Trump continues his unrelenting attacks on the integrity of American journalists and news outlets. This has provided cover for repressive regimes to follow suit.

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The phrase “fake news” — granted legitimacy by an American president — is being used by autocrats to silence reporters, undermine political opponents, stave off media scrutiny and mislead citizens. CPJ documented 21 cases in 2017 in which journalists were jailed on “fake news” charges.

Trump’s attempts to undermine the free press also make it more difficult to hold repressive governments accountable. For decades, dissidents and human rights advocates have relied on independent investigations into government corruption to further their fight for freedom. But constant cries of “fake news” undercut this type of reporting and strip activists of one of their most powerful tools of dissent.

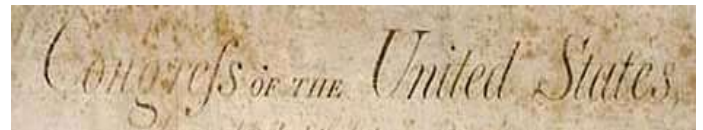
We cannot afford to abdicate America’s long-standing role as the defender of human rights and democratic principles throughout the world. Without strong leadership in the White House, Congress must commit to protecting independent journalism, preserving an open and free media environment, and defending the fundamental right to freedom of opinion and expression.

We can do this by encouraging our partners and allies to review their laws and practices, including the abuse of defamation and anti-terrorism laws, to better protect press freedom and ensure that they do not unduly shrink the space for free speech. We can authorize U.S. foreign assistance to support independent media outlets and programs that create greater media pluralism. We can do more to foster conditions in which freedom of expression and information can thrive, including working to change increasingly political attitudes toward journalism. And we can condemn violence against journalists, denounce censorship and support dissidents and activists as they seek to speak the truth.

Ultimately, freedom of information is critical for a democracy to succeed. We become better, stronger and more effective societies by having an informed and engaged public that pushes policymakers to best represent not only our interests but also our values. Journalists play a major role in the promotion and protection of democracy and our unalienable rights, and they must be able to do their jobs freely. Only truth and transparency can guarantee freedom.

Source:

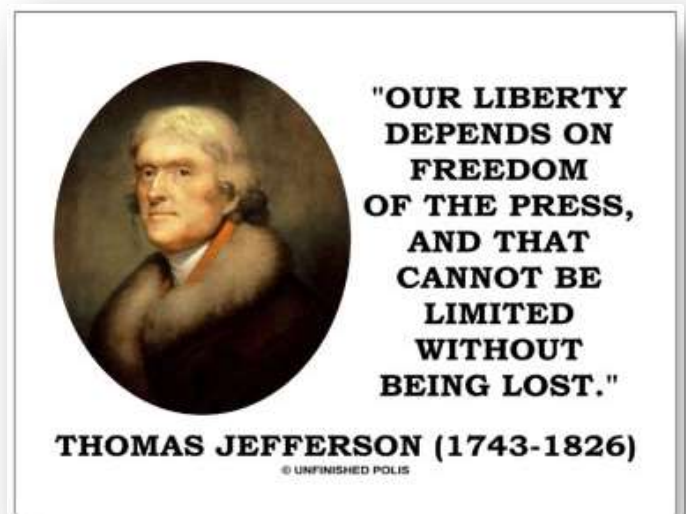
www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mr-president-stop-attacking-the-press/2018/01/16/9438c0ac-faf0-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html?tid=ss_tw-amp&utm_term=.8310e0f892bf



We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Article [I] (Amendment 1 - Freedom of expression and religion

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (emphasis added)



"I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

