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Donald Trump's war on media continues in an America divided into Fox News viewers and a more non-discriminatory crowd

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United States President Donald Trump has waged a systematic war on the American press, which is a priceless pillar of our immiserated democracy. He has decried any media outlet other than *Fox News* and its allies dispensing right-wing cant as "fake news" (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/28/upshot/donald-trump-twitter-insults.html)". The US president has dubbed the media (with the exception of *Fox*) the "enemy of the people". He has applauded murderous dictators for their draconian suppression of their press and those dictators, in turn, have justified their crimes with

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Trump has lavishly praised a US congressman (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2018/oct/19/laughter-as-trump-lauds-politicians-body-slam-of-journalist-video>) who, when questioned about healthcare policy, brutally assaulted a reporter. He has vituperatively refused to answer questions from journalists he dislikes, often verbally abusing them. He has also publicly insulted dozens of journalists (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/28/upshot/donald-trump-twitter-insults.html>) — particularly women and people of color — using crude and demeaning language. Footage of Trump grotesquely mocking a disabled reporter (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX9reO3QnUA>) had gone viral in 2016.

Last week, Trump and his administration sunk to a new low when *CNN's* Jim Acosta persisted in having Trump answer a question he had sought to evade, despite the efforts of a White House intern to seize Acosta's microphone. The US administration used manipulated video footage (<https://www.firstpost.com/india/expert-says-video-of-cnn-reporter-jim-acosta-distributed-by-white-house-was-doctored-to-make-him-look-more-aggressive-5525361.html>) of Acosta's exchange with the intern to assert that he had assaulted her and used this as a pretext to strip him of his White House press credentials. The manipulated footage omits the audio of Acosta apologising (https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2018/11/08/white-house-shares-doctored-video-support-punishment-journalist-jim-acosta/?utm_term=.8b983b65c175) to the young woman for the inadvertent contact as she sought to wrest the microphone from him.



CNN filed a suit

(<https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/13/media/cnn-sues-trump/index.html>). Surprisingly, *Fox News* publicly supported the suit (<https://www.firstpost.com/world/fox-news-to-back-cnn-in-court-battle-with-white-house-over-reporter-jim-acostas-credentials-5551671.html>), as did other media outlets. By the end of last week, a judge issued an

injunction (<https://www.firstpost.com/world/judge-sides-with-cnn-says-white-house-was->

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wrong-to-revoke-jim-acostas-press-credentials-5564611.html) and ordered Acosta's White House press pass to be reinstated while the case is heard. Although this is a victory, the war is far from over, and America's enfeebled democracy will be one of its casualties.

Trump's assailing of the American media corresponds to the dismal public trust in it. In the spring of 2018, Gallup and the Knight Foundation questioned 1,440 people about the US media (https://www.knightfoundation.org/reports/perceived-accuracy-and-bias-in-the-news-media?utm_source=link_news9&utm_campaign=item_235796&utm_medium=copy). While many respondents opined that news sources were biased, Republicans and Democrats rated the accuracy and bias of organisations very differently. Disparities were starkest regarding *Fox News*, *Breitbart News*, *CNN* and *MSNBC*, and were greatly shaped by whether the respondent espoused the ideological leaning of the source in question.

Not all of this can be attributed to Trump's contumely attacks on the freedom of the press as Americans' confidence in their media has steadily retrenched (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/143267/distrust-media-edges-record-high.aspx>). However, it is unlikely a coincidence that about half of Republicans (51 percent) polled in August (<http://time.com/5367145/republicans-media-enemy-of-the-people-poll/>) said they believed that the news media is the "enemy of the people", in contrast to 24 percent of independents and a meagre 5 percent of Democrats who answered similarly.

Moreover, that same survey found that three quarters of Republicans trusted Trump to tell the truth (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/07/25/three-quarters-of-republicans-trust-trump-over-the-media/?utm_term=.db27f25c37d7), while about 15 percent of Republicans trusted the media to be truthful. Unsurprisingly, 86 percent of Democrats trusted the media (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/07/25/three-quarters-of-republicans-trust-trump-over-the-media/?utm_term=.db27f25c37d7) compared to only 5 percent who trusted Trump. Such reliance on Trump's veracity among Republicans is discomfiting, given the well-documented evidence that he lies repeatedly on issues big and small: As of 2 November, fact-checkers at *The Washington Post* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/11/02/president-trump-has-made-false-or-misleading-claims-over-days/?utm_term=.d4d2cccb90de) reported that the US president has

made 6,420 false or misleading claims over 649 days. However, for Republicans, this will either not affect their trust in him, or they will simply dismiss these claims using the words of their cult leader: "Fake news".

Republican leaders in Congress, or elsewhere, have generally demurred from criticising Trump's antics even after liberal media and opinion leaders were targeted in a failed mass assassination attempt (<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/10/26/mail-bomber-trump-943260>) by a rabid Trump supporter. In part, other Republicans avoid criticising the president because they fear his base that loves him because of his boorish behavior, not in spite of it.

However, Trump's outrages are dangerous for democracy, and both the US president and the Republicans know it. By sowing doubt about all but right-wing media, Trump and the Republicans are confident that *Fox* and its allies will continue to garner viewership, who, in turn, will be exposed to outright lies and pro-Trump propaganda, with the net impact of improving Republican electoral outcomes. This price is high — it comes at the expense of producing highly ill-informed voters who are easily swayed by the False Prophets of *Fox News*.

This "*Fox News Effect*" has been well studied by scholars. In 2007, Stefano Della Vigna and Ethan Kaplan (<https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/122/3/1187/1879517>) wrote a scholarly study — titled "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting (<https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/122/3/1187/1879517>)" — in which they leveraged data about *Fox News*' entry into the cable market and presidential electoral data for 1996 and 2000. They found that the highly-partisan network increased the Republican vote share between 0.4 and 0.7 percentage points, which is enough to swing tight races. They also found that *Fox News* affected Republican voter turnout as well as the Republican vote share in the Senate.

The strongest impact on mobilising conservative voters was evident in Democratic-leaning districts. More recently, Gregory Martin and Ali Yurukoglu (https://web.stanford.edu/~ayurukog/cable_news.pdf) assessed that individuals who watch *Fox News* experience a substantial rightward shift in their attitudes and significantly greater

had *Fox News* not existed, the Republican presidential candidate's share of votes would have been 3.6 percentage points lower in 2004 and 6.3 points lower in 2008. Again, these margins are more than enough to swing an election.

Not only is there evidence that *Fox News* helps solidify and galvanise the Republican base, studies have shown that those who use *Fox News* as their primary source of information are much more likely to be grossly misinformed regarding basic truths about domestic and foreign policy issues. When Steven Kull and his colleagues ([http://illinois-online.org/krassa/ps101/Readings/Kull Ramsay Lewis 2003.pdf](http://illinois-online.org/krassa/ps101/Readings/Kull%20Ramsay%20Lewis%202003.pdf)) posed three basic questions about the Iraq War with indisputable, correct responses to a representative survey of American respondents, they found that *Fox News* viewers were overwhelmingly more likely to get all three rudimentary questions wrong. Those who were most likely to answer the questions correctly were those who got their news from print sources or public radio and television. However, respondents who relied on other mainstream networks (*CNN*, *ABC*, *NBC* and *CBS*) were less likely than *Fox* viewers to be misinformed, but far more likely to be so than those who used print media or public television and radio.

It needs to be stated that while numerous studies have shown conservative Americans overwhelmingly rely on *Fox News* (<http://www.loooker.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x.pdf>) and are greatly influenced by the incorrect perceptions spread by the network, many of these studies predate the emergence of *MSNBC*, which is an explicitly Democratic-leaning partisan network. Patrick C Meirick and Elena Bessarabova (<https://spssi-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/asap.12101>), in their study of partisan misperceptions, found evidence that Democrats, too, are more likely to espouse Democratic-serving misperceptions the more they accessed liberal media. However, the market share of such media is minuscule compared to the market dominance of the falsehood-fabricating *Fox News*. In October, *Fox News* averaged more total viewers (<https://www.adweek.com/tvnewser/october-2018-ratings-fox-news-channel-averaged-more-viewers-than-cnn-and-msnbc-combined/382598>) than *CNN* and *MSNBC* combined.

The enormous market share of *Fox News*, with its penchant for pro-Trump propaganda,

dishonest reporting, race-baiting and fear mongering is worrisome for democracy for at least

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First, it is well known that partisans of all stripes use biased strategies (<https://spssi-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/asap.12101>) when looking for information and tend to accept messages with which they agree while rejecting countervailing information. The result is that partisans build opinions for the purpose of defending their existing points of view rather than being objectively correct.

With the proliferation of media, it is increasingly easy for consumers to self-select into echo chambers with the disturbing reality that two distinct Americas have emerged, each equipped with what they believe to be their own "facts". However, some of these facts are clearly less factual than the other.

Second, studies have shown that is nearly impossible to dislodge a partisan fiction once it has taken hold. In fact, efforts to refute nonsense often have the adverse effect of encouraging the person to hold it more ferociously. Efforts to expose partisans to alternative news sources are virtually inefficacious (<https://spssi-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/asap.12101>) in dislodging a misperception.

America is divided. One set of Americans, largely ill-informed by *Fox News*, is fearful of change, rues the diminution of white privilege and wants to "Make America Great Again" by trying to make it White again. The other America is more cosmopolitan, tends to embrace change and diversity, is less fearful about America's changing demographics and wants an America in which people are equal before the law, irrespective of their creed, gender, race or who they choose to love. Republicans and their newly-denervated white supremacist allies know that demography is not on their side: America is changing and there is little that they can do to stop it.

This is at the heart of Trump's war on media. It's not just about vilifying and suppressing every outlet that seeks to publish the truth about his corruption, incompetence, truculence and white supremacist pandering. It's about ensuring that his cult-ish followers view him as

bona fides of behemoth *Fox News*, whose slavish willingness to serve as Trump's "state television" makes that network his single-most important constituency. As Michael M Grynbaum (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/business/media/fox-news-trump-bill-shine.html>) observed, *Fox* once gave Trump a perch. Now it's his bullhorn.

The writer has authored the books Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War (OUP, 2014) and In Their Own Words: Understanding Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (forthcoming 2018).

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Bharat Mahan

The mainstream media is 100% Democratic and anti-Trump. Instead of news, the mainstream media is spewing out hatred against Trump. Trump is responding in kind.

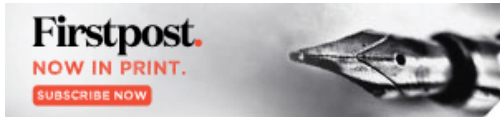
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By Gabriella Borter

(Reuters) - A pair of tornadoes killed at least 23 people on Sunday in Alabama, causing infrastructure damage with at least 150 miles per hour (241 kph) winds in the deadliest twister to hit the United States in almost six years.

The following is a list of some of the deadliest single tornadoes and tornado outbreaks in the United States over the last quarter century:

- A so-called Super Outbreak of 362 tornadoes hit the southeastern United States over three days in April 2011, killing an estimated 321 people, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Three of the tornadoes were rated EF-5, the top of the five-step Enhanced Fujita scale that meteorologists use to measure tornado strength. The system struck Alabama the hardest, wrecking Tuscaloosa and Birmingham and causing

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1 in damages across 12 states.
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- The deadliest tornado to hit the United States in the last several decades struck Joplin, Missouri on May 22, 2011 and killed at least 158 people, NOAA said. Damage from the storm exceeded \$3 billion, the most of any single tornado in U.S. history.
- The so-called Super Tuesday Outbreak of 87 tornadoes in the southeastern United States on Feb. 5, 2008, killed 57 people, according to NOAA. It had the longest footprint of any tornado in U.S. history, according to private forecaster Accuweather, touching down continuously for 122 miles (196 km) through Arkansas.
- A tornado outbreak in the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, metropolitan area on May 3, 1999, spawned 61 tornadoes and killed 55 people, with one single tornado responsible for 36 deaths, according to the Weather Channel.
- An outbreak of seven tornadoes in central Florida in February 1998 killed 42 people and injured 260 others in the state's deadliest tornado outbreak since 1962, the National Weather Service reported.
- In April 2014, an outbreak of dozens of tornadoes stirred up by a powerful storm system hit the Southeast and Midwest over a three-day period and killed 32 people in Iowa, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee, according to NOAA.
- A tornado killed 24 people on May 20, 2013 in Moore, Oklahoma. The tornado had winds over 200 miles per hour (322 kph), giving it the most severe rating of EF-5. It lasted about 40 minutes, and caused billions of dollars worth of damage, according to NOAA.

(Compiled by Gabriella Borter in New York; Editing by Scott Malone and Grant McCool)

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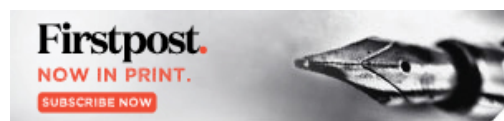
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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Three U.S. House committees sent a letter to the White House and State Department on Monday asking for details on President Donald Trump's communications with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The House Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and Government Oversight committees said in a statement they wrote to acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo seeking documents and interviews on Trump's communications with Putin.

(Reporting by David Alexander; Editing by Lisa Lambert)

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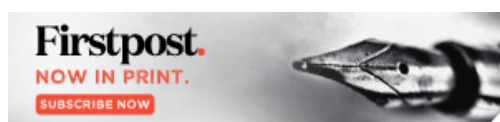
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By Deisy Buitrago, Angus Berwick and Carlos Jasso

CARACAS, Venezuela (Reuters) - Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido returned to his country on Monday after flouting a court-imposed travel ban by touring Latin American countries to boost support for his campaign to tighten regional pressure on President Nicolas Maduro.

A crowd of cheering supporters greeted Guaido and his wife as they stepped into the Maiquetia airport's arrivals hall, and then sped to an opposition rally in eastern Caracas where thousands had gathered to welcome him.

The return of Guaido, recognised by most Western nations as Venezuela's legitimate head of state, signals that Maduro's adversaries have at least temporarily avoided the arrest of a leader who has united the traditionally fractured opposition.

But it will also lift pressure on Maduro to act against Guaido as his authority continues to wane and the country's economic meltdown fuels malnutrition and hunger.

"Hope has been born and it will not die - things are going well," Guaido told the crowd at a plaza in the Las Mercedes district. "We are going to celebrate this small victory today."

He announced plans to meet on Tuesday with public employees, who have been historically pressured by the ruling Socialist Party to join pro-government rallies, as well as for a major march on Saturday.

Guaido secretly left Venezuela for Colombia, in violation of a Supreme Court order, to coordinate efforts there on Feb. 23 to send humanitarian aid into Venezuela to alleviate widespread shortages of food and medicine.

But troops blocked convoys of aid trucks sent from Colombia and Brazil, leading to clashes that killed at least six people along the Brazilian border, rights groups say.

From Colombia, he travelled to Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay to shore up Latin American support for a transition government that would precede free and fair elections.

On Sunday, he departed by plane from the Ecuadorean coastal town of Salinas but had not

appeared publicly since. Venezuelan media outlets reported that he flew from Panama City to

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He had kept details of his trip under wraps and he arrived without prior notice, meeting ambassadors for European countries at the airport.

Guaido calls Maduro a usurper and says his presidency is illegitimate after he secured re-election last year in a vote widely considered a sham. Maduro retains control of state institutions and the apparent loyalty of senior figures in the armed forces.

Asked by a reporter how he was received at the airport by immigration authorities, who could have prevented his entry for violating the travel ban, Guaido said they addressed him as president - a swipe at Maduro, who calls him a U.S. puppet.

"Here's my passport, safe and sound," Guaido said, showing it to the crowd.

The Information Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"FACE JUSTICE"

Maduro, who denies there is a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, has said Guaido's arrest depends on the justice system.

"He can't just come and go. He will have to face justice, and justice prohibited him from leaving the country," he told ABC News last week.

Protesters in Caracas on Monday, wearing dressed in white and chanting "Freedom," said arresting Guaido would spark new demonstrations.

"If the regime has even a little bit of conscience, they should not arrest Guaido because people truly would not put up with it," said Franklin Lopez, a 60-year-old administrator.

The United States has warned Maduro of the consequences of arresting Guaido and the U.S. Treasury imposed new sanctions on Friday targeting Venezuelan military officials.

After the military blocked the aid convoys, Guaido proposed that "all options be kept open" to topple Maduro, but foreign military intervention is seen as unlikely and his international backers are instead using a mix of sanctions and diplomacy.

"President Guaido safely returned to Venezuela today," U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said on Twitter. "The United States fully supports Guaido and the National Assembly.

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The government has jailed dozens of opposition leaders and activists for seeking to overthrow Maduro through violent street demonstrations in 2014 and 2017, including Guaido's mentor, Leopoldo Lopez, who remains under house arrest.

Turning away from previous hopes of a swift end to Maduro's government, Guaido said on Sunday it would be a "long and difficult process."

He has offered future amnesties to state officials and soldiers who recognise Guaido, though the military has largely remained loyal to Maduro despite Colombia's migration agency reporting several hundred desertions since Feb. 23.

(Additional reporting by Vivian Sequera, Fabian Cambero, and Shaylim Valderrama in Caracas, Marco Bello in Bogota, and Efrain Otero in Maiquetia; Writing by Angus Berwick and Brian Ellsworth; Editing by Clarence Fernandez, Susan Thomas and James Dalglish)

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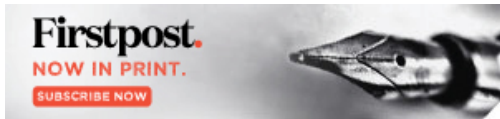
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(Reuters) - A CommutAir plane, a 50-seat Embraer ERJ145 jet, flying from Newark to Presque Isle landed on the grass adjacent to a runway at the Northern Maine Regional Airport, injuring one pilot as well as three passengers, the Federal Aviation Administration and the company said on Monday.

The Ohio-based regional carrier, in which No.3 U.S. airline operator United Continental Holdings Inc owns a minority interest, said the injuries of the crew and the passengers were minor and they were being attended to by emergency personnel.

There were 28 passengers and three crew members on board the aircraft, which landed at 11:43 a.m. ET.

The FAA said it would investigate the incident.

(Reporting by Ankit Ajmera in Bengaluru; Editing by Maju Samuel)

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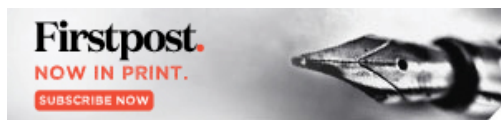
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