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What Just Happened?! A Review of President Trump's Seventh Week.

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“We regret not having the courage to make such and such decision,” wrote the dour Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran in *Drawn and Quartered*. “We regret much more having made one—any one. Better no action than the consequences of an action.” These would be wise words for President Donald Trump to heed. There are many lessons the American people can draw from the first 50 days of Trump’s presidency—“Don’t elect someone who gets their information from *Fox & Friends*” and “Donald Trump will never change” being two of the biggest—but this is a lesson for Trump himself: It’s better to do nothing because the blowback for every hastily conceived and poorly executed action of his presidency has been devastating.

Trump’s seventh week in office was defined by two things. The first was sheer rage. The Russia scandal once again kneecapped his presidency, this time, nearly taking down Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Livid that the news cycle had turned against him after he received positive reviews for his address to a joint session of Congress, Trump took to Twitter to make a wild accusation against former President Barack Obama for which he had zero evidence. The second was incompetence. Over the past few days, Trump has had to act like an actual president and whip the votes needed to pass the House GOP’s repeal and replacement of Obamacare. Trump, the great negotiator, proved he has no idea how to do this.

After starving himself of Twitter to prime pundits into saying that he was becoming more presidential (it worked), Trump was back with a vengeance on Friday. He tweeted *a lot* and each tweet was dumber than the last. He kicked things off by blasting the Democrats for not having confirmed his cabinet, but all 15 cabinet picks have been approved and every senior official who hasn’t been confirmed has been held up by Republicans, not Democrats. He then tweeted a conservative meme so obviously dumb and disingenuous that he had to heap on the smarm to try to sell it—in one instance he had to also dictionary.com search “hereby”:

But this actually makes the opposite case that Trump thinks it does. Unlike much of the Russia scandal, the case against Jeff Sessions (like the case against disgraced former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn) is straightforward. The problem isn’t that Sessions and Flynn and seemingly every other member of Trump’s presidential campaign met with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak. The problem is that Sessions and Flynn lied about it afterward, in

Session's case under oath, which suggested that they're hiding something. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill may have forgotten about their past contacts with Kislyak, but they are not under suspicion of cozying up to a foreign government that allegedly meddled in the U.S. election. There's a difference. Also on Friday, Mike Pence is old and got hacked—while using a private email address. Oops.

But all of that was prelude to Saturday, when Trump popped off for real.

This is insane—so insane that there was pretty much radio silence from Trump's own team for 24 hours while they figured out what the hell they were going to say about this clearly insane thing. Trump has access to the best, most classified intelligence in the country and presumably could have used it to, you know, check if the accusation that Barack Obama had wiretapped him was credible. But nope. Trump read a Breitbart article that alleged that his phones had been tapped and treated it as the truth.

If this were true, it would be the biggest political story in 40 years—the first black president illegally tapping a political rival's phones to try to secure his legacy! If Trump had *any* evidence that this was true—and wasn't just venting on Twitter because everyone in his campaign is getting grilled for talking to Russia all the time—you'd expect a huge rollout befitting the political scandal of this young century. Instead, 30 minutes later, Trump moved on to blasting Arnold Schwarzenegger. This would be like Woodward and Bernstein breaking off a Watergate story after 450 words to write about *M*A*S*H*.

The next two days would be defined almost entirely by the White House's response to these very ill-advised tweets. After 24 hours, the White House decided to dump the burden of proof on Congress, demanding an investigation into Trump's accusations. In other words, the investigation would be a fishing expedition. There is something darkly funny and absurd and almost postmodern about demanding a lengthy investigation into an obviously false accusation. But it is also chilling: The aim of such an investigation would not be to uncover the truth, but to find a shred of evidence that the administration could then hold up and say, "Look, you mocked us for saying that Barack Obama put on coveralls and a fake mustache and bugged Trump Tower, but this tiny piece of evidence suggests...Maybe he did?" On Sunday, it was also reported that FBI Director James Comey, Trump's former BFF, was apoplectic over the tweets, because they 1) had no basis in reality; 2) smeared the FBI as little more than a politically motivated intelligence agency; and 3) would result in a giant headache for everyone, with valuable resources being devoted to an investigation about nothing.

But on Monday, it became clear that James Comey had no friends left. Democrats, having been burned once (the whole "Comey swinging the election to Donald Trump" thing still stings), refused to back him up. Meanwhile, Trump deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders basically said the administration doesn't give a hoot what James Comey thinks about anything. At that point, the "Obama bugged Trump Tower" story—which, again, if true, would be the political story of the last half-century—receded to the background.

Trump on Monday signed a new travel ban that was very similar to the old travel ban—still horrific, still unconstitutional, but now affecting six, not seven, Muslim-majority countries. Also on Monday: Brain surgeon Ben Carson revealed that he has no idea how the human brain

works and called slaves “immigrants”; the Trump administration plagiarized ExxonMobil, one of the few global entities that can give it a run for its money in terms of being a net negative for human civilization; and the House GOP’s Obamacare replacement, the American Health Care Act, leaked to the press.

By Tuesday morning, it was clear that everyone hated this bill. Conservatives hated it because it was, in significant ways, not that different from the Affordable Care Act. Liberals hated it because its principal differences—like the repeal of the individual mandate and the freezing of the Medicaid expansion—would result in millions of people losing their health insurance. The bill is staggeringly regressive: It is mostly tax cuts and regulatory cuts that benefit rich people, combined with nonsensical revisions that hurt the poor and the elderly, and especially those who are poor *and* elderly. Meanwhile, there are still enough incentives for poor and/or old people that major conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute came out strongly against it. When the entire Democratic Party (which wants universal health insurance) and conservatives (who think poor people should have to beg for health care, *Oliver Twist*-style) come together in opposition of a bill, you know that something is wrong.

The AHCA wasn’t helped when Utah Representative Jason Chaffetz said that people should have to choose between health care and an iPhone, suggesting that he has no idea how much either costs. A \$300 iPhone and \$10,000 in yearly insurance bills are obviously not the same thing, but Chaffetz’s point still fits within long-held conservative orthodoxy, which is that “if poor people can afford normal things, then we should make them pay for crushingly expensive things that regularly force not-poor people into bankruptcy.” If that wasn’t bad enough, even Trump didn’t seem sold on the bill. Yes, he tweeted lukewarm praise—though with the caveat that the bill was open for “negotiation”—but he seemed more interested in continuing to level factually inaccurate smears against Barack Obama.

By Wednesday, the Trump administration was setting up to fight on two fronts. First, they would go all-in on the AHCA, even though it sucks and everyone hates it. Second, if the bill goes down, they would blame Speaker Paul Ryan. (This is actually fine, because he has it coming.) But replacing Obamacare wasn’t the only thing on Trump’s plate. He also tweeted twice about International Women’s Day:

These are very bad tweets for very obvious reasons, namely Trump’s long history of misogyny, his sexual assault and harassment allegations, his “grab them by the pussy” video, his sexist feud with Megyn Kelly, “Miss Piggy,” the list goes on and on and on. But the Trump administration is nothing, if not irony-free. Speaking of sexism, Trump ended the day by dining with Ted and Heidi Cruz, who was once the subject of a disgusting and sexist picture that Trump tweeted.

On Thursday, the full-court press on Obamacare continued. The reason for the rush became clear when it was reported that the Congressional Budget Office would likely eviscerate the bill for kicking 15 million people off their health insurance and generally being an incredibly lame and bad bill. A number of senators—most notably Rand Paul, Tom Cotton, and Mike Lee—said they would not vote for it, creating a possible situation in which the House, after symbolically voting to repeal Obamacare roughly 2,743,876 times during the Obama era, might symbolically vote to repeal it in the Trump era, as well. Paul Ryan did a powerpoint presentation to try to save the

bill, but in the process suggested that he—The One True Wonk—had no idea how health insurance actually works.

Trump's seventh week in office was, by his standards, relatively uneventful. He slandered an ex-president by accusing him of a Watergate-esque conspiracy, signed an executive order banning travel from six Muslim-majority countries, and unveiled his terrible and bad replacement for Obamacare. It's been 50 days.