

Statesman

Young: Instead of wall, Trump builds miles and miles of big, beautiful lies

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No one has the Trump administration figured out like satirist Andy Borowitz of The New Yorker. Here's the headline to [his post last week](#):

“Sarah Huckabee Sanders offers to lie for free during shutdown.”

It's a tough job, carrying bucket after bucket of bilge for your boss, but someone has to do it. (Presumably Sanders gets paid through President Donald Trump's “crisis.” She'll not miss out on any of her \$179,000-a-year salary, with a \$10,000 raise scheduled.)

As New York Times columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner [Thomas Friedman puts it](#), the nation's only crisis is having a president “no one believes.”

You bet it's a crisis. Bulletin: Even Fox News is calling this administration out on its hysterical stream of right-wing confections.

That's where Sanders floated the line that “nearly 4,000 known or suspected terrorists come into our country illegally and we know that our most vulnerable point of entry is at the southern border.”

Fox News' [Chris Wallace was on it](#). He pointed out that just about all of the people she cited, those listed on a federal list of suspected terrorists, were stopped at airports.

How many of those suspects were apprehended at the border? [Six](#).

Six? Four thousand? That's only 3,994 people away from the truth. Meanwhile, the government shutdown affects 800,000 federal workers.

The biggest lie is that the people the wall would stop are physical threats to you and me. It's such a spurious and racist claim that any reasonable person should denounce the Grand Weasel.

What other lies has Trump told about this outrageous vanity quest? First, of course, was that [Mexico would pay for it](#). Over and over he said it. Now he's saying, with Republican hand-servants echoing his claim, that revenue from better trade deals with Mexico will result in the \$5.7 billion he says he needs.

The thing is, if he were to get every penny it won't even scratch the surface of the costly white elephant along the border.

A Cato Institute analysis finds that completing a border fence along the entire 2,000 miles of Mexican border would cost an astronomical \$59.8 billion — and this factors in roughly 700 miles of barrier built since 2006.

In other words, Trump could have his \$5.7 billion and would have barely made a dent in stopping the flow of desperate people trying to make it to this country.

And for this he's shut down the government.

By the way, what is Trump's proud-to-shut-it-down gambit itself costing? According to S&P Global Ratings, in a matter of days the cost would exceed the \$5.7 billion Trump has demanded. As of Jan. 11, it had cost U.S. economy \$3.6 billion.

Trump made a clumsy act in trotting out his empty claims of a national emergency before a national audience. It's one thing to tweet falsehoods to those who will digest them. It's another to interrupt America's evening for said purpose.

Not only do a majority of Americans oppose the shutdown and Trump's expressed purpose for it, three-quarters of those polled by NPR say it is "embarrassing for the country," including a majority of Republicans.

The gall merchant in the Oval Office had the temerity to say that large numbers of federal employees support what he's doing. Sure they do, as they try to figure out how to pay next month's rent and go to food banks to feed their families.

This is a losing game for Trump and for America. His precious \$5.7 billion is not worth what he has created. But the "border crisis" serves to distract from his other big problems.

Fortunately, one person it is not distracting is special counsel Robert Mueller.