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Trump is back to racist rhetoric

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Politico reports:

President Donald Trump on Thursday ditched his “boring” prepared remarks at a tax roundtable in West Virginia, instead repeating his claim that “millions” of people are voting illegally and boasting that he was right about the threat of Mexican rapists.

“You know, this was going to be my remarks, it would’ve have taken about two minutes, but to hell with it,” the president said, tossing papers up in the air. “That would have been a little boring, a little boring.” . . .

“Remember my opening remarks at Trump Tower when I opened? Everybody said, ‘Oh, he was so tough.’ I used the word rape,” the president said. “And yesterday it came out where this journey coming up, women are raped at levels that nobody has ever seen before.”

His stream-of-consciousness comments were rather hard to follow, but he seemed to suggest the U.S. Army is building the wall (not to anyone’s knowledge) and, contrary to his assertion, money in the omnibus explicitly cannot be used for a wall. His allegations about massive voting fraud are unfounded. Moreover, his assertion that Mexicans are responsible for a massive increase in rapes is absurd, unsupported and downright racist. It smacks of Jim Crow talk to suggest minority men are fiends preying on (apparently) white women. He said we need to “change our laws,” but rape is already illegal of course and immigration officials already enforce our immigration laws.

We have noted that the most recent FBI crime statistics do not support the assertion that there is any massive uptick in violent crime. (The FBI put out a statement last year advising, “Preliminary figures indicate that law enforcement agencies throughout the nation showed an overall decrease of 0.8 percent in the number of violent crimes brought to their attention for the first 6 months of 2017 when compared with figures reported for the same time in 2016.”) Overall, violent crimes are substantially down over the past few decades. There is no association between crime and so-called sanctuary cities. Immigrants commit fewer crimes than native-born Americans. (The Cato Institute, for example, found: “Empirical studies of immigrant criminality generally find that immigrants do not increase local crime rates and are less likely to cause crime than their native-born peers, and that natives are more likely to be incarcerated than immigrants. .

. . The incarceration rate was 1.53 percent for natives, 0.85 percent for illegal immigrants, and 0.47 percent for legal immigrants.”)

This should not be brushed off simply as Trump “at it again” or “just playing to the base.” Trump is inciting racial animosity and smearing millions of immigrants by making a racially incendiary allegation not backed up by facts. Republicans will roll their eyes and remain silent; Sarah Huckabee Sanders will dodge questions about this. (The White House already tried to claim he was referring to immigrants victimized traveling to the United States. However such crimes have not to our knowledge increased; border crossings in total are down.)

Like clockwork, Trump soon will move on to another outrageous statements and this racist harangue will evaporate into the political ether. His persistent race baiting and assaults on the truth are precisely what right-wing populists do in France (most prominently by the National Front) and in other European countries beset by neo-fascist movements. Trump’s latest outburst is one more indication that the longer he remains in office the more damage will be done to our multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy.

UPDATE: A Justice Department official pointed out that “rate of rape has increased by 12.5 percent (from 35.9 to 40.4) from 2013-2016.” The department did not answer my repeated questioning as to whether rape was much more prevalent in the 1970s when violent crime rates were higher than they are today, or if there is any data showing illegal immigrants are responsible for the recent increase. In fact, estimates showed an astonishing 2.8 rapes for every 1,000 people in 1979.