

# #6 MOST-READ in 2017: Donald Trump Rants and Raves at the Press in a Classic Example of Misdirection



*By Andrew Ricci, Vice President, [LEVICK](#)*

First, some definitions. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, rant (verb) is “to utter in a bombastic declamatory fashion; to talk in a noisy, excited, or declamatory manner; to scold vehemently.” Rave (verb) is “to talk irrationally in or as if in delirium; to speak out wildly; to talk with extreme enthusiasm.”

When President Trump stood up on Thursday in a press conference, he was bombastic and declamatory. He vehemently scolded the press. And he spoke out wildly for a full hour and 18 minutes. “Tomorrow, they will say, ‘Donald Trump rants and raves at the press,’” he said. And boy, was he right.

Almost immediately after the press conference was over, journalists weighed in. CNN’s Jake Tapper called it “an airing of grievances” and said it was “unhinged.” Shep Smith from FOX News – a network that has been more friendly than most toward the Trump Administration – railed against it, saying “It’s crazy what we’re watching every day.” And seemingly every journalist in between weighed in with a similar sentiment.

Monitoring Twitter in the hours after the presser ended, many

agreed that it was one of the top five craziest press conferences in modern history – up there with former South Carolina Governor (and current U.S. Representative) Mark Sanford’s press conference announcing that he was not, in fact, hiking the Appalachian Trail but was instead engaging in an illicit affair and former Rep. Anthony Weiner’s press conference admitting to sending lewd photos via Twitter.



(Photo Source: Twitter)

In short, it was a circus, but it was what we have come to expect from this unorthodox administration.

Much has been written unpacking the President’s claims from the press conference, and fact checking the easily-disproven falsehoods he pushes from the podium. Here’s the thing, though. The President achieved what I suspect was his ultimate goal, which was change the subject.

The past few weeks’ revelations about his administration’s close ties to Russia were truly damaging stuff. News that his

National Security Advisor had discussed sanctions with his Russian counterpart before the inauguration violated longstanding protocols that dictated the United States has one President at a time.

Shortly after General Flynn resigned, more news came to light that officials from his campaign had been in contact with Russian intelligence officials in the year before the election in communications that were intercepted by American law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The investigation thus far is classified, so we don't have all of the details. We don't know what was discussed or how many of the President's campaign advisors were talking to the Russians.

But this had the potential to be a big scandal and was getting wall-to-wall coverage in every form of media. People were throwing around the term "Watergate," and not as hyperbole. And then, out of nowhere, came "the press conference."

Let's make no mistake: the press conference was juicy and fun to watch. There were almost too many things to cover. And by giving a wealth of things to cover, the President ensured that Russia was unlikely to be one of them.

Look at Friday's newspaper front pages. *The New York Times* had three stories above the fold, two of which were about the presser. The Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and *Chicago Tribune* had similar front page treatments. We are no longer talking about the highly damaging Russia story.

Ranting and raving is Donald Trump's modus operandi, and has been since he became a player on the political scene several years ago. During the early years of the Obama Administration he ranted and raved, peddling conspiracy theories about President Obama's birthplace and religion. During his campaign, he ranted and raved about his opponents. This is what he does. He is who we thought he was. But every time he

does it, the media covers his ranting and raving in an almost too self-aware way. Every minute they spend accusing him of ranting and raving plays into his narrative that the media is out to get them, and it's another minute they aren't spending covering the real-world impact of his policy proposals and his actions.

Magicians and con artists alike learn the classic art of misdirection as one of the first lessons of their craft, as it is the foundation for their ability to trick you. Regardless of whether you think the President is a magician or a con artist, we should all stop falling for the trick. It isn't magic, and we would all be better off paying attention to the coin hidden in the other hand.

*About the Author: Andrew Ricci, Vice President at D.C. communications firm [LEVICK](#). Andrew, an experienced media relations expert, content-creation specialist, and public affairs strategist, started his career working on political campaigns and on Capitol Hill, serving as a senior communications aide to Rep. Zack Space (D-Ohio) and as the Congressman's official spokesman during his reelection campaign. At LEVICK, Andrew now counsels a wide range of clients navigating reputational challenges in the public eye.*