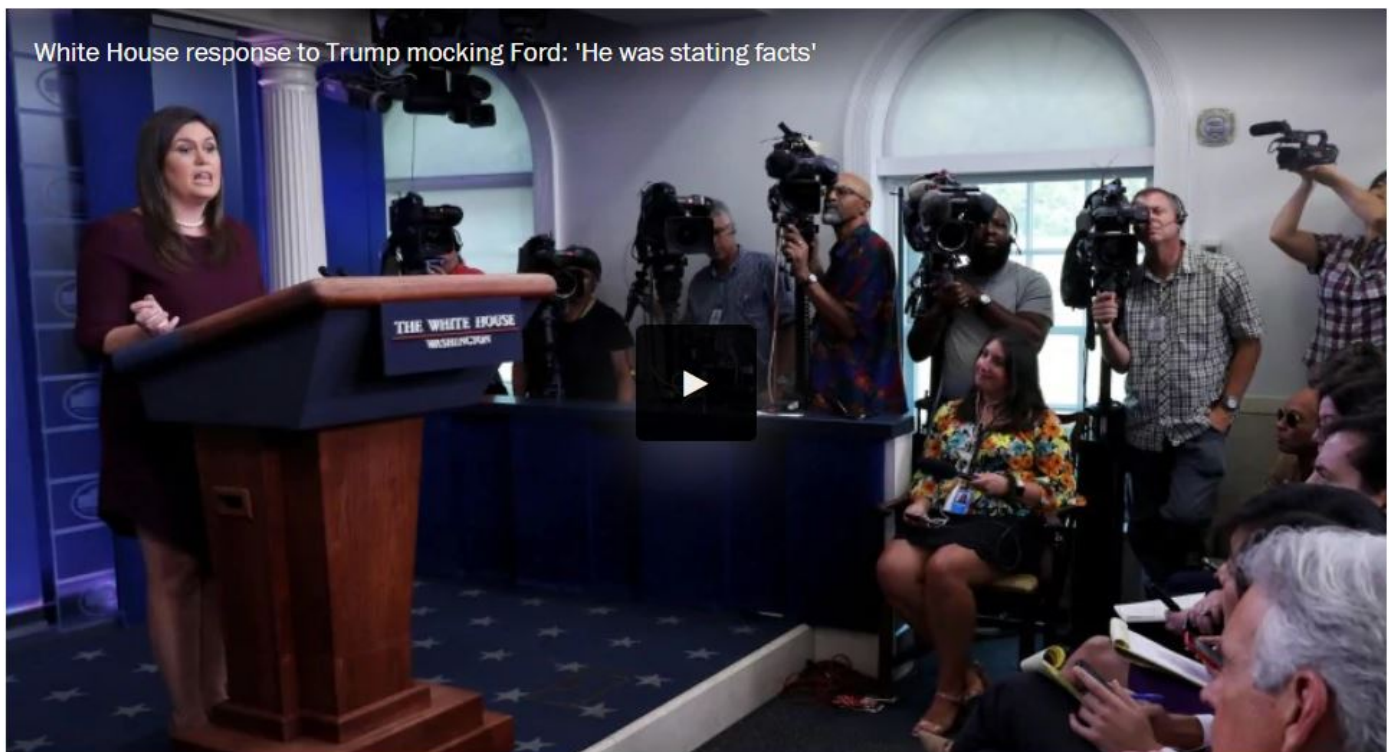


Exhibit 24

Style • Perspective

Dishing up lies while proclaiming the love of facts, Trump and Sarah Sanders gaslight America



By **Margaret Sullivan**

Media columnist

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President Trump's assault on truth — and would-be truth-tellers — has hit a new low.

It may not seem possible, considering that this is a president who has misled or lied to the public [thousands of](#)

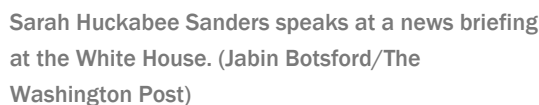
[times](#).

But consider what happened in a White House news briefing Wednesday afternoon. Then consider this week's rushed and [restricted FBI investigation](#) of Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh. And, finally, consider the administration's response to the [New York Times's groundbreaking investigation](#) of Trump family finances that was published this week.

There can be no doubt: We're in a whole new phase of the Orwellian nightmare in which black is called white, and you'd better not dare object to that.

In White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders's briefing Wednesday, she blatantly lied in describing her boss's ridicule, at a rally the night before, of Christine Blasey Ford. (Imagine the volume of lies we'd be subjected to if these "daily" briefings happened more frequently than once every few weeks.)

Anyone who saw [Trump's performance](#) could observe that he was cruelly mocking the California professor who has accused Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her when they were in high school — all to the delight of his laughing and cheering crowd.

 Sarah Huckabee Sanders speaks at a news briefing at the White House. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

Michael Bromwich, one of Ford's attorneys, aptly described what Trump did as "vicious, vile and soulless."

But Sanders countered reporters' repeated questions about it by stating that the president was merely reciting the facts of the case. She ignored the reality that the supposed facts he gave (for example, that Kavanaugh's accuser didn't know whether the alleged assault happened upstairs or downstairs) contradicted what Ford had said last week to a global audience under oath.

And — this was rich — Sanders offered the idea that facts, not emotion, should decide whether Kavanaugh should be confirmed.

"A very contemptuous, evasive and unhelpful performance even by Sanders standards," tweeted Daniel Dale, Washington correspondent for the Toronto Star and one of the straightest shooters among those who cover the White House.

Then — perhaps worse still — there's the extremely restricted FBI investigation that, according to [new reporting in the New Yorker](#) and elsewhere, did not include the testimony of knowledgeable people who wanted to cast light on the allegations against Kavanaugh.

Sanders spouted the GOP line that the White House had given the FBI free rein.

But as [The Washington Post reported](#): "Even before the investigation ended, several people who said they had information that could be useful said they ended up mired in bureaucracy when they tried to get in touch with the FBI."

And the bureau was even reportedly restricted from exploring whether Kavanaugh had lied under oath about his alcohol use.

The New Yorker's Ronan Farrow and Jane Mayer [wrote](#) that potential witnesses "have been resorting to sending statements, unsolicited, to the Bureau and to senators, in hopes that they would be seen before the inquiry concluded."

The fact that the report was completed well ahead of the one-week deadline adds to the undeniable conclusion that this was far less a search for truth in a complex and perhaps unknowable situation, and much more an old-fashioned whitewash.

Yet we're supposed to believe that any questioning of this amounts to "moving the goal posts."

That's classic gaslighting, which longtime Trump observer (and "Art of the Deal" ghostwriter) Tony Schwartz [once described](#) as "a blend of lying, denial, insistence and intimidation designed to fuel uncertainty and doubt in others about what's actually true."

The gaslighting extended, too, to Trump's reaction to a meticulously reported and far-reaching New York Times investigation of Trump's crooked family finances.

The report was — according to Trump, his lawyer and Sanders — completely false and defamatory. They haven't addressed the specifics, except to say that a lawsuit against the Times may be forthcoming.

Add that to the list of things that are best not to believe. (My colleague Paul Farhi wrote about how often [Trump threatens to sue](#), and how little tends to come of those threats.)

Now add in the disparagement of reporters that we've seen worsen in recent days: Trump's gratuitous [insult of ABC's Cecilia Vega](#) was another new low.

Each instance of gaslighting, each contemptuous denial of what we've seen or heard, each shameless lie threatens to move us farther from the shared reality we need as functioning citizens.

"It's all so confusing," said the woman seated next to me on a flight from Texas last week as the Kavanaugh hearings were concluding.

Predictable as all of this is, it's deeply disturbing. Or it ought to be.

But it's hard to maintain a sense of outrage, or certainty, when the lies and obfuscation just keep coming.

The sheer exhaustion — understandable as it is — might be the most dangerous problem of all.

For more by Margaret Sullivan visit wapo.st/sullivan



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