

Donald Trump's explanation of his wire-tapping tweets will shock and amaze you

By **Chris Cillizza** March 16

Donald Trump sat down with Fox News's Tucker Carlson on Thursday night to chat about his first two months in office. The two talked about Trump's recently-released 2005 tax returns, how he uses Twitter and, well, a lot of other random stuff. Using [Genius](#), I annotated it. You can too! Sign up for [Genius](#) and annotate alongside me! To see an annotation, click or tap the highlighted part of the transcript.

TUCKER CARLSON, FOX NEWS HOST: Mr. President, thanks for joining us.

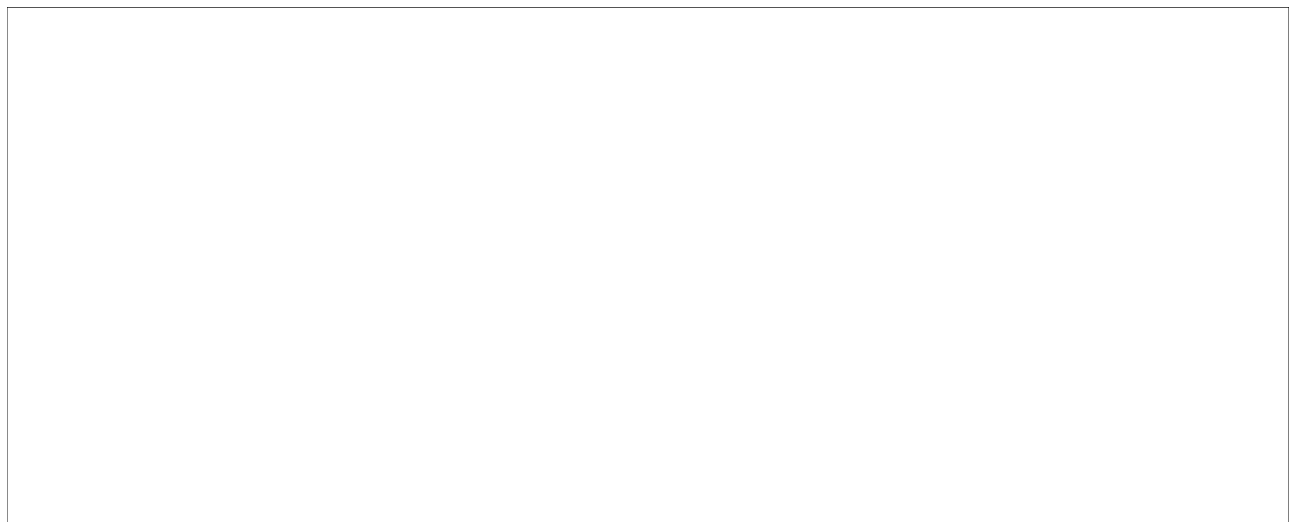
DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Thank you.

CARLSON: So last night, your tax return from 2005, the first two pages, appeared, and the reporter who got it, he said in his mailbox, said that the front of it is stamped client copy, and he suggested that it did not come from the IRS, but that it was leaked to him potentially by someone in the White House, wasn't it?

TRUMP: Well certainly not from the White House. That, I can tell you. I don't know where they got it. This guy's been following me for 25 years. He's -- he's not much. And I don't know, I have no idea where they got it, but it's illegal, and you're not supposed to have it, and it's not supposed to be leaked. And it's certainly not an embarrassing tax return at all, but it's an illegal thing. They've been doing it, they've done it before, and I think it's a disgrace.

CARLSON: So it showed that you paid about a little less than 25 percent federal taxes on your income that year, which was more than a lot of people, but it's still less than the 40 percent that wage earners, people do investments (ph) would be paying. Is it fair to have a tax system -- I know you're doing tax reform soon -- where wage earners pay twice the tax that investors do?

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TRUMP: Well I actually paid less than that, and it is not fair, because the income was actually \$250 million for the year, and if you notice, there was about \$100 million in tax deductions and depreciation and various other charges. So actually the income was at the 250 level, and if you look at it, it's really a lower number, and no, I don't think it's fair. And I've been complaining about it for a long time.

Because I don't care about me anymore. I care about the people out there. Me, I'm very satisfied. I'm not going to go back into building major buildings someday. I'm not going to be doing what I used to do, and used to have a good time doing it. This is what I'm doing now, and I'm saving a lot of money. On the airplanes, I saved \$725 million, probably took me a half an hour if you added up all of the times. And we've saved a tremendous amount of money in government already, and that's just the beginning.

I will tell you, the tax -- people are paying too high a tax. And one of the reasons I want to get the healthcare taken care of -- and it has to come statutorily and for other reasons, various complex reasons, having to do with politics, and also Congress -- it has to come first. It really has to come first. One of the reasons I want to get it finished, ideally soon, is because I want to start on the taxes. People are paying too high, companies are paying too high, it's affecting our jobs, it's affecting a lot of things.

Now with that being said, the country's doing, right now, really well. The level of optimism is up highest it's been in 15 years. You see the kind of numbers coming out, it's amazing the enthusiasm. I saw it this morning on "Fox And Friends", I watch -- I like that group of three people. But they had a man who was saying, Trump is the greatest president ever and there will never be one like him.

Now, the thing is, I've only been there for like 50 days. But he was very enthusiastic. But he was talking -- he's a manufacturer. And I've taken off regulations by the thousands, and we're just starting. We're just starting. So there's great optimism about the economy, but we have to get the taxes reduced.

CARLSON: But you want to start -- and you can imagine a system where I think federal top is a little less than 40 percent. Obviously taxes at the top on capital are 20, but you'd like to see them at parity?

TRUMP: It has to go down. Well, it's going to go -- first of all, it's going to go way down for the middle class. It's going to go way down for business. I'm going to try and get the 15 percent level if we can for the business. I think we'll probably be a little bit higher than that, but we're going to try and get the 15 percent level.

There's tremendous waste in this country. There's tremendous -- the bidding procedures in the country -- I'll give you an example. Medicine. I met with a man that I really liked, Elijah Cummings, Congressman. And he was in my office, and so passionate about prescription drugs, and drugs, the fact that they're so expensive in this country and so expensive for people, and I'm going to work and put in this bill, or shortly thereafter a new bill bidding for drugs and prescription drugs.

You go to Europe, they buy them for a fraction, from the same company, they buy them for a fraction of what they pay in the United States. Because we have a middle man system, and we have a lot of bad systems, but basically, we don't have a good bidding system, and we're going to get drug prices so far lower than they are now your head will spin.

CARLSON: So you said, in a subsequent bill -- let's talk about this bill. So it's been seven years since Obamacare passed, and Republicans have said the whole time, we're going to get rid of it, and we're going to give you something better. Are you satisfied with the bill we're now looking at that Paul Ryan is pushing is the best the Republicans could do after seven years of thinking about it?

TRUMP: I think we're going to have negotiation. But you have to understand, we only have 52. We only have two vote -- we have a two vote margin. And you're always -- to get 52 people is very hard. If we had 60 or 60 votes, we could do something differently. But we're never going to get a Democrat vote, they're never going to vote for us.

If I had the greatest bill in the history of the world, they would not vote for us, because they hate the Republicans, probably hate me, but they hate the Republicans so badly that they can't see straight. So they're always going to vote against us. It's really a shame.

CARLSON: Right.

TRUMP: Because -- and that's one of the problems that we have when people come into my office about lowering drug prices, lowering other things -- the Democrats are always going to vote against us. It's been simmering for years. The hatred has been there for years, not just with me. I mean the hatred has been there for years.

You know, when I was in Washington years ago, I'd come -- and Republicans, they'd fight with the Democrats during the day, and then you'd see them out to dinner at a restaurant together, their families would be out, I mean, they got along. The hatred is so incredible. And it, honestly, it's been like that for a long time. It's been like that through the Obama years. It's been like that, to a large extent, through the Bush years.

But, if we had 60 votes, perhaps we'd do it a different way. But the only way you're going to get it passed is with Republican votes, because the Democrats -- no matter how bad Obamacare is, and it's the worst anybody's ever seen, it's a disaster -- Obamacare is a disaster. The premiums are going up at numbers as high as 116 percent. And by the way, this year will be the

worst year of all. And I said the other day, they criticized me. I said look, Obama's gone. Smart guy. He put things on, '17 is going to be the worst year because he's gone. He knew that was the year. I mean, let him be out before it implodes.

Obamacare is imploding, it's a disaster, and the Democrats know that. If we had the greatest healthcare bill ever in history and we needed eight votes from the Democrats to get us up to the 60 number that you would need, they wouldn't vote for it. It's a very selfish thing. They're doing a very, very bad disservice to the country.

CARLSON: This bill has, as one of its centerpieces, a tax cut for investors that would primarily benefit people making over \$250,000 a year. Already done pretty well in the past 10 years, as you know. A Bloomberg analysis showed that counties that voted for you, middle class and working class counties, would do far less well under this bill than the counties that voted for Hillary, the more affluent counties.

TRUMP: Oh, I know. I know.

CARLSON: It seems like --

TRUMP: It's very preliminary, Tucker.

CARLSON: -- maybe this isn't consistent with the message of the last election.

TRUMP: No. A lot of things aren't consistent. But these are going to be negotiated. We've got to go to the Senate. We're going to see what happens in the Senate. Right now, we have five or six senators that look like maybe they're not going to -- I'm talking about Republicans, because we're not going to get one Democrat to vote for it.

Again, if this bill were perfect, if it was the greatest thing for Democrats and Republicans, we wouldn't get one Democrat vote. They're going to vote against it. Because of selfish, because of stupidity, because it's politics -- it's really bad for our country, what's going on. What's going on for years, but it's really bad for our country. We will take care of our people or I'm not signing it, OK, just so you understand. This is very preliminary.

CARLSON: Are you confident that Paul Ryan -- I mean, doesn't seem like you agree on economics or foreign policy or social policy. Are you confident that you share enough in common that he can -- he's on board with your interests?

TRUMP: I think he is on board with the American people. I do believe that strongly. I think he is on board with my presidency. I think he wants to make it very successful. I like him. We had our run ins, as you probably have heard, initially. But I think he is very much -- he wants to do the right thing. That I believe 100 percent. We're going to take care of the people.

And by the way, if we're not going to take care of the people, I'm not signing anything. I'm not going to be doing it, just so you understand.

CARLSON: Right.

TRUMP: I'm, in a little way, I'm an arbitrator. We have the conservatives, we have the more liberal side of the Republican Party, we have the left, we have the right within the Republicans themselves, we got a lot of fighting going on, we have no Democrats, again, no matter what we do, we're never going to get a Democrat. Maybe we'll get one along the way.

Now, if we could get, and the one thing they don't add is phase three, because phase three makes a lot of things very good -- but if we could get some Democrat vote, we could change the bill. We could have it different. We could have a repeal, which really, essentially we have anyway. But we could have a specific repeal. But we're not going to get any Democrats, no matter what we do. Doesn't matter what we do. We're not going to get --

For phase three, we're going to get some Democrats, I believe. Because phase three, there will be incentives added, and there are so many good things, including that's where I'm going to put the bidding for medicine. I'm going to put that, I want them to put that in phase three. Phase three is a part of it. You have phase one, which you know about. You have phase two, which is really not a phase. That's where our secretary, who's a terrific guy, by the way, Tom Price -- is going to sign away. He's going to sign his heart away, and he's going to get rid of those horrible things that have been signed over the years.

And then phase three, a lot of the goodies are added in, and we're going to add now in medicine. We think we're going to be able to do that, or I'm going to have a separate bill for the bidding of medicine. We're going to bring the cost of medicine way down, prescription drugs and drugs.

CARLSON: So on March 4, 6:35 in the morning, you're down in Florida, and you tweet, the former administration wiretapped me, surveilled me, at Trump Tower during the last election. How did you find out? You said, I just found out. How did you learn that?

TRUMP: Well, I've been reading about things. I read in, I think it was January 20 a "New York Times" article where they were talking about wiretapping. There was an article, I think they used that exact term. I read other things. I watched your friend Bret Baier the day previous where he was talking about certain very complex sets of things happening, and wiretapping. I said, wait a minute, there's a lot of wiretapping being talked about. I've been seeing a lot of things.

Now, for the most part, I'm not going to discuss it, because we have it before the committee and we will be submitting things before the committee very soon that hasn't been submitted as of yet. But it's potentially a very serious situation.

CARLSON: So, 51,000 people retweeted that. So a lot of people thought that was plausible, they believe you, you're the President -- you're in charge of the agencies. Every intelligence agency reports to you. Why not immediately go to them and gather evidence to support that?

TRUMP: Because I don't want to do anything that's going to violate any strength of an agency. We have enough problems.

And by the way, with the CIA, I just want people to know, the CIA was hacked, and a lot of things taken -- that was during the Obama years. That was not during us. That was during the Obama situation. Mike Pompeo is there now doing a fantastic job.

But, we will be submitting certain things and I will be perhaps speaking about this next week, but it's right now before the committee, and I think I want to leave it. I have a lot of confidence in the committee.

CARLSON: Why not wait to tweet about it until you can prove it? Don't you devalue your words when you can't provide evidence?

TRUMP: Well, because "The New York Times" wrote about it. Not that I respect "The New York Times". I call it the failing "New York Times". But they did write on January 20 using the word wiretap. Other people have come out with --

CARLSON: Right, but you're the President. You have the ability to gather all the evidence you want.

TRUMP: I do. I do. But I think that frankly we have a lot right now. And I think if you watch -- if you watched the Bret Baier and what he was saying and what he was talking about and how he mentioned the word wiretap, you would feel very confident that you could mention the name. He mentioned it. And other people have mentioned it. But if you take a look at some of the things written about wiretapping and eavesdropping --

And don't forget, when I say wiretapping, those words were in quotes. That really covers, because wiretapping is pretty old fashioned stuff. But that really covers surveillance and many other things. And nobody ever talks about the fact that it was in quotes, but that's a very important thing.

But wiretap covers a lot of different things. I think you're going to find some very interesting items coming to the forefront over the next two weeks.

CARLSON: Do you talk to anyone before you tweet? And is there anyone in the White House who can say to you, Mr. President, please don't tweet that, who you would listen to?

TRUMP: Well, let me tell you about Twitter. I think that maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Twitter, because I get such a fake press, such a dishonest press. I mean, if you look at -- and I'm not including Fox, because I think Fox has been fair to me, but if you look at CNN and if you look at these other networks, NBC -- I made a fortune for NBC with "The Apprentice". I had a top show where they were doing horribly, and I had one of the most successful reality shows of all time. I made -- and I was on 14 seasons. And you see what happened when I'm not on. You saw what happened to the show was a disaster. I was on -- I was very good to NBC, and I -- they are despicable. They're despicable in their coverage.

CBS, ABC, you take a look at what's going on -- I call it the fake press, the fake media. It is a disgrace what's happening. So, let me just tell you --

CARLSON: But then they say to you, but you're -- I mean, as you know, the response -- look, so you had this big speech to the joint session on Tuesday. You had great press all week, bipartisan, and then you let off this tweet, and immediately, people say --

TRUMP: No, it wasn't that tweet. They had other things --

CARLSON: You can't back up what you say.

TRUMP: Excuse me. I had a very successful night. Joint session, it was very successful. I got reviews even from people that I would never think I was going to get good reviews. I got great reviews. And then all of a sudden they came up with a new dialogue in order to kill that. So that speech was hot for about two or three hours after the speech was made, because they came up with other things, having to do with other people, that they shouldn't have been able to do and they shouldn't have done, but they did it. And you know exactly what I'm talking about.

So the news is not honest. Much of the news. It's not honest. And when I have close to 100 million people watching me on Twitter, including Facebook, including all of the Instagram, including POTUS, including lots of things -- but we have -- I guess pretty close to 100 million people. I have my own form of media. So if I tweet two or three or four or five times a day, and if most of them are good -- and I really want them all to be good -- but if I make one mistake in a month -- this one, I don't think is going to prove to be a mistake at all.

CARLSON: Do you think it's OK to make -- the counterargument, even from people who support you, who say look, I support Donald Trump, I believe what he believes, and I want him to succeed badly, but if the President says something that cannot be proved or is demonstrably untrue, he devalues his own currency.

TRUMP: Let's see whether or not I proved it. You looked at some proof. I mean, let's see whether or not I prove it. I just don't choose to do it right now. I choose to do it before the committee, and maybe I'll do it before the committee. Maybe I'll do it before I see the result of the committee. But I think we have some very good stuff. And we're in the process of putting it together, and I think it's going to be very demonstrative. But just on Twitter, if I don't do that, I won't get my word out. Because when I tell -- when I say things, the press doesn't cover it accurately. They cover it very inaccurately. Much of the press.

Some of the press -- by the way, some of the finest people I know are reporters. Reporters are wonderful. I'm talking about the fake media, the fake news. And there's a lot of fake news. So if I'm not going to -- if they're not going to do me the honor and the public the honor of spreading my word accurately as it was meant, and you know exactly what I'm talking about, because there's been nobody in history that got more dishonest media than I've gotten. You look at some of the stories in "The New York Times". You look at some of the stories in "The Washington Post". Take a look at what's going on with CBS and NBC in particular and ABC -- take a look at CNN. It's a complete hit job. No matter what you do, no matter how good -- no matter how great it is, they don't report it in a positive fashion.

So, when I can reach, whether it's 90 million or 100 million or 80 million, however many people it may turn out to be, when you add everything up -- and then of course it gets disseminated from there, when I can reach that many people, Twitter is a wonderful thing for me, because I get the word out.

CARLSON: Does it ever go through any kind of mediator --

TRUMP: Sure it does. Sure. Sometimes I'll --

CARLSON: Do you show your staff and --

TRUMP: Sometimes I'll have something and I'll say, what do you think about this? A lot of times, my staff comes to me and they say, could you do a tweet on this or that? Because it's not being shown correctly. I mean, they'll come to me a lot and they'll say, could you do -- I probably wouldn't be here -- I'm not talking about Twitter, because it's really Twitter, Facebook, and lots of other things, OK. But I might not be here talking to you right now as President if I didn't have an honest way of getting the word out.

CARLSON: Last question. European nationalism, obviously, is flowering, and a lot of it is about immigration and culture. Do you think it's possible to move a large Muslim population into the West and successfully integrate them into Western culture? Have you seen that anywhere?

TRUMP: Well, it's not easy. And it certainly hasn't been easy. You look at Germany, you know, I took a lot of heat over Sweden and then the next day they had this massive riot and now nobody talks about it. It certainly has not proven to be easy.

At the same time --

CARLSON: Could we do it here?

TRUMP: Well, they've been trying, and we'll let you know. The assimilation has been very, very hard. It's been a very, very difficult process. I want this country to be safe. I want this country to be great. And it's called make America great again. That's where I got elected. I want people that love our country. And many Muslims do. Many, many Muslims do. But it has been a hard process.

If you look at Germany, what's happened. If you look at Sweden, what's happened. If you look at Brussels, take a look at Brussels, I mean look what's going on. Take a look at so many other places. It has been a very hard process. We are going to try very, very hard to make it work.

CARLSON: Mr. President, thanks.

TRUMP: Thank you very much.

Chris Cillizza writes "The Fix," a politics blog for The Washington Post, and hosts the Ciquizza podcast, a weekly news quiz [Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher].  Follow @thefix