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## Trump praises the CIA, bristles over inaugural crowd counts

Julie Pace and Jill Colvin,  
1/22/2017

On his first full day in office, President Donald Trump on Saturday berated the media over its coverage of his inauguration, and turned a bridge-building first visit to CIA headquarters into an airing of grievances about "dishonest" journalists. But it was Trump who spread inaccuracies about the size of the crowds at his swearing in.

Standing in front of a memorial for fallen CIA agents, Trump assured intelligence officials, "I am so behind you." He made no mention of his repeated criticism of the intelligence agencies following the election, including his public challenges of their high-confidence assessment that Russia meddled in the White House race to help him win.

"There is nobody that feels stronger about the intelligence community and CIA than Donald Trump," he said, blaming any suggestion of a "feud" on the media.

Trump's decision to travel to CIA headquarters so quickly after taking office was seen as an attempt at a fresh start with the intelligence agencies he will now rely on for guidance as he makes weighty national security decisions. Following his private meeting with top CIA leaders, Trump said the U.S. had been "restrained" in its efforts to combat terrorism, calling the threat "a level of evil we haven't seen."

But in unscripted, stream-of-consciousness remarks, Trump appeared more focused on settling scores with the media.

He defensively touted the crowd size for his swearing-in ceremony, wrongly claiming that the throngs on the National Mall stretched "all the way back to the Washington Monument." Photos and video clearly showed the crowd stopping well short of the landmark.

Trump's visit took place as throngs of women, many of them wearing bright pink, pointy-eared hats, descended on the nation's capital and other cities around the world for marches organized to push back against the new president. Hundreds of protesters lined the motorcade route as Trump sped back to the White House, many screaming and chanting at the president.

The Washington rally alone attracted more than 500,000 people by the unofficial estimate of city officials. It appeared to be more people than attended Trump's inauguration on Friday, but there were no comparable numbers. The city did not release an estimate for the inauguration. The National Park Service does not provide crowd counts.

During his remarks at the CIA, the president claimed the inaugural crowds topped 1 million people, offering no evidence.

Suggestions that weak enthusiasm accompanied his inauguration clearly irked the new president. Shortly after his remarks, he dispatched his press secretary, Sean Spicer, to the White House briefing room to aggressively reinforce the message.

"There's been a lot of talk in the media about holding Donald Trump accountable. And I'm here to tell you that it goes two ways. We're going to hold the press accountable as well," Spicer said in his first on-camera appearance at the White House.

Trump, and later Spicer, also slammed a Time magazine reporter for incorrectly reporting Friday that Trump had moved a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. out of the Oval Office. But Trump followed with a misstatement of his own, saying the reporter had not corrected the mistake. In fact, the item was quickly retracted.

High-level CIA brass stood largely silent during Trump's remarks, though some of the roughly 400 other officers in attendance cheered on the president during his remarks. California Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, slammed Trump for using his CIA visit to squabble over media coverage.

"He will need to do more than use the agency memorial as a backdrop if he wants to earn the respect of the men and women who provide the best intelligence in the world,' Schiff said. Former CIA Director John Brennan went further. His former aide Nick Shapiro released a statement saying "Brennan is deeply saddened and angered at Donald Trump's despicable display of self-aggrandizement in front of CIA's Memorial Wall of Agency heroes. Brennan says that Trump should be ashamed of himself."

The inaugural celebrations have been shadowed by reports that the CIA and other federal agencies are investigating Russian interference in the presidential election on behalf of Trump. McClatchy reported that the investigation included whether money from the Kremlin covertly aided Trump. The New York Times said agencies were examining intercepted communications and financial transactions between Russian officials and Trump's associates.

FBI Director James Comey has declined to confirm or describe the nature of the government's investigation, both during a congressional hearing and in closed-door meetings with members of Congress.

Saturday marked the end of three days of inaugural celebrations, with Trump and his family attending a national prayer service traditionally held for the new president. The president and his wife, Melania, and Vice President Mike Pence and his wife, Karen, sat in a front pew at Washington National Cathedral for the morning service.

The interfaith service is a tradition for new presidents and is hosted by the Episcopal parish. But the decision to hold a prayer session for Trump sparked debate among Episcopalians opposed to his policies.

Bishop Mariann Budde of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington wrote in a blog post that while she shared "a sense of outrage at some of the president-elect's words and actions," she felt an obligation to welcome all people without qualification, especially those who disagree and need to find a way to work together.

Trump arrived at the cathedral mid-morning. The service included readings and prayers from Protestant, Jewish, Sikh, Mormon, Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Baha'i, Episcopal, Hindu and Native American leaders. But the program was remarkable for the large number of evangelicals participating, including two former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, the country's largest evangelical denomination. Several speakers had served as Trump advisers and supporters who spoke at the Republican National Convention.