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## Looters and Losers and Trump, Oh My!



On November 10, 2018, President Donald Trump was in Paris, scheduled to visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery some 50 miles away, the final resting place for more than 2,000 American troops killed in World War One. The president's visit was to have commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the war's end.

Trump didn't make it to Aisne-Marne. The White House said that the president was unable to visit Aisne-Marne due to "inclement weather." That was a lie. Trump cancelled the visit

to Aisne-Marne at the last minute because it had begun to drizzle and Trump was concerned about his hair.

While he did not make it to the cemetery, Trump's thoughts were with America's fallen. "Why should I go to that cemetery?" Trump asked aides. "It's full of losers."

We know this thanks to Jeffrey Goldberg's September 3 article in *The Atlantic*: "Trump: Americans Who Died in War Are 'Losers' and 'Suckers.'" Goldberg, the editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic*, says he got his information from "four people with firsthand knowledge of the discussion that day." Trump's remarks sparked outrage from Americans in and out of the military (and denials from the White House and from Trump personally).

### **De Mortuis Nil Nisi—**

What makes a dead soldier a "sucker" or a "loser"? Dead soldiers are "suckers" and "losers" for Trump because they went to war with some purpose other than getting rich.

Goldberg relates how on Memorial Day 2017 Trump went to Arlington National Cemetery with General John Kelly, at that time Trump's secretary of homeland defense, later Trump's White House chief of staff. Kelly's son Robert, a Marine Corps first lieutenant killed in Afghanistan in 2010, is buried at Arlington.

Standing by Robert's grave, Trump remarked to the elder Kelly: "I don't get it. What was in it for them?"

Friends of General Kelly told Goldberg that at first Kelly thought this was Trump's "ham-handed" way of referring to the "selfless sacrifice of America's all-volunteer force." (General Kelly declined comment for the *Atlantic* article.) Goldberg adds that General Kelly "later came to realize that Trump simply does not understand non-transactional life choices." Trump can't understand doing anything unless it's for money, certainly not laying down one's life.

Well, then. If you want to avoid Trumpian condemnation, don't fight for your country like a chump. Fight for money. Are you an ambitious young psychopath searching for a hot career? You can earn \$22,500 *per month* (much of it tax-free) as a private military contractor, vulgarly known as "mercenaries." That's more than four times a US army captain's measly monthly pay of around \$4952. *Ka-ching!*

Even more lucrative, be the person who makes the guns the suckers and losers from Georgia and Michigan shoot. At a September 7 press conference, Trump claimed that ordinary service members were "in love" with him, although the "top people in the Pentagon probably aren't because they want to do nothing but fight wars so that all of

those wonderful companies that make the bombs and make the planes and make everything else stay happy.”

*Donald; how could you?* Nobody loves arms merchants more than you do. Trump has flatly said that the reason the US continues to aid Saudi Arabia’s genocidal war on Yemen is in order not to lose lucrative arms sales to the Saudis. You will never hear Trump sneer at a top executive at Raytheon, Boeing, Lockheed, or Northrop Grumman as a “loser” or a “sucker.”

### **Trump Endorses Looting**

Besides arms sales, there are other ways to make money off war. Running for president in 2016, Trump said (truthfully or not) that he had opposed the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, but that the US should have kept Iraq’s oil. The US didn’t, so I guess that makes the US “suckers” and “losers.”

Chins up, it’s not too late to grab *Syria’s* oil. Trump had wanted to withdraw US troops from Syria. But much like distracting a cat by dangling something shiny in front of him, the Pentagon got Trump’s mind off withdrawing troops with tantalizing visions of Syrian oil. “We’re keeping the oil,” Trump announced to a convention of police chiefs in Chicago, Illinois on October 28, 2019. (Did the Joint Chiefs whisper in Trump’s ear that he’d be a “sucker” not to?)

The problem with the US “keeping” Syria’s oil is that under the Fourth Geneva Convention this constitutes the war crime of “pillaging,” *i.e.*, theft during wartime.

“Pillaging.” Sounds a lot like looting.

But looting is bad, isn’t it? Conservatives say it is. Looting is a wicked thing—although I only hear conservatives denounce looting when Black people do it. Racism explains why the MAGA crowd loses their minds over scattered offenses against property and doesn’t bat an eye over cops shooting unarmed Black people.

In any event, stealing all the oil in Syria is looting on such a heroic scale that it’s hard for some people not to admire it.

One thing Trump has taught us is: if you’re going to loot, go large.

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