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Trump's Ridiculous Foreign Policy

By Daniel Larison
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Donald Trump made the mistake of sitting down for an interview with Hugh Hewitt. His grasp on relevant foreign policy details was not very good.

Donald J. Trump revealed gaps in his mastery of international affairs during a radio interview on Thursday, appearing to mistake the Quds Force, an Iranian military group, for the Kurds, a Middle Eastern people, and growing testy over questions about foreign leaders.

“You’re asking me names that — I think it’s somewhat ridiculous,” Mr. Trump told Hugh Hewitt, a popular conservative radio show host. “As far as the individual players, of course I don’t know them. I’ve never met them. I haven’t been, you know, in a position to meet them.”

Each time that he was pressed to demonstrate some relevant knowledge about a particular part of the world, Trump either evaded the question or complained about “gotcha” questions that he

refused to answer. As bad as the interview seemed to be for Trump, the striking thing was how often Hewitt was willing to indulge the candidate's nonsensical answers. For instance, Trump repeated the obvious lie that the nuclear deal would require the U.S. to defend Iran against an attacker. Instead of correcting or challenging him on this plainly absurd and untrue statement, Hewitt approved of Trump's ridiculous position. Hewitt said:

It's remarkable, and I'm glad you know about it. And I'm glad you'll stand with Israel.

Trump was repeating a complete falsehood, but Hewitt praised him because the talk radio host is just as committed to unfounded arguments against the nuclear deal as the candidate was. Later on, when Trump was asked what he would do in the event of a conflict between China and U.S. allies in East Asia, Trump dodged by saying, "You don't want the other side to know. I don't want to give you an answer to that." In other words, Trump had no answer one way or the other, and so he hid behind the pretense that he was concealing a cunning plan that he didn't want to reveal. Instead of pressing him for an answer, Hewitt nodded along and replied, "Fair response. Good response." In fact, it was an awful, completely useless response, but Hewitt allowed it to pass without criticism.

As annoyed with Hewitt as Trump might have been by the end, the important thing to remember is that Hewitt indulged and played along with Trump's ridiculous answers on foreign policy most of the time. In some cases, he endorsed and affirmed those answers despite the fact that they were nonsense. Far from being the "gotcha" interview that Trump whined about, it allowed Trump to dominate the conversation. The fact that Trump still came across sounding ignorant and unqualified is that much more damning.