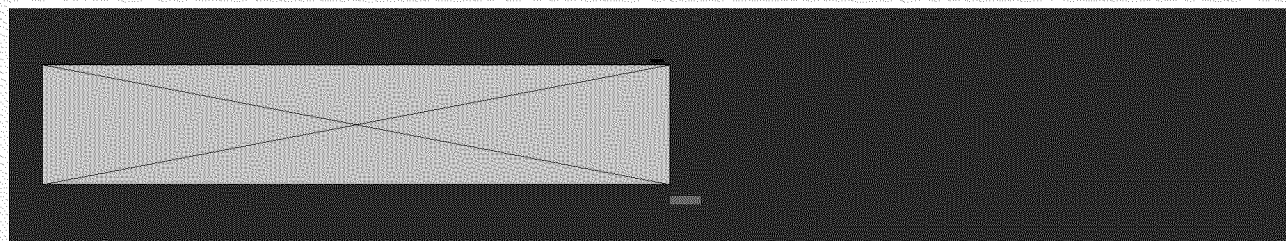


To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
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Subject: Federal Insider: Disloyalty slur latest in series showing Trump administration's mistrust of feds



Disloyalty slur latest in series showing Trump administration's mistrust of feds

By Joe Davidson

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke speaks March 29 at the Interior Department in Washington. (Molly Riley/AP)

While Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's accusation about the loyalty of his workforce is the Trump administration's most outrageous statement about federal employees, it fits a deplorable pattern of verbal aggression against them.

Zinke's declaration that "I got 30 percent of the crew that's not loyal to the flag" is an escalation that demands denunciation.

"This is the latest in a long line of attacks by this administration on federal workers, starting with his claim that the country needs another 'good shutdown,'" said Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. "The idea that President Trump, Secretary Zinke or anyone else in the administration would threaten the jobs of hard-working civil servants unless they pledge loyalty to the president is grossly abusive and, if carried out, against the law."

Zinke's slur, and another remark comparing the Interior Department to a pirate ship, followed comments and actions that began even before Trump took office and make feds shudder, including:

- Zinke's suspicious transfer of dozens of senior executives, which is being investigated by the department's inspector general.

- ADVERTISEMENT
- Trump's pledge to "drain the swamp." That can include much of Washington, but feds took it personally.
 - Conspiracy theories about a "deep state" of federal bureaucrats determined to sabotage the Trump administration.
 - Trump's talk about a "good shutdown," which would hurt federal employees more than anyone.
 - The Trump transition team's attempt to get the names of Energy Department staffers who worked on climate change.

Trump explains why he 'didn't like' the phrase 'drain the swamp' but now does

Defending Zinke, a former Navy SEAL commander, after his disloyalty hit, Interior press secretary Heather Swift said, "The Secretary led with the fact that Interior is full of 'really good people' but that a small minority are hesitant to changing policy and reforms." Zinke's comment about the flag, previously reported by the Associated Press, she added, "was not a literal comparison to the flag of the U.S. or even the administration. In the military structure, to which the secretary was alluding, the flag represents the command of an organization and the policies and procedures it seeks to implement."

That's a distinction without a significant difference. It does nothing to lessen this latest example of the administration's toxic mistrust of the workforce. The loyalty that federal employees owe is to the Constitution, the nation and the American people. Staffers are obligated to implement the administration's policies, but their allegiance is not to Trump and Zinke, Interior's commanders, as individuals.

"My loyalty is to public lands and the citizens I serve," said Leisyka Parrott, an Interior Department employee in Arcata, Calif. Fearing potential negative ramifications for speaking to me, Parrott made it clear that she did so on her own time and as a National Federation of Federal Employees representative. "If we have a difference of opinion, we are not loyal to the flag," she asked. "I wonder if they will make being a party member a requirement of employment."

Zinke's comments leaves his staff dismayed, on edge and offended.

"As a member of the civil service at the Interior Department's Bureau of

Land Management, I'd suggest Mr. Zinke needs a lesson in civics," Rob Winthrop, of Washington, said in a Washington Post letter to the editor. "In Nazi Germany the civil service pledged personal loyalty and obedience to Adolf Hitler. This is not the way of a free society."

The Trump administration has difficulty understanding American fidelity, as the president showed when he told then-FBI Director James B. Comey: "I need loyalty." Trump didn't get it and later sacked Comey.

"It is comments like the ones made by Secretary Zinke that demonstrate the absolute necessity of strong civil service protections in the federal government," said NFFE President Randy Erwin. "Without those protections, the interests of the American people are going to take a back seat to bully leaders pushing their own personal agendas."

Sen. James Lankford (Okla.) and Rep. Mark Meadows (N.C.), Republican chairmen of the congressional subcommittees overseeing the federal workforce, declined to comment on Zinke. Jason Chaffetz, a former GOP representative from Utah, was critical of the secretary's remarks, though he softened it with talk about the "frustration" Trump officials feel over a "lack of cooperation" from the bureaucracy. "I don't think it's wise to berate public employees," Chaffetz said. "Most are good, hard-working people."

Chaffetz made a point of quashing fed-bashing before he left Congress this year as chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. But he believes in the deep state. "I do believe there is a deep state that acts to protect itself and embarrass others. I think that, too, is wrong. But you have to find the individual perpetrators," he said.

That doesn't mean insulting almost a third of your employees.

If Zinke is so concerned about loyalty, why isn't he outraged at the people and symbols, including those on Interior-controlled lands, honoring disloyal Confederates? When asked about removing Confederate monuments at the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, Md., Breitbart.com quoted Zinke saying, "Don't rewrite history."

What he shouldn't do is accept the glorification of traitors while questioning the loyalty of public servants. Nothing is more disloyal to America than

~~Zinke's Best of America Prize to the public servants he is supposed to be leading,~~ said Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (Ariz.), the ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee. "He often refers to his military service, so he should be well aware that loyalty is earned — and you don't earn it, or deserve it, with divisive comments like these."

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President Trump's greetings were welcome, particularly given the disrespect, disappointment and dismay his administration has heaped on the workforce.

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