

**To:** Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**From:** Morning Media  
**Sent:** Thur 8/17/2017 9:46:15 AM  
**Subject:** Morning Media: So, who's WH comms director now? -- Steve Bannon's surprise interview -- The press conference, a day later

By Alex Weprin | 08/17/2017 05:43 AM EDT

*With Cristiano Lima*

**SO, WHO'S WHITE HOUSE COMMS DIRECTOR NOW?** It's Hope Hicks, who led communications during President Trump's campaign, and had been serving as director of strategic communications in the White House. Her role as White House communications director is not permanent, with the official announcement adding that the White House will "make an announcement on a permanent communications director at the appropriate time." Credit where it's due, The Daily Caller was first to report the news.

**- But really, is there any doubt who really runs comms for the White House?** It's President Trump. He made the decision to veer off script at his impromptu press conference on Tuesday (more on that below), and he even used Twitter to get ahead of another story on Wednesday.

**- According to The Wall Street Journal,** members of the president's Strategic and Policy Forum held a conference call in which they voted to disband in the wake of Trump's statements Tuesday. After the call, but before the CEOs on that panel could release statements announcing the change, the president took to Twitter to provide his own spin and get ahead of the story. "Rather than putting pressure on the businesspeople of the Manufacturing Council & Strategy & Policy Forum, I am ending both. Thank you all!"

**NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR TESTIFIES IN PALIN SUIT:** James Bennet said during a deposition on Wednesday that he did not intend to imply a "causal link" between a targeted map of electoral districts circulated by Sarah Palin's political action committee and the 2011 Arizona shooting that injured Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Bennet testified Wednesday in a defamation lawsuit in which the former vice presidential nominee accuses the paper's opinion section of having "violated the law and its own policies" by linking her to the violent episode. Bennet added that he "did not know if the map incited" the shooter into acting, but was instead "looking for a very strong word to write about the political climate because I wanted to get our readers' attention." Read more from our own Laura Nahmias, here.

**Good morning and welcome back to Morning Media!** With Hadas off to join CNN, I'll be helming Morning Media for the time being. It has been a pleasure working with Hadas, and I know she will do great things at CNN. I always want to make Morning Media better and more useful to you, so please send me tips, ideas and feedback! I'm on Twitter @alexweprin and on email at alexweprin@gmail.com. Morning Media is produced with help from **Cristiano Lima** (clima@politico.com / @ludacristiano). Archives. Subscribe.

**THAT PRESS CONFERENCE, CONT'D:** A day after it happened, President Trump's Tuesday news conference continued to reverberate across the media landscape. Here are a few

observations about that coverage.

- **People watched.** During the 4 p.m. hour that the presser took place, approximately 3.3 million watched live on MSNBC, CNN and Fox News. In prime time that evening, the ratings swelled for all three channels peaking at 9 p.m. and 10 p.m., when an average of 7.1 million people tuned in. Millions more likely saw all or part of the presser on the broadcast networks or online.

- **That Vice News documentary was everywhere.** Cable news channels and network news shows played clips from the doc, which had access to the white supremacists that others did not have. On Facebook, the doc had more than 25 million views. On YouTube, it had nearly three million. As CNN's Brian Stelter wrote, it was a "breakthrough moment" for Vice News.

- **Fox News coverage changed somewhat.** While the prime-time shows the night of the presser tended to mirror Trump's point of view, or cover other stories altogether, many of the channel's shows on Wednesday took on the president's comments directly. Here's news anchor Shepard Smith [video]: "Our booking team - and they're good - reached out to Republicans of all stripes across the country today. Let's be honest, Republicans often don't really mind coming on Fox News Channel. We couldn't get anyone to come and defend him here, because we thought, in balance, someone should do that. We worked very hard at it throughout the day, and we were unsuccessful." Fox Business anchor Melissa Francis teared up while discussing Trump's remarks. There was also a memorable segment yesterday morning featuring Abby Huntsman.

**Of course, during the prime-time opinion shows last night**, many of the viewpoints once again were more aligned with the president's line of thinking. "As the media pines for unity, they foment friction," Greg Gutfeld said on "The Five." Likewise, Sean Hannity led off his program at 10 p.m. with a monologue about "the media" distorting the president's comments.

- **In the wake of the presser, one of President Trump's personal lawyers sent an email** to a number of people - including journalists at Fox News, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Times - "that echoed secessionist Civil War propaganda," according to The New York Times.

- **Here's how NBC News got that video** of White House chief of staff John Kelly that was widely shared after the presser.

- **A man misidentified as the driver** that killed one and injured 19 in Charlottesville plans to sue some "alt-right" sites, including GotNews, that laid the blame for the attack on him. In fact, the man identified on those sites was not even in the state of Virginia.

**HOW ABOUT THAT STEVE BANNON INTERVIEW?** Bannon's interview with The American Prospect, released Wednesday evening, was the most shocking interview to come from an administration official since, well, since then-White House comms director Anthony Scaramucci's conversation with The New Yorker last month. The Prospect's website was down for much of last night, having a hard time with the deluge of traffic. "The question of whether the phone call was on or off the record never came up," wrote The American Prospect's Robert Kuttner. "This is also puzzling, since Steve Bannon is not exactly Bambi when it comes to

dealing with the press. He's probably the most media-savvy person in America."

- **According to Axios' Jonathan Swan, **Bannon didn't realize** his comments would be published:** "Apparently Bannon never thought that the journalist might take his (very newsworthy) comments and turn them into a story. It's Anthony Scaramucci all over again (minus the curse words.)"

**THAT BREITBART PROFILE:** Breitbart was the subject of a splashy New York Times Magazine profile. It is a must-read, both for its access and for its detail. Still, as The Hill's Will Sommer and others on Twitter pointed out, the profile did not mention a few notable things. For example: There was not one mention of Matt Boyle, the Breitbart staffer with arguably the closest relationship to the White House and Steve Bannon.

- **Here's Breitbart's take on the profile:** "The New York Times Magazine acknowledges in an exhaustive feature that Breitbart News - and more pointedly, its editor-in-chief Alex Marlow - has amassed a news and editorial staff with more racial and gender diversity than most American media outlets."

**BUZZFEED, DECISION DESK TEAM UP FOR ELECTION RESULTS COVERAGE:** BuzzFeed and Decision Desk HQ, the election tracking organization, announced Wednesday they're expanding their partnership to provide election coverage on House, Senate, special election and gubernatorial races through 2018, Poynter reports. The deal will not only provide BuzzFeed with access to the organization's robust data operation, but will also feature the teams joining up to provide election-night broadcasts dissecting races. The move also bolsters BuzzFeed's rapidly expanding live video programming, which will include a new early morning show slated to launch in September.

**A WHITE SUPREMACIST WEBSITE IS FACING ONLINE ROADBLOCKS** in response to its coverage of the violence in Charlottesville. The Daily Stormer, a prominent white supremacist outlet linked to neo-Nazis and other hate groups, is facing a wave of backlash over its attacks on Charlottesville victim Heather Heyer. Twitter on Wednesday began suspending accounts linked to the site, which also saw its domain taken down by online registrars, forcing it to take on a Russian domain name. The Stormer is also facing a defamation suit from a Muslim comedian for its claim that he was behind the Manchester bombing.

**MORE ON VERIZON'S "OATH":** Joe Pompeo, who wrote this newsletter up until a couple of months ago, has a great deep dive into "Oath," the rebranded Verizon unit that includes HuffPost, Yahoo News and other media properties. Lots of newsy bits to chew on.

REVOLVING DOOR:

-**Bustle has named Karine Jean-Pierre contributing editor**, focusing on "the people, organizations, and movements powering the resistance, providing thoughtful analysis about the most important demonstrations and policies coming out of the Trump administration." Jean-Pierre is senior advisor and national spokesperson for MoveOn.org.

- **NBC Peacock Productions president Sharon Scott is leaving the network** after 27 years.

- **The New York Times' Jennifer Steinhauer has been named Editor of Live Journalism/D.C.**, where she'll launch a series of TimesTalks events tied to politics, current events and the Trump administration. She will continue writing on culture and politics in Washington.

- **FiveThirtyEight announced the additions** of CNN and POLITICO alum Hilary Krieger as its new Washington editor and Andrea Jones-Rooy as its new quantitative researcher.

- **Village Voice staff writer Alex Neason will be joining the Columbia Journalism Review** as a senior writer next month.

**SOUNDBITE:** "But, frankly, look, the bottom line: The story's true. I'm not doing anything. I barely show up to work and I've been caught." -- A spokesman for New York's state court system, in a voicemail left after accidentally butt-dialing a New York Post reporter who was working on a story about him. [[The New York Post](#)]

**CLARIFICATION:** Yesterday's Morning Media left the impression that the AP's guidance on using the term "alt-right" was first issued after the Charlottesville protests and attack. In fact, the guidance was issued last November. The AP did add "anti-Semitism" to its alt-right guidance in the wake of the latest news.

#### **EXTRAS:**

- One year after John McLaughlin died, "The McLaughlin Group" returned for a special episode, on YouTube. [[TVNewser](#)]

- A new study out of Harvard says that coverage of President Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign skewed toward policy, rather than his public statements. "Clinton's coverage was focused on scandals, while Trump's coverage focused on his core issues," a summary of the findings out of the Berkman Klein Center stated. [[Berkman Klein Center at Harvard](#)]

- Sen. Al Franken is set to return to Bill Maher's "Real Time" on Friday after dropping out of a scheduled appearance in June following the host's controversial use of a racial epithet. [[The Hollywood Reporter](#)]

- A new study tackles the "delayed promise of newsroom diversity" and the potentially grim prospects for media inclusion. [[Columbia Journalism Review](#)]

- Fox News host Eboni K. Williams talks about receiving death threats after her criticisms of President Trump on Tuesday [[Variety](#)]

- The Advocate lists the 50 most influential LGBT media members. [[Advocate](#)]

- How a faux-Guardian article made its way into Russian propaganda. [[BuzzFeed](#)]

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/08/17/so-whos-wh-comms-director-now-steve-bannons-surprise-interview-the-press-conference-a-day-later-001334>

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