

## Commander-in-Grief

By [Alexander Woodward](#)

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President Trump salutes the Coast Guard.  
[Image: US Department of Defense courtesy of Shannon Collins]

Senior Republicans fear that President Trump's personal gaffes are distracting attention from actual policy, and thus dam-aging their party. After previously picking fights with the National Football League and retiring Senator Bob Corker, this week Donald Trump fought off accusations of disrespect towards military personnel after multiple attacks from a military family and a senator within his own party. This in the same week that Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker Paul Ryan wanted to shift the attention from 'White House drama' to the planned tax reform set to go to vote in the House this week.

The provocation started last week with Frederica Wilson, a Democratic congresswoman from Florida claiming that the President called Myeshia Johnson, widow of Sgt. La David Johnson to offer condolences for the passing of her husband. However, she claimed that during the call the President forgot his name and said that "he knew what he signed up for". At the time Donald Trump immediately disputed the claim, going onto Twitter to assert that the Democratic congresswoman "totally fabricated" what he had said, whilst claiming he had proof.

While the President has never shown the proof he claims to possess, criticism hasn't stopped. On Monday, Republican Senator John McCain, on accepting the Liberty Medal at an event for honouring war heroes, talked about the need to be wary of "half-baked, spurious nationalism cooked up by people who would rather find scapegoats than solve problems". McCain also took time to attack rich individuals who had dodged the draft during the Vietnam War, although he has since stated that this comment was not about Donald Trump, an individual who did dodge the draft on five separate occasions, for both medical and educational reasons.

This is the latest comment in a series of feuds between the President and the Arizona Republican, starting when then Republican nominee Trump blasted McCain's war record. Since the infamous Access Hollywood tape released last October, McCain has been a vocal critic of Trump, voicing his opinions on his potential ties to Russia and in-famously voting against his health-care plan in September.

Following on from McCain's criticism, Trump found himself being dragged back into the scandal on Monday when widow Myeshia Johnson appeared on ABC's Good Morning America to talk about her

husband's death in Niger and the controversy around the response of the 45th President. She told ABC that "the President said that he knew what he signed up for, but it hurts anyway. And it made me cry 'cause I was very angry at the tone of his voice and how he said he couldn't remember my husband's name," before going on to say that she "heard him stumbling on trying to remember my husband's name and that's what hurt me the most, because if my husband is out here fighting for our country and he risked his life for our country why can't you remember his name". Trump immediately responded on Twitter, stating that he "had a very respectful conversation with the widow of Sgt La David Johnson, and spoke his name from beginning, without hesitation".

The Republicans currently have the luxury of control of the legislature and executive branches and yet it seems that, despite this, triumphs have been elusive. This week Republicans were keen to move the conversation back to policy rather than controversy, with the House of Representatives preparing to vote on the Senate's budget resolution which could advance the GOP's tax overhaul with a majority in the Senate. Despite the budget being less conservative than hoped for by House Re-publicans, the budget is expected to pass with ease. This is expected to help with fears of a "Watergate style blowout" in the words of leading Republican and former Presidential nominee Ted Cruz, aware that with no major policy achievements, the Republicans could suffer heavy losses in the 2018 mid-term elections.



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