



This image provided by Jim Morin of the Miami Herald in February 2017 shows his editorial cartoon made for 2017's Sunshine Week. — AP

MEDIA THE ENEMY? TRUMP IS AN INSATIABLE CONSUMER

WATCHING CABLE IS OFTEN AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

NEW YORK: Before most people are out of bed, Donald Trump is watching cable news. With Twitter app at the ready, the man who condemns the media as "the enemy of the people" may be the most voracious consumer of news in modern presidential history. Trump usually rises before 6 am and first watches TV in the residence before later moving to a small dining room in the West Wing. A short time later, he's given a stack of newspapers - including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times, The Washington Post and, long his favorite, The New York Post - as well as pile of printed articles from other sources including conservative online outlets like Breitbart News.

The TVs stay on all day. The president often checks in at lunch and again in the evening, when he retires to the residence, cellphone in hand. It is a central paradox of the Trump presidency. Despite his fervent media criticism, Trump is a faithful newspaper reader who enjoys jousting with reporters, an avid cable TV news viewer who frequently live-tweets what he's watching, and a reader of websites that have been illuminated by his presidential spotlight, showcasing the at-times conspiratorial corners of the internet.

Trump's media diet

No recent president has been so public about his interest in his media coverage, nor seemed so willing to mobilize the powers of the federal government based on a media report that he has just read, heard or watched. In fact, the power of Trump's media diet is so potent that White House staffers have, to varying degrees of success, tried to limit his television watching and control some of what he reads.

The president's cable TV menu fluctuates. Fox News is a constant, and he also frequently watches CNN despite deriding it as "fake news." Though he used to watch "Morning Joe," a Trump aide said the president has grown frustrated with his coverage on the MSNBC program and has largely stopped. For Trump, watching cable is

often an interactive experience. More than dozen of times since his election, he has tweeted about what he saw on TV just minutes before.

On Nov 29, he posted about instituting potentially unconstitutional penalties for burning the American flag 30 minutes after Fox ran a segment on the subject. On Jan 24, he threatened to "send in the Feds!" to Chicago a short time after watching a CNN segment on violence in the city. On Feb 6, after CNN reported about a "Saturday Night Live" skit on the increasing power of the president's advisers, Trump just 11 minutes later tweeted, "I call my own shots, largely based on an accumulation of data, and everyone knows it!"

On Tuesday, Trump tweeted five different times about the news of the day being discussed on his preferred morning show, "Fox & Friends." MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, a frequent Trump critic, told The Associated Press that she finds it "unsettling" that Trump "may be getting most of his understanding of the world based on whatever he stumbles upon on cable."

While pleased that Trump is following the media, Maddow noted that "the White House is designed as an instrument to feed the president of the United States expertly curated and highly selective, well-vetted information from every corner of the world." Others note there may be some smart politics behind Trump's media diet. He "advertised getting his news the same way his supporters do, which helps make a connection," said Tobe Berkovitz, a communications professor at Boston University.

The president's advisers try to curb his cable consumption during the workday. But there are no limits when he returns to the residence. He also avidly watches his own staff's TV performances, including White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's daily briefing. Aides have been known to shape their public comments to please the president or try to influence him.

Trump's consumption of cable news differs considerably from previous commanders in chief, who have at least claimed to be

disconnected from the cable chatter. Jay Carney, White House press secretary under Barack Obama, has claimed that Obama "doesn't watch cable news," though that did not keep the former president from criticizing the medium.

Getting news online

Where Trump differs most from his presidential predecessors is his reliance on getting news online - even though he rarely uses a computer and prefers aides to print out articles for him to read. What he was seeing on Twitter and conservative websites like the Drudge Report and the conspiracy-laden Infowars helped forge his political persona - and his public misinformation campaign questioning whether Obama was born in the United States.

And social media has become a way for some news sources to gain an audience with the president. Last Thursday, as questions swirled around contacts between Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Russian ambassador, a Reddit user posted a picture of Russian President Vladimir Putin and New York Sen. Charles Schumer from a 2003 photo op. Two hours later, the blog The Gateway Pundit reprinted the photo with the headline "Where's the Outrage?"

The image careened across the internet from an Infowars editor's post to the Drudge Report to Trump's own Twitter account as he delivered that outrage, demanding an investigation into Schumer's alleged ties to Putin.

That wasn't the only time last week when Trump put the White House stamp on a theory that originated on the edges of the conservative movement. Radio host Mark Levin voiced without evidence the idea that Obama had wiretapped Trump Tower. That accusation was picked up the next day by Breitbart News, the site formerly run by Trump's current chief strategist Steve Bannon. An aide placed that piece in Trump's daily reading pile, said a White House official, who like other aides would not be named discussing the president's private routine. — AP

TRUMP TO PAY HOMAGE TO ANDREW JACKSON

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump plans to visit Nashville next week to rally supporters and perhaps pay homage to predecessor and unlikely political idol Andrew Jackson, America's first populist president. Trump plans to hold a campaign-style rally in the city on Jackson's 250th birthday Wednesday and, according to the Tennessean newspaper, could visit the nearby Hermitage-the final resting place of America's seventh president. Since coming to office in January, Trump aides have sought to draw comparisons between the bareknuckle Democratic president and Trump.

A portrait of Jackson has been introduced to the Oval Office and Trump's top strategist Steve Bannon described his boss's populist inaugural address "Jacksonian." Not so fast, says Jackson historian Daniel Feller, of the University of Tennessee. "I can understand fully why Trump wants to portray himself as the second coming of Andrew Jackson. I don't see much similarity myself," he said. "The narrative of Andrew Jackson is that a great popular hero came in and overthrew the existing establishment in Washington, that he was an outsider, that he was not taken seriously."

That is exactly the image Trump has tried to cultivate-despite losing the popular vote to Hillary Clinton by three million votes. Where Jackson pledged to speak for the common man and spoke of "cleansing the Augean stable," Trump talks of "draining the swamp" in Washington. But historians say Jackson's story is more subtle.

Born in the backwoods in 1767, he was orphaned in his early teens. He gained a reputation as a fighter: As a young man he was cut with a sabre for refusing to polish a British soldier's boots and once killed a man in a duel. He gained fame as a military hero for defeating the British in New Orleans.

'Trail of tears'

Jackson's reputation has been somewhat tarnished in recent years, with criticism focused on his temperament and the forced removal of Native Americans from their land. The Treasury Department recently decided to replace Jackson's image on the \$20 bill, with civil rights hero Harriet Tubman. But for the White House, comparisons with Jackson help place Trump inside the pantheon of US presidents and within the mainstream of American political history.

Trump's critics have painted the polarizing mogul as an aberration and his views as antithetical to the American democratic tradition. "Part of the mystique of Andrew Jackson is that he came from nowhere and he came to bust up Washington," said Feller. "But Jackson had been a very different outsider, Jackson had been a public servant, he had been in the employment of government in military or civilian capacity almost his entire adult life." By contrast Trump was never drafted into the military and the presidency was his first elected office.

Still, taking up Jackson's mantle could be good politics for Trump. A key factor in his electoral victory was the ability to pick up votes from disgruntled Democrats. Where Democratic presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John F Kennedy invoked Jackson, his anti-elite views are reflected today by only the Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren wing of the Democratic party. Trump is more than happy to steal the Democrat's thunder. — AFP