

# Trump tweet: Bar transgender from serving in U.S. military

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump abruptly declared a ban Wednesday on transgender troops serving anywhere in the U.S. military, catching the Pentagon flat-footed and unable to explain what it called Trump's "guidance." His proclamation, on Twitter rather than any formal announcement, drew bipartisan denunciations and threw currently serving transgender soldiers into limbo.

"Please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military," the commander in chief tweeted.

Trump wrote that he had consulted with "my generals and military experts," but he did not mention Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, the retired Marine general who less than one month ago told the military service chiefs to spend another six months weighing the costs and benefits of allowing transgender individuals to enlist. At the time, Mattis said this "does not presuppose the outcome of the review," but Trump's tweets appeared to have done just that.

The Pentagon has refused to release any data on the number of transgender people currently serving. A Rand Corp. study has estimated the number at between 1,320 and 6,630 out of 1.3 million active-duty troops.

Criticism for Trump's action was immediate and strong from both political parties.

His action is "harmful, misguided and weakens, not strengthens our military," said Democratic Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

John McCain, the Arizona Republican and Vietnam War hero, said Trump was simply wrong.

"Any American who meets current medical and readiness standards should be allowed



In this 2008 file photo, the Pentagon is seen in this aerial view in Washington.

**"There is no reason to force service members who are able to fight, train and deploy to leave the military — regardless of their gender identity."**

— Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican and Vietnam War hero

**"It's about time that a decision is made to restore the warrior culture and allow the U.S. military to get back to business."**

— Rep. Duncan Hunter, member of the House Armed Services Committee

to continue serving," he said. "There is no reason to force service members who are able to fight, train and deploy to leave the military -- regardless of their gender identity."

Not everyone at the Capitol agreed.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said, "The president's decision was the absolute right decision. ... It's about time that a decision is made to restore the warrior culture and allow the U.S. military to get back to business."

Transgender people already in uniform were concerned about what comes

next. "Everybody is hurt, everybody is scared," said Rudy Akbarian, 26, who is in the military but did not want to identify his branch.

Akbarian, who said his chain of command was supportive as he transitioned from female to male, said his time to re-enlist is coming up and he might stay to ensure there is a strong voice for transgender troops like himself.

"I'm going to remain hopeful," he said. "America is really progressive and definitely smart, and there are a lot of transgender members serving in critical roles."

Shane Ortega, a 30-year-old retired staff sergeant in Los Angeles, said he's concerned more for civilians than transgender troops.

Ortega, who transitioned to male while serving in the Army and served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, said, "When Donald Trump attacks what America calls its heroes or its warrior class, it means it's only a matter of time before he starts attacking and disassembling the American public, and that's what I have the most fear of."

Hours after Trump's tweets, Defense Secretary Mattis, who has been on vacation this week, was publicly silent and the Pentagon referred all questions to the White House.

Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said the Pentagon was working with the White House to "address the new guidance" from Trump. That suggested there is not yet any new written policy or executive order.

## BRIEFLY

### Trump donating first-quarter salary to education

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is donating three months of his salary to the Department of Education.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders says Trump chose to give the department \$100,000. His first quarter salary donation went to the Department of Interior.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos says the donation is being used to pay for a science, technology, engineering and mathematics camp sponsored by the department.

As a candidate, Trump had promised not to take a salary. By law he must be paid, so he is donating the money. Taxpayers can write off such donations, potentially lowering their income taxes.

DeVos says she is grateful for the donation.

The Trump administration proposed a 13 percent cut to the Education Department's budget

an uncertain future in Congress, while his administration is bogged down by an investigation into Russia's possible ties with his presidential campaign.

The factory will produce liquid-crystal display panels that are used in televisions and computer screens, according to a senior White House official who insisted on anonymity to discuss the announcement.

Taiwan-based Foxconn is perhaps best known for assembling Apple iPhones in China.

### Law drawing focus in Russia probe rarely ends in prosecution

WASHINGTON (AP) — Criminal prosecutions are rare for people who fail to register as foreign agents, according to a top Justice Department official who testified Wednesday about an obscure law receiving new attention amid investigations into contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Adam Hickey, a deputy assistant attorney general, told Senate lawmakers that the Foreign Agents Registration Act — a law aimed at ensuring transparency about lobbying efforts done in the U.S. on behalf of foreign governments or principals — contains multiple exemptions for registration and requires proof that someone intended to break the law by failing to disclose their work. He said lawyers in a specialized Justice Department unit often prod someone to voluntarily register instead of seeking to charge them.

### Trump announces \$10B Foxconn plant in Wisconsin

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that electronics giant Foxconn will build a \$10 billion factory in Wisconsin that's expected to create 3,000 jobs.

The announcement comes at a critical juncture for a Trump administration that pledged to generate manufacturing jobs but has struggled to deliver results as quickly as the president promised. Trump's plans for health care and tax cuts face



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