

www.nationaljournal.com

# The Many, Um, Misstatements of Donald Trump

From the size of his airplane to the source of his campaign money, the GOP frontrunner continues making factually untrue claims

**S.V. Dáte**

**@SVDATE**

🕒 November 30, 2015

---

Ever since he got into the presidential race nearly six months ago, Donald Trump has had an epic battle on his hands.

No, not with his rival Republican candidates, who until recently have been reluctant to criticize him, but with the truth. As in actual, provable facts.

While just about all the candidates have exaggerated or embellished their records or their proposals in some way, developer-turned-reality-TV-star Trump has been in a league of his own when it comes to making factual claims that are, simply, factually not true. From the size of his airplane to the nature of the trade deal negotiated with Pacific Rim countries to how he's paying for his campaign, what Trump has said repeatedly fails to mesh with reality.

What's more, he and his campaign typically refuse to acknowledge any errors, and instead attack those pointing them out. Campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, for example, responded to *National Journal's* query about Trump's frequent misstatements by challenging the basis of the article itself: "The premise of your question is wrong and demonstrates the bias in your reporting."

This attitude is perhaps unsurprising, given Trump's admitted propensity to stretch the truth when it has suited his business purposes. "I'm not different from a politician running for office," he said in a [2007 deposition](http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB124261067783429043) (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB124261067783429043>). He even allowed that his much-touted net worth was a function of his "feelings" on any given day.

And while Trump has kept [fact-checkers busy](http://www.politifact.com/personalities/donald-trump/statements/byruling/pants-fire/) (<http://www.politifact.com/personalities/donald-trump/statements/byruling/pants-fire/>) with scores of questionable claims, here are seven of the most egregious:

**His airplane.** Of his numerous misstatements, this one is the most easily refuted and therefore the most mystifying. In an [interview with \*Rolling Stone\*](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/trump-seriously-20150909) (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/trump-seriously-20150909>) aboard his Boeing 757, Trump said about his plane: "It's bigger than Air Force One, which is a step down from this in every way." That statement, of course, is not remotely true. Since 1990, the U.S. president has used a Boeing 747 as [Air Force One](http://www.whitehousemuseum.org/special/AF1/) (<http://www.whitehousemuseum.org/special/AF1/>) (technically, whatever Air Force plane the president happens to be using is designated Air Force One for that flight). The president's plane is 50 feet longer, has a fuselage 8 feet wider and a maximum takeoff weight more than three times that of a 757. All of this is readily known to even a schoolchild with a casual interest in airplanes—which raises the question: Where and why would Trump get the idea his plane was bigger?

**A quarter-million Syrian refugees.** On the campaign trail, Trump frequently mentions the Obama White House's plan to accept more Syrian refugees. "Our president wants to take in 250,000 from Syria," he [said in Texas two weeks ago](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/14/donald-trump-says-tough-gun-control-laws-in-paris-contributed-to-tragedy/) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/14/donald-trump-says-tough-gun-control-laws-in-paris-contributed-to-tragedy/>). Only the actual number the administration has proposed is somewhat smaller: [10,000](http://www.nationaljournal.com/s/66471/white-house-is-ready-bring-more-syrian-refugees-congress-is-divided-whether-thats-such-good-idea) (<http://www.nationaljournal.com/s/66471/white-house-is-ready-bring-more-syrian-refugees-congress-is-divided-whether-thats-such-good-idea>), meaning Trump's figure represents a 25-fold exaggeration. Trump has been questioned about this claim, but refuses to back away from it. On Sunday, he mentioned it again on [NBC's \*Meet the Press\*](http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-november-29-2015-) (<http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-november-29-2015->

n470871). His source for the figure? “I happened upon a certain amount of knowledge, I’m very friendly with a lot of people on both sides, that Obama’s plan is 200,000 to 250,000,” he told NBC.

**Cheering New Jersey Muslims.** Somewhat relatedly, Trump told ABC’s *This Week* (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-cheering-jersey-911/story?id=35355447>): “There were people that were cheering on the other side of New Jersey where you have large Arab populations. They were cheering as the World Trade Center came down.” If Trump actually saw this on television, it was perhaps on a special channel produced only for him and some of his followers. While Internet posts alleging this existed immediately following the terrorist attacks, police departments and local media said then and say now there were no such celebrations. Interestingly, fellow GOP candidate Ben Carson, who following Trump’s remarks also said he saw the cheering on TV, later said he had gotten confused, and footage of the celebrations was actually from East Jerusalem.

**Self-funded campaign.** Over and over, Trump has told audiences that he is beholden to nobody because he is paying for his campaign himself. He told millions of TV viewers of the GOP main-stage debate (<http://time.com/4107636/transcript-read-the-full-text-of-the-fourth-republican-debate-in-milwaukee/>) in Milwaukee: “I’m self-funding my campaign. I’m putting up my own money.” Except that Federal Election Commission records to date show that it is not true. Not even half-true. While Trump did lend his campaign \$1.8 million during the first half of the year, and then spent another \$100,000 in “in-kind” contributions during the summer months, the bulk of his campaign money through Sept. 30, nearly \$3 million, has come from the sale of “Make America Great Again” hats, T-shirts, and other souvenirs. The campaign’s second-biggest expense over the summer (<http://www.nationaljournal.com/s/90778/donald-trumps-donors-not-his-bank-account-fueled-his-magic-summer?a=S.V.%20D%C3%A1te&mref=search>) months, after the cost of flying his 757 around, was for hats and T-shirts—which the campaign then sells at a 200-percent markup—meaning Trump’s campaign is not really so much self-funded as it is hat-funded (<http://www.nationaljournal.com/s/90948/how-donald-trump-capped-off-his-fundraising?a=S.V.%20D%C3%A1te&mref=search>).

**China's trade-pact "back door."** Trump has made China's supposed ability to get the better of American leaders a focus of his campaign. But during the Milwaukee Republican debate, he took this theme to a new level, suggesting that China would be the actual beneficiary of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement that was recently completed among the United States and 11 nations in Asia and the Americas: "It's a deal that was designed for China to come in, as they always do, through the back door and totally take advantage of everyone," Trump said. This claim has flummoxed trade experts. Back door? And given that China is not even party to this agreement (as Sen. Rand Paul correctly pointed out during the debate), are the Chinese so crafty and devious that they can somehow insert self-serving provisions into trade deals that they had no part in negotiating? This claim also speaks to Trump's [China fixation \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDrfE9I8\\_hs\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDrfE9I8_hs) more broadly, in which he attributes the relative shift of manufacturing jobs to China and other Far Eastern nations to bad negotiating by U.S. leaders rather than market forces, such as vastly lower labor costs in those countries. When *The Wall Street Journal* editorial board [asked him recently \(http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-presidency-as-the-art-of-the-deal-1448062143\)](http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-presidency-as-the-art-of-the-deal-1448062143) who he looked to for advice on economics, Trump said there was no need: "Honestly, I feel that I have such a vast feeling for it that I really—you know, Milton Friedman was good—but I don't really listen to anybody," he said.

**Mark Zuckerberg's personal senator.** During the Oct. 28 debate in Boulder, Colorado, Trump was asked why he had referred to Sen. Marco Rubio as Facebook cofounder Mark Zuckerberg's "personal senator" regarding Rubio's support for more tech-worker visas. Trump's reply: "I never said that. I never said that," and added that he had no clue where moderator Becky Quick could have come up with such an idea. During a commercial break, though, [Quick dug up the source for her question \(http://time.com/4091301/republican-debate-transcript-cnbc-boulder/\)](http://time.com/4091301/republican-debate-transcript-cnbc-boulder/). It had come from Trump's own campaign website. Trump offered a 158-word reply that said he had created tens of thousands of jobs and that immigrants had to come to his country legally because "we have a country of borders"—but failed to address his categorical and, as it turns out, incorrect denial from minutes earlier.

**River of Blood.** Trump's forays into fiction are not limited to his presidential campaign. A Virginia golf course he purchased and renovated along the Potomac River was given a historical monument recently commemorating all the soldiers from both sides who died near that spot during the Civil War: "The casualties were so great that

the water would turn red and thus became known as “The River of Blood.” The only problem was that actual historians, according to a *New York Times* account (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/us/politics/in-renovation-of-golf-club-donald-trump-also-dressed-up-history.html>), say that location saw nothing like what Trump imagines. Trump’s response to the *Times*: “How would they know that? Were they there?”