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USA

Trump's Wrecking Ball

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President Donald J. Trump, in his first week in office swung a wrecking ball smashing institutions, breaking laws, and wreaking havoc. The effect is dizzying.

To begin, Trump used the presidential pardon to free over 1,550 people involved in the insurrection at the U.S. capitol on January 6, 2021, reversing the decisions of the Justice Department and the Federal courts. Among those released are two far-right leaders, Enrique Tario of the Proud Boys, and Stewart Rhodes of the Oath keepers, both convicted of sedition and serving 22 and 18 years. They are now free to organize their fascist movements.

Trump wants total control of the government and is acting to take it. Trump fired about 20 independent inspectors general whose job is to promote economy and efficiency and to prevent waste, fraud and abuse. At the same time, Trump established a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), headed by billionaire Elon Musk, to modernize technology and to maximize governmental efficiency. Various watch-dog groups and labor unions have filed suit to stop DOGE.

Trump also eliminated all federal government positions working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) programs meant to insure fairness in employment for all whatever their gender, race, or disability. He called DEIA "radical and wasteful." Trump repealed Executive Order 11246, issued president Lyndon Johnson in 1965 to stop discrimination in government contracting. Trump also announced that the federal government only recognizes two genders, male and female and that Black and Women's history months will no longer be celebrated.

Trump declared a "national emergency" at the southern border and sent U.S. troops there to stop what he calls "the immigrant invasion." Trump shut down the app used to make asylum appointments and canceled 30,000 existing appointments. The president has also revoked temporary humanitarian parole for 30,000 refugees from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti and Ukraine who live and work in the United States. There is now also fear among the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from many other countries who enjoy temporary protective status, another program granting temporary residence. And immigration police can now target hospitals, schools, and churches, which were previously forbidden. Trump attempted to end birthright citizenship by executive order but a federal court stopped him saying his action was unconstitutional.

The president ordered an unprecedented 10-day pause of all activity by Health and Human Services agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health, stopping all external communications as well as scientific publications, and conferences. And Trump has withdrawn the United States from the World Health Organization.

President Donald Trump's national security adviser Mike Walz told 160 aides employed at the National Security Council to go home and do nothing until the new administration decides their future. Twenty Justice Department officials were also reassigned. Trump has reclassified thousands of federal employees as "Schedule F," making it easier to fire them, and he could remove civil service protection from all 2.5 million federal employees.

Fulfilling his promise to "drill baby drill," Trump declared "a national energy emergency"—even though the United States produces more oil than any other nation. He is opening up more land to oil companies for drilling and fracking, though state and local laws may still regulate oil production. He is also undoing all federal regulations aimed at preventing climate change.

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In foreign policy, Trump has changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, and says he wants to take back control of the Panama Canal and to change Greenland from a Danish to a U.S. possession and is willing to consider military force to do so.

The barrage of decrees and actions has overwhelmed his opponents, for the moment.

PS:

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