

JAKE TAPPER, CNN ANCHOR: Senator Vance, good to see you. Thank you so much.

SEN. J.D. Vance (R-OH), & VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Thank you.

TAPPER: So let me ask you, obviously, Trump's former chief of staff General John Kelly --

VANCE: Sure.

TAPPER: -- was alarmed, he says, by what he heard when Trump said he wanted to use the National Guard or the Pentagon to go after the enemy, within, Americans with whom he disagrees, including the Pelosis, Adam Schiff.

And then he gave an interview. He said that Trump, quote, "certainly falls into the general definition of Fascist," that he is, quote, "certainly an authoritarian who admires people who are dictators."

You've called him a disgruntled former employee. But why shouldn't Americans out there listen to somebody who worked closely with Trump, worked with him longer than you've worked with him, retired four-star Marine general, served his country honorably, who is conservative, who says he agrees with Trump on most policies, but is worried about this aspect of Trump?

VANCE: So let me say two things in response. So first of all, a lot of what John Kelly, pretty much all of what John Kelly, accuses Donald Trump of saying, there were other people in the room, Mike Pence's former chief of staff, for example, who've explicitly said Donald Trump never said those things, right?

So, one --

TAPPER: Mike Pence is not going to support Trump because -- because --

VANCE: Mike Pence -- Mike Pence's former chief of staff said that Donald Trump didn't say those things, right? So that's number one.

Number two, I actually think there's a -- there's an interesting conversation here to have, Jake, which is why does John Kelly not support Donald Trump? It's about policy. It's not about personality.

TAPPER: No, he says he agrees with Trump on most policy.

VANCE: No.

TAPPER: He agrees with Trump on most policy.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: He disagrees with Trump on how Trump views his role and his -- and the Fascism and the authoritarianism.

VANCE: I don't -- I don't buy that. Jake. I don't buy that.

Because if you actually look at John Kelly, at folks like Liz Chaney, the fundamental disagreement they have with Donald Trump is, even though they say that they're conservative, they're conservative in the sense that they want America to get involved in a ton of ridiculous military conflicts.

They want America to police the world and Donald Trump wasn't.

TAPPER: John Kelly lost a son in Afghanistan. Why are you saying that? He -- like, I've never heard John Kelly say whether he supports Iran or Afghanistan.

VANCE: And I -- and I honor his son's sacrifice and I honor his family sacrifice. That doesn't mean he is not wrong about policy.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: But what specifically are you talking about? He said that --

VANCE: Is your argument that a person who lost his son in Afghanistan, can't be wrong about public policy?

TAPPER: I'm asking you --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Then why bring that up? Let's talk about public policy --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Because you were asked --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: -- because I've never criticized his service or his son's service.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I brought it up because you're acting as if he is pro-war and I've never heard him say whether or not he supported the war in Afghanistan or the war in Iraq. He was a general carrying out orders.

VANCE: Because I know John Kelly's worldview and I know the people who have attacked Donald Trump, the most vociferously on foreign policy, they'll say, "Well, he's a dictator," when what they really mean is, they won't listen.

He -- Donald Trump wouldn't listen to the leadership of the military when they wanted him to start ridiculous conflicts. That is a consistent theme.

And I think that there's a big, big thing going on in American politics. It's a very interesting theme in American foreign policy where a lot of former members of the Pentagon bureaucracy, a lot of old Neoconservatives, they have a fundamental difference with Donald Trump on the question of peace and war.

I believe Donald Trump is the candidate of peace. I think the record supports that, but the reason these guys go after him, so vociferously, I don't think that it's about his personality, Jake. I think that it's about, they don't like that Donald Trump said no when a lot of them wanted to start a ridiculous war.

TAPPER: Well, for your -- your ascribing worldviews, I think, based on gut, I can't really tell what -- where you're coming from on it. There's no evidence --

VANCE: It's based on people that I've talked to in the Trump administration.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Sure, John Bolton --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: John Kelly want to do, John Bolton, Liz Chaney. These people have a consistent --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: John Kelly was at the Department of Homeland Security and then he was chief of staff. He was not weighing in. I don't even know what you're talking about.

But let me ask you something about John Kelly specifically, because you said the other day, quote, "I guarantee John Kelly talked to somebody on Kamala Harris's campaign beforehand," before he did this interview.

Now I've spoken with people in John Kelly's circle and I've spoken with people in the Kamala Harris campaign. They say there's been no communication the entire time, so where did that come from?

VANCE: Oh, I'm highly skeptical of that, Jake. You know the way that these attacks work. You know the way that these people are often vetted by a campaign before somebody goes out there.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: So you made it up?

VANCE: No, I said that the American media and the American Democratic Party apparatus works a certain way. If it comes out that John Kelly never even spoke with a person in the Kamala Harris orbit, then I'm happy --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: You're telling me that based on secondhand conversations with John Kelly, and it's interesting. We've now spent Jake three minutes, Jake, talking about John Kelly. If it is true that he never spoke with anyone in Kamala Harris' orbit, I'm happy to apologize to John Kelly for misstating how he delivered this news to "The "Atlantic" magazine.

But let's talk about who -- who did he deliver this news to? To Jeffrey Goldberg, a guy who lied the United States into the Iraq war, which led to the deaths of millions of innocent Arabs and thousands of innocent Americans.

You don't go to that guy if you don't have a particular ideological motive. I think that's what's going on. If I'm wrong, I'm happy to say that I'm wrong.

TAPPER: I think it's interesting that you think that -- that a magazine writer lied the American people into war.

VANCE: Well, he encouraged it. He wrote stories that were dishonest. He took--

TAPPER: He wrote a story about the gassing of the Kurds in the -- in -- I forget if it was "The Atlantic" or the "New Yorker."

But I'm actually referring to John Kelly talking to "The New York Times."

VANCE: He -- he wrote stories, by the way, where he took what intelligence officials in the American Pentagon bureaucracy said and wrote it as the gospel truth.

And this highlights, the entire point that I'm making about Trump's foreign policy, is this is a guy who wants to use American troops sparingly. He wants peace through strength. It's why his foreign policy was so successful during his first term.

It's all the same people who were wrong about Iraq. They were wrong about the quagmire in Afghanistan. They were wrong about Syria. They were wrong about everything, and now they're coming after Donald Trump, because he actually has a realistic and cautious foreign policy.

TAPPER: I'm talking about people who worked for Donald Trump in his first administration. That's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about not just John Kelly, but Mark Milley, who was the Trump-appointed chairman of his joint -- of the Joint Chiefs of Staff --

VANCE: Who disobeyed Trump's direct orders on troop deployments in Syria. And --

TAPPER: I'm talking about the guy that, that had your job --

VANCE: A massive, a massive, massive violation of his constitutional oath, by the way.

TAPPER: I'm talking about the guy that had your job before Donald Trump's supportive crowd wanted to hang him, Vice President Mike Pence, who said, as you know, that Trump put himself before the Constitution.

I'm talking about General Mattis, also secretary of defense in Trump's administration. I'm talking about Mark Esper, the secretary of defense who told me that Trump does have Fascistic tendencies. John Bolton, H.R. McMaster --

VANCE: Every single one ---

TAPPER: These are Trump administration officials!

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Okay, Jake, are you gonna listen to every single Trump administration official? Do you know one reason why Kamala Harris doesn't have as many people criticizing her, is because she doesn't fire people who fail.

That's why we haven't had a real audit of the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal is because Kamala Harris protects failures in government. Donald Trump fires them, and I'd much rather have the president who fires people who screw up.

Now, Jake, now this is an important point.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: He did not fire Mike Pence!

VANCE: Kamala Harris --

TAPPER: He did not fire Mike Pence.

VANCE: Kamala Harris --

TAPPER: He did not fire Mark Milley.

(CROSSTALK)



TAPPER: He did not fire general -- I mean John,

VANCE: He fired a lot of those people, Jake, and he did because they weren't doing their job. But this is the thing, Jake, we've -- we've now spent, yes, five minutes talking about people in Donald Trump's staff --

TAPPER: Who think he's not fit for office

VANCE: -- who he's fired.

TAPPER: Who think --

VANCE: -- who he's fired --

TAPPER: -- he's unfit for office.

VANCE: Oh, they didn't think he was unfit for office until they had a falling out with him because he fired them, and we're not talking about the public policy.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Why don't we talk about how Americans can't afford groceries --

TAPPER: We're actually -- we're actually --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Can we talk about the fact that Americans can't afford the cost of housing? Let's -

TAPPER: We're actually talking about --

VANCE: -- talk about the fact that a lot of people out there in Erie, Pennsylvania. They're the ones who suffer and die when people like Mark Esper and Mark Milley don't obey the commander-in-chief's orders.

TAPPER: We're talking about Donald Trump and what he says.

VANCE: Yes --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Donald Trump says --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: And you'd much rather talk about what Donald Trump allegedly said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I'm talking about what Donald Trump --

VANCE: -- than what Donald Trump did in office.

TAPPER: I'm talking about what he said publicly.

VANCE: What he did in office, Jake --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I'm talking about what he said publicly. What he said publicly, he wants to use the military to go after the enemy within, which is the American people --

VANCE: He did not say that, Jake. He said --

TAPPER: The enemy within?

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: He said that he was going to send the military after the American people? Show me the quote where he said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: He said he was going to -- the enemy within --

VANCE: He said far-left lunatics. He's talking about the people rioting--

TAPPER: Like the Pelosi, and Schiff.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: He's talking about people rioting after the election. I think --

TAPPER: The Pelosis were rioting after the election?

VANCE: He said --

TAPPER: Adam Schiff was rioting after the election?

VANCE: You're using two separate -- you're using two separate phrases. He said about using the military that far left lunatic, people who riot in the wake of an election, people who burned down American cities in the summer of 2020, yes, we should have a federal law enforcement response.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: This is what he said to Joe Rogan on Friday, the enemy within, that he wants the military to go after --

VANCE: No, no. This is the thing--

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: The enemy within --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Keep the second part.

TAPPER: We have to -- we have people that are really bad people that I really think want to make this country unsuccessful. That's what that enemy within --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Did he say that he wants to use the military against those people? Here's, here's--

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: He wants to use the military to go after the enemy within.

VANCE: There's the game that you're playing. He said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I'm not playing a game.

VANCE: No, no, no. Let me -- can I answer the question please? He said that he wanted to use the military to go after far-left lunatics who were rioting. And he also called them -- he also called them the enemy within.

He separately, in a totally different context and a totally different context, in a totally conversation said that Nancy Pelosi and Adam Schiff were threats to this country.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: -- were the enemy within. Were the enemy within. He said they were the enemy within.

VANCE: So, every time he uses the exact same phrase, we assumed that he uses the military?

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I don't know. I don't go around the term of enemy within to talk about using the military against going American people --

VANCE: And you're asking his vice president, but you won't let me answer the question. I'm telling you that Donald Trump has said, and I agree with him, that we should use the U.S. military to --

VANCE: To go after Americans.

VANCE: People who riot, who burned down our cities. We should follow the National Guard.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: This was what John Kelly --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: This was what John Kelly was alarmed by, the idea of using the US military to go after Americans. That's what he said.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Donald Trump never said Americans, writ large. You keep on putting words in his mouth and my mouth--

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Are they or are they not Americans?

VANCE: -- far left people who commit acts of violence, who riot, I don't care --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Now you're doing a very narrow definition, of what he said--

VANCE: I don't care --

TAPPER: That's not what he said.

Let me ask you the bigger point --

VANCE: He did. He did say that, Jake. He said that he wanted to use the US military -- let me clarify --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: after the far-left lunatics --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: And then he also added --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: He never said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: And he added Schiff--

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: -- never said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: And then he added the Pelosis.



VANCE: He never -- he never said --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Then he added people that don't want the country to --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: He said that Adam Schiff and Nancy Pelosi, he used in a separate context in a separate conversation. And what you're doing is you're smashing two totally different--

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: -- conversations --

TAPPER: FOX asked him about this last week and he didn't take issue with it. He said the enemy within is the biggest is the biggest -- the biggest threat to this country.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Did he say the enemy within, that he's going to use the military against Nancy Pelosi? Donald Trump offered Nancy Pelosi the National Guard on January the 6th, and according to private emails, she rejected it.

TAPPER: No. So let's -- let's talk about things that he wants to do that are feeding into this concern that people like John Kelly and General Mattis and General Milley have. He said on Friday, special counsel, Jack Smith, should get thrown out of the country.

He's threatened to arrest election officials who cheated. We know that he believes a lot of people cheated that did not cheat. He wants to --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: If you violate the law, you should be arrested, yes.

VANCE: No one disagrees with that but he's talking --

TAPPER: You do.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: No.

VANCE: Based on the way you're asking the question.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: No, based on the fact that he's accused people that didn't break the law of breaking the law when it comes to the election.

And if you want to revisit that, I'm happy to. But Liz Cheney, he said, should be put before a war tribunal. None of that sounds Fascistic to you at all?

VANCE: No, of course, it doesn't.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Putting Liz Cheney before a military tribunal?

VANCE: First of all, I don't buy into the premise of what you're saying, Jake.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: These are things he said!

VANCE: Because I just on things that I know that he said -- on things that I know that he said, you're impugning things. You're taking words out of context. You're taking two separate conversations and pretending they --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: No. I'm not.

VANCE: -- were made at the exact same time.

TAPPER: No, I'm not.

VANCE: So I'm rejecting the premise of your question. I frankly don't believe what you're saying about Donald Trump's words.

If you'd like to put up a clip and actually put him in context, I think the American people would realize that Donald Trump is a hell of a lot more reasonable than the people like Liz Cheney, who would like to lie us into war.

Now, Jake, we also remember, I mean, step back a little bit. Well, ask yourself a basic question about network integrity. You guys talked about the Russia hoax nonstop. The --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: The FBI was investigating it.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: The FBI was investigating it. So we -- so we covered them.

VANCE: And so you took the words of unnamed FBI agents and put them on your network as if they were the gospel truth. You did it again and again.

A viewer of your network would've believed that Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin conspired in 2016.

TAPPER: No.

VANCE: That was totally and preposterously false.

TAPPER: No--

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: That's why--

TAPPER: What you just said is false. We covered an FBI investigation. I don't know why you want to talk about the FBI investigation.

VANCE: You covered it in a way that gave credence to anonymous sources, accusations. You did it yourself. Your network did it, Jake. But again, can we talk about the issues that Americans care most about?

TAPPER: I'm talking about things that Donald Trump has said.

VANCE: Yes.

TAPPER: If you have an issue --

VANCE: Kamala Harris --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: -- with whether or not he's talking about the economy enough, that's between you and your running mate. I'm talking about things he has said this week.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Every single rally that he does, he talks about how he wants to unleash American energy so we can lower the cost of groceries.

He talks about the fact that housing has become unaffordable. He talks about the wide open border, Jake.

Kamala Harris and her allies -- you know, it's interesting. Kamala Harris and her media allies -- and I would put CNN in this category, you guys--

TAPPER: They wouldn't.

VANCE: You guys seem to care--

TAPPER: I'll tell you that—they wouldn't.

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Well, they should watch your network more because you guys seem to care more about Donald Trump's past than the future of the American people. We're running this campaign on making of the American dream.

TAPPER: I'm specifically asking about how Donald Trump is going to be president in the future should he win? And then we're being told --

VANCE: He's going to pursue economic policies that lower the cost of groceries and make life more affordable again. He talks about it every single day on the campaign trail, and so do I.

What you're talking about is -- is an anonymously sourced story or one guy who --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Nothing anonymously sourced. Zero --

VANCE: Or one guy who is a disgruntled employee.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Ten other people --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Five other people have pushed back against him and said that what he said was dishonest.

So why don't we talk about the policy that's affecting American citizens and not what Donald Trump allegedly said, according to one guy who's pissed off because he got fired by Donald Trump.

TAPPER: I didn't bring up any of the things that he said -- he said, I didn't bring up

VANCE: You brought up John Kelly. And that --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: I brought up John Kelly's view of Donald Trump. I didn't bring up John Kelly talking about what Donald Trump said about Hitler's generals. I didn't bring that up. I talked about John Kelly's view of Trump based on something Trump has been saying in the last week. So that's what I asked about.

VANCE: So John Kelly makes accusations that are rejected by five people. You -- you --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Again, you're talking about something I didn't bring that up.

VANCE: I think that maybe implicates his overall judgment, and I think the fact that he has a worldview that's so oppositional to peace and prosperity suggests that he's not an honest arbiter here.

This is not a guy, John Kelly, going to brag to Jeffrey Goldberg who is interested in the American truth or is interested in telling an honest account of Donald Trump.

He's a guy with an axe to grind because Donald Trump fired him and disagreed with him on policy.

TAPPER: So all those 10 people, including the former vice president, Mike Pence, all of these people are -- have this horribly damaged worldview. And they're all just going after Donald Trump because they want to send people into war?

That's what -- that's really your argument?

VANCE: Absolutely.



TAPPER: It's not like these are --

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: Absolutely that's my argument.

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: These are not conservative Republicans who are concerned about Donald Trump?

VANCE: All are not --

TAPPER: That's not right?

(CROSSTALK)

VANCE: All of the people, Jake, they came into office thinking that they could control Donald Trump. That when he said he wanted peace in the world --

(CROSSTALK)

TAPPER: Mike Pence thought he could control Donald Trump?

VANCE: Yes, he did.

TAPPER: Really?

VANCE: And when he found out that he couldn't, they all turned on Donald Trump, and a lot of them got fired. And we are running, and we're trying to staff the government with people who are going to govern according to principles of peace and prosperity.

TAPPER: Let me ask you --

VANCE: They're pissed off about it.

TAPPER: Let me ask you because we're being told that we're over.

VANCE: Yes.

TAPPER: One more question --

VANCE: Yes, yes.

TAPPER: You are running to be vice president of the United States.

VANCE: Of course.

TAPPER: And there is a 50-50 chance, maybe better, I don't know, that you're going to succeed. Are you running to be vice president of the United States or are you running to be vice president of the red states?

Because if you win, and there's a decent chance you will, you're going to be vice president of childless cat ladies. You're going to be vice president of legal Haitian -- Haitian migrants in Springfield, Ohio. You're going to be their vice president, too.

Are you running to do that?

VANCE: Jake, of course, I'm running to be the vice president of all Americans. I'm running because I want people to be able to afford a good life in this country.

You know how I grew up. You know that I grew up in a family where things were often tough. I want, whether you're in a blue state or a red state, whether you're going to vote for Trump or you're going to vote for Harris, I want you to be able to have a good life in this country.

But what's not going to happen with the broken leadership in Washington, DC.

Let me give you a statistic, Jake, because here is what the leadership of people like Kamala Harris and Nancy Pelosi and, yes, Mike Pence, over 30 years in this country has led to.

A person with a bachelor's degree lives seven years longer than a person without a bachelor's degree. There are a lot of people who have gotten rich and powerful off -- off of American decline. Some of them have had "R"s next to their name. Some of them have had "D"s next to their name, and the first person who I believe is really putting the interest of the American people first is Donald J. Trump. So, yes, we're going to be the president and the vice president for all people.

The only way to do that is to reject the failed consensus.

TAPPER: All right.

VANCE: Thanks Jake.

TAPPER: Thank you so much, Senator. Appreciate it.

VANCE: Absolutely.

TAPPER: Have a good time out there.

VANCE: Yeah. VAN