

# KRISTI NOEM COMBATS CLAIMED ANTISEMITISM BY TRYING TO DEPORT 61 ISRAELI STUDENTS, AND OTHER TALES OF HARVARD DERANGEMENT

Donald Trump is making American troops – and Americans generally – less safe from biohazards as part of his attempt to destroy Harvard University.

Among the details included in Harvard's motion for summary judgement submitted yesterday in the university's lawsuit challenging Trump's effort to defund the university (there are two lawsuits – the one regarding Trump's campaign to retaliate because Harvard refused to cede its independence, and the one responding to Kristi Noem's denial of visa for Harvard students) is a description of how Pete Hegseth's agency cut off DOD grants without informing DARPA that the "top performing team" on an effort to detect and deploy countermeasures to biohazards had been arbitrarily and immediately cut off.

The motion quotes the effort DARPA's director of contracting made to reverse the cuts, to no avail.

Harvard is currently the top performing team on the AMPHORA program. Inadequate knowledge of the biological threat landscape poses grave and immediate harm to national security. Development of critical technologies that enables bio surveillance and biocollection in austere, field forward locations bolsters national security and warfighter safety and lethality by enabling medical countermeasure

development to new and emerging threats and provides biological threat intelligence to the deployed warfighter. This technology is significantly outpacing the state-of-the art and provides a novel leap-ahead capability to the force. Harvard's effort is at a pivotal juncture in Phase 1 as they are just starting the microfluidic experiments that will give first indications of whether the program goal is achievable. They are also a critical integrator of multiple technologies that enable this effort and could not be readily reproduced.

Pete Hegseth just did what Trump told him to do – cut off Harvard – with no consideration of how it undermines his claimed effort to make military more lethal.

National security took a back seat to Trump's maniacal effort to get Harvard to bow down to his demand to turn the country's most storied institution of higher learning into a bureaucracy replicating MAGA ideology.

Harvard's motion mentions – and a declaration from Harvard's Vice Provost for Research, John Shaw, lists far more – of the other benefits to American taxpayers that Trump arbitrarily took away. As a breast cancer survivor, I would personally benefit from a \$7 million grant supporting research “to find and describe early changes in breast tissue in women that may be at a higher risk of breast cancer.” As someone who lost a parent to Parkinson's, I might personally benefit from efforts to “identify[] numerous modifiable risk factors for Parkinson's disease.” We all would benefit from a \$2 million effort to better understand resistance to antibiotics *awarded by the (second) Trump administration*.

Gone.

All of those benefits and many more have been

stolen from taxpayers who've already sunk billions into this research.

And yet, with few exceptions (an important one is a NYT story, cited in the motion, describing how the cuts will disrupt efforts to prevent veteran suicides and otherwise improve healthcare for veterans) this is not how the story of Trump's emotional tantrum against Harvard is being told.

"Harvard Digs In for Battle, but Trump's Blows Are Landing," WSJ described a boxing match when reporting the visa ban for Harvard students.

"Why is Trump going after Harvard?" WaPo promised to answer, instead explaining, "Here's how the attacks have escalated," even while treating wrestling booster Linda McMahon's claimed pretense of fighting antisemitism in good faith. Their timeline missed several important details that show up in Harvard's own timeline (submitted with the motion for summary judgement): notably:

- Harvard did a bunch of things to address antisemitism on campus
- Plans announced by Task Force on Antisemitism Senior Counsel, Leo Terrell, way back on October 24, 2024, to defund Harvard
- The Trump Administration's persistent disinterest in the things Harvard had done to address antisemitism
- The Trump Administration's persistent silence about any single instance of antisemitism on Harvard's campus – the kind of due process to which Harvard

## would respond on Title VI

Having not presented the pretext of antisemitism as such, WaPo doesn't ask how revoking the visas all foreign students at Harvard, including those of 61 Israeli students, combats antisemitism.

Politico similarly glosses the significance of all this in what is mostly a process story of Trump's efforts to "brainstorm new Harvard measures." Trump is seeking to "bring the storied institution to heel." The Administration will need to "get more creative to keep squeezing the school." When it contemplates the "Trump administration's broader efforts to reshape not just American government but the institutions that have long surrounded it," Politico did not mention how that effort included an ignorant effort to defund Politico subscriptions, to say nothing of Trump's other assaults on the press.

NYT has been reporting a series of "escalations." "[T]he administration appeared eager to escalate one of its civil investigations into a criminal inquiry," Mike Schmidt and Michael Bender described a manufactured outrage that would backfire if it were criminally charged. The fight escalated, Mike Schmidt said in an interview. This was a sharp escalation, NYT set up another Schmidt interview. Cutting off visas was a major escalation, Schmidt and Michael Bender described. "Trump Administration Escalates Harvard Feud With New Justice Dept. Investigation," another headline blared. Mike Schmidt, who always seems to reinforce Trump's power, keeps insisting that, "Harvard Has No Way Out," without thinking through what that would mean for the US, if true.

Schmidt apparently can't imagine a political setback so significant – a backlash from taxpayers about the value Trump took from them, a value that Schmidt doesn't consider – that Trump would realize he has to fund Harvard research just like he has to keep Air Traffic

Controllers on the job.

Politico, at least, quotes one of several administration sources describing that the mere futility of Trump's efforts when public opinion swung to Harvard when Trump revoked the student visas (it made no mention that that included visas for Israelis).

"We're fighting a losing battle," one of the administration officials said, acknowledging that the university has the narrative upper hand when it comes to the effort to revoke Harvard's student visas. "We've taken one of the most evil institutions and made them the victim."

But there remains no question about the way Trump has deliberately hurt Americans – not just elite Americans whose kids go to Harvard, or poorer Americans, whose Harvard tuition foreign students subsidize, but the Americans who benefit from the cancer cures and biohazard warnings and ways to combat antibiotic resistance.

Dan Drezner, from his perch just down the road from Harvard at Tufts, argues that Schmidt's pessimism about Harvard is all wrong, that Harvard is winning this battle.

Over the weekend, however, some news stories have come out that reinforce a few points about how these attacks are going.

- *The administration has already shot its wad in going after Harvard and has very little left in its cupboard.*
- *This anti-Harvard jihad is not going exactly as planned, either legally*

*or politically.*

- *The Trump White House has now reached the same point in its dealing with Harvard that it previously reached in its trade negotiations with multiple countries: desperate for a victory that may never come.*

This is not to say that Trump is not wreaking carnage. He's wreaking a *tremendous* amount of carnage. What he is not doing, however, is winning.

Part of Drezner's optimism is that academics, both within Harvard and across the institutions, have discovered collective action.

What Klein's story omits is that after a stumbling start at collective action, the administration's actions have **galvanized** a lot of universities to talk to each other about response strategies. The fundamental lesson to be learned from Trump's actions to date is that no matter how a university responds, Trump will be coming after them anyway. That comes through loud and clear in all the coverage. And if university leadership knows this, they will choose standing their ground over backing down every day of the week.

From my own limited view of how higher education is responding, I see discussions about how to respond to further pressure from the Trump administration. I also see that none of the response strategies on the table include "cut a deal."

Where I depart from Drezner's optimism, and concede Schmidt has a point, is that unless this senseless battle imposes a cost on Trump, Harvard will ultimately lose, American taxpayers will ultimately lose the sunk costs in research and jobs that Trump decided to take away. Because until those resisting Trump – from the lawyers to the universities to the local nonprofits and yes even the media outlets – actually win the underlying battle, Trump remains in a position to take away those cancer cures.

And that – not Wharton grad Trump's claim of Harvard snobbery and not the billionaire's concerns about elitism and sure as fuck not a concern about antisemitism – is why Trump keeps doubling down.

Harvard has the means and the facts to win the legal cases before it. Without even telling the story of the cancer cures Trump took away, Harvard also has the means to look like less of an asshole than Trump.

But that's a different thing from turning Harvard's fight – and the collective action that has arisen – into a political win.

This is not about universities. Or – as I tried to visualize last week – universities are not what people think they are. Universities do a lot of the same kind of things Elon Musk does, but with nowhere near the grift, corruption, and – yes – the antisemitism.

This is not a boxing match, a wrestling match, or a series of escalations.

This is about a broader fight for civil society.

Perhaps journalists, from their very privileged position within civil society, will be the last to figure this out, to understand that all those escalations against Harvard are really inseparable from the – thus far – more successful escalations against the press.

But what is going on is a two-bit dictator is

willing to take things away from the American people all so he can lord over an entity that dared stand up to him.