

TRUMP'S VULNERABILITY AND THE BUNKER-BALLROOM

I have long suspected that one reason Stephen Miller has so much control over Donald Trump right now is he played a big part of getting Trump back on his feet after the Butler shooting, which really (and unsurprisingly) rattled him for weeks. Trump's return coincided with a particular turn to the fascist.

That's one reason I find this exchange from NYT's "interview" with Donald Trump interesting.

He directly tied the security of the bunker-ballroom to some trauma (he had earlier raised it, and sent a valet to get all his ballroom models). Then they spoke off the record (one of perhaps four times they do so, aside from the call with Colombian President Gustavo Petro).

President Trump

This is a much more important thing to do. So, this is the ballroom right here. It's beautiful. People love it. It'll hold – it's being designed with bulletproof glass, 4 to 5 inches thick. Can take just about any weapon that we know of. I wish I was in it about a little while ago. [Mr. Trump laughs.]

[Mr. Trump speaks briefly off the record.]

Tyler Pager

Mr. President, on the record, you haven't even been here a year yet, and you've made many renovations. Are there other plans for you to make changes?

They came back on the record with a slightly different topic: renovations generally.

From there, Trump discussed a plan to add a

second floor to the West Wing, because the roof that's there now is not used given that long range rifles could hit them.

Tyler Pager

What about at the White House complex?

President Trump

I may do an upper West Wing. This area. Cover it with one floor because it needs more space. It would be –

David E. Sanger

Including the Oval? Or Oval would be separate?

President Trump

No, less. Short of the Oval. If you take the L [shape] –

David E. Sanger

So you'd put it up – there's a second floor. It's sort of in the attic.

President Trump

Well there's a second floor now that was, that was meant to be a park. People don't use it as a park. Now with long-range rifles, you tend not to use it.

[snip]

Katie Rogers

The L. Is that why you were on the roof that day?

President Trump

Exactly.

Katie Rogers

What were you doing?

President Trump

I was looking at doing office space.

Grandpa Sundown took a diversion to show a picture of Don Jr holding a rattlesnake while wearing flip-flops.

Then Trump brought out one after another model of the ballroom. When David Sanger asked him about its cost, he distinguished between the aboveground portion – the ballroom – from the stuff below ground (which has not been discussed on the record) – the bunker.

The current \$400 million cost does not include the bunker.

President Trump

But I said, “Ultimately, they win.” You better be careful. So ready? Don’t take any pictures of this ’cause you’ll scare people. So I started off with a building half of the seats –

[Mr. Trump puts a model for a new White House ballroom on the table.]

– and then it just kept growing and growing, and the money kept pouring in and pouring in. No, no, please. So I started with that – started with this.

[Mr. Trump puts a model of what he said was the smaller, original planned ballroom on the table.]

And I said: “Wow, I’ve got all this beautiful land. I don’t want to waste it.” So I said: “All right. I’ll go a little bit larger.” This would have seat – seated 450 people. So I said, “Let’s go a little bit larger.” So then I said, “Let’s do this.”

[Mr. Trump removes the smaller model and puts another model for the new ballroom on the table.]

Zolan Kanno-Youngs

What’s the updated price tag on all this?

President Trump

Well, every time I make it larger it goes – but I'll do it for – I'm under budget and ahead of schedule. You know, I'm – I'd build it larger.

David E. Sanger

Are you at about \$400 million now?

President Trump

I'll bring it in for less than – it's, it's ahead of schedule and under budget so far.

David E. Sanger

What's the budget?

President Trump

Under \$400 million.

David E. Sanger

And that's just the aboveground, not –

President Trump

That's the aboveground.

According to CNN a White House official acknowledged the security enhancements going on underground.

During a recent meeting of the National Capital Planning Commission where the ballroom was discussed, White House director of management and administration Joshua Fisher said broadly that the overall ballroom project will "(enhance) mission critical functionality," "make necessary security enhancements" and "(deliver) resilient, adaptive infrastructure aligned with future mission needs."

Fisher was pressed on why the project broke with precedent by starting the demolition process without the

commission's approval – and he indicated that the “top-secret” work taking place underground was the motivation.

“There are some things regarding this project that are, frankly, of top-secret nature that we are currently working on. That does not preclude us from changing the above-grade structure, but that work needed to be considered when doing this project, which was not part of the NCPC process,” he said.

And to the NYT, Donald Trump tied the bunker-ballroom to his own sense of vulnerability.