

FLASHBACKS TO THE 2015 CAMPAIGN



Katy Tur at SXSW

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Several years ago, I got Mrs Dr
Peterr Katy Tur's book
*Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to
the Craziest Campaign in American
History*. Tur had been the NBC
reporter assigned to the Trump
campaign in 2015 and 2016, and
listening to the impeachment
coverage yesterday and the
coverage this morning, one episode
she recounted in the book came
flashing back . . .

In Dec 2015, three days before Trump announced
his pledge to institute a Muslim travel ban,
Trump got rattled at a rally in Raleigh NC where
protesters coordinated their efforts and threw
him off his game, interrupting his speech every
couple of minutes from different parts of the
arena. Disgusted, Trump abruptly left the podium
and started shaking hands offstage, and Tur sent
out a simple tweet describing what had happened.

Right before lunch the next day, Hope Hicks
wrote her to say "Katy, Mr. Trump thought your
tweets from last night were disgraceful. Not
nice! Best, Hope." Shortly thereafter, the media
gets the word about the travel ban Trump

intended to announce that night, and that becomes the big story of the day with Katy doing liveshots all afternoon. That evening, before a rally inside the USS Yorktown (an aircraft carrier-turned-museum in Charleston harbor), Trump blasted her with four attack tweets in the span of four minutes.

Tur says the rally's specific location was a surprise, in that it wasn't held on the carrier deck but inside the belly of the ship, with the media crowded into a pen.

Yes, we are in a pen: a makeshift enclosure made of bicycle racks and jammed full of desks, reporters, and camera equipment. We're in the middle of the carrier, slammed against the right side wall. As usual, almost all of Trump's supporters are white and a lot of them are looking at us, not exactly kindly. The campaign and Secret Service force us to stay inside the pen while Trump is onstage. They even discourage bathroom breaks. None of them have a good explanation for why we're kept separate from the supporters. *Are we the threat or are they?*

Trump starts his rambling speech, and the crowd eats it up. Then Trump opens up on the media.

"The mainstream media," Trump says. "These people back here, they're the worst. They are so dishonest."

Hoots and hollers.

And then I hear my name.

"She's back there, little Katy. She's back there."

Trump then calls her a liar several times, and a third rate reporter several times as well, before pivoting to a more general attack on the media. Finally, once he's got the crowd sufficiently whipped up, he formally announces

the Muslim ban, and the crowd which she described earlier as looking at her like “a large animal, angry and unchained” went nuts.

She goes live with Chris Matthews as Trump leaves the stage, and when she’s done with that, Chris Hayes takes over and wants to keep her on the air for the lead story on his show that followed Matthews’.

[Trump] supporters are taking their time to leave. They’re still whipped up. I know someone is going to start yelling at me as soon as I start talking. So I do what I always do. I find the pinhole deep in the back of the lens and I tune everything else out.

A couple of minutes later, I’m done. The crowd that had gathered behind my live shot is gone except for a few stragglers, yelling at me. They’re five feet away, held back by those lousy bicycle racks. A Trump staffer shoos them away. MSNBC has cleared me and my bosses want [her cameraman/sound tech] Anthony and me to get out of there as quickly as we can. I don’t quite understand why until we pack up and start to head out. A Trump staffer stops me and says “These guys are going to walk you out.”

I look over and see two Secret Service agents. Thank goodness. They walk Anthony and me along the gangway back to our car. It’s pitch black and I’m nervous. We’re parked with the crowd.

Once we’re moving, I take a look at my phone. My mom has called. And called. And called. I dial her back. “Are you okay? Where are you staying? Can someone stay with you? You need security!?” She is crying. And it hits me.

I’m a target.

On that day in December 2015, the security professionals of the US Secret Service recognized that Trump was dangerously inciting a mob, and stepped in to protect the target he had singled out.

On January 6, 2021, Trump again incited a mob, and this time there was no one to stop them.