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"Flood the zone", Trump's strategy to overwhelm and knock out the system with a torrent of measures, announcements, and dismissals

Story by Pablo R. Suanzes • 18h • 4 min read



Trump, last week, at the White House.
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The Government revokes the extension approved by Biden that allowed 600,000 Venezuelans to benefit from Temporary Protected Status until 2026.

The strategy is by no means new or a secret, but there is no known remedy to counter it. In 2017, Steve Bannon, advisor to Donald Trump, called it "flood the zone," literally "inundate the zone," **overwhelm the opposition, institutions, and the media with an unstoppable torrent of announcements, measures, and decisions.** So many, so relevant, crucial, and often illegal or unconstitutional that touch a nerve, overwhelm, and make a strong or effective response impossible. **When congressmen or senators try to focus on one, three more come down on them.** When courts halt one, others arrive. When the media investigate or delve into an appointment, a dismissal, they helplessly watch as the rest pass without obstacles.

The tactic fits Trump's personality like a glove, a force of nature capable of setting the agenda, the pace, the news with half-truths, exaggerations, insults, or capital letters. With early morning tweets, a constant presence in front of the cameras, and perhaps an unparalleled talent in U.S. political history to communicate or, at least, monopolize attention.

His goal is **for Americans to assume that he is in charge**, that he has come to change things. Thus, for example, he signs an executive order stating that **those born in the U.S. to undocumented parents do not have the birth rights** that the Constitution has recognized for a century and a half through the 14th amendment. **The secondary aspect is that a court immediately annuls it** following the appeal of opposing states. Or announcing a complete freeze on disbursements of up to three trillion dollars in many programs, even though it is illegal [since 1974 after Nixon attempted it] for the Executive branch to interfere in what has already been directly allocated by the Legislative branch. It is irrelevant, in terms of opinion and message, if there are lawsuits, especially if the leader of the majority in Congress supports the idea. But if there are, he rescinds the order as he did on Wednesday at noon. The message has already sunk in.

▶ **Related video:** Trump floods the zone, leaving opposition drowning (France24 (Video))

France24 (Video)

Trump floods the zone, leaving opposition drowning



In his first nine days, Trump has managed to "flood the zone," inside and out, with threats to invade allied countries, occupy territories, or incorporate Canada. Starting a fierce trade war with Colombia, even if it lasted eight hours. Abruptly firing Department of Justice officials who, in compliance with their duties, brought two cases against him for election interference or misuse of classified documents. Putting all federal diversity and equality program employees in limbo, without work but with pay for now. Forcing the rest to return to a 100% in-person regime. And offering incentivized leaves to those who choose to go home, copying the idea and even the language used by Elon Musk when he took over Twitter.

"Democrats don't matter," Steve Bannon told journalist Michael Lewis seven years ago. "**The real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with crap**". Noise, distraction, mud, as Trump does now every few days by playing with the idea of perhaps running for a third term, something unconstitutional, to unsettle pundits and analysts. Always taking the initiative, "flooring the accelerator, never the brake," especially if he has gained momentum, as he did in the first week.

There is much more. Appointments of **high-ranking officials who in the past would never have been ratified**, like the **new Secretary of Defense**, Pete Hegseth, or the **Health Secretary, Robert Kennedy Jr.**, who faced scrutiny in the Senate on Wednesday after being **accused by his own cousin**, JFK's daughter, of being "a predator" and almost a psychopath. Toying with dismantling the federal agency for natural disasters. Raids in sanctuary cities, permission to search for undocumented children in schools, conditioning aid for California wildfire recovery on the state changing its electoral law. Freezing development aid, public funds for research or the arts. Removing the protection and security detail of former officials threatened by Iran or other foreign powers because they publicly criticized him. Not to mention pardoning over 1,500 convicted for participating in the Capitol assault.

On Wednesday, *The New York Times* reported that the Government had **revoked** an extension of the **Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 600,000 Venezuelans** approved by Joe Biden, allowing them to stay in the U.S. and apply for work permits. Trump had done something similar in his first term with countries like Sudan and others in civil wars. The new Homeland Security Secretary, Kristi Noem, confirmed the news in a Fox interview, showing her satisfaction: "We stopped it. Today we signed an executive order, we were not going to continue with what [her predecessor] did to tie our hands. Did they think they could stay here and violate our laws for another 18 months?" she concluded.

The plan is working perfectly, and the system is overloaded, overwhelmed. **The news cycle lasts not 24 hours, but 24 minutes.** This time his team was chosen and prepared, no improvisations. There is a *roadmap*, very defined interests, and the opposition is knocked out, overwhelmed, not seeing it coming or knowing how to react, and only praying for this pace to stop while regrouping. Trump has not deceived and has hardly surprised anyone about his intentions. He campaigned talking about a "purge" of the "deep state" and is doing just that. **He wants a transformation of the State**, of the country, and of society, and is applying a systematic, precise, step-by-step method at all levels, something that probably has no precedent, neither in substance nor in form.

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"The American people gave President Trump an overwhelming mandate on November 5, and he is trying to ensure that the tax money leaving this bankrupt city truly aligns with the will and priorities of the American people," explained the new White House press secretary in her first appearance. Although it is more with Trump's will, priorities, and agenda.

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