

# TRUMP'S GONE FULL JESSEP

[NB: The byline is mine. /~Rayne]

If you haven't recently watched the 1992 film, *A Few Good Men*, it's a good time to do so. Especially for this particular monologue delivered from the stand by Colonel Nathan Jessep, played by Jack Nicholson (spoiler alert: this scene is the climax of the movie):

The colonel gave an illegal order – a Code Red – to his men to dispense extrajudicial punishment to PFC William “Willie” Santiago after which Santiago died.

Up to this point Jessep has been a hard ass, bordering on rude. But this particular monologue depicts Colonel Jessep at his worst, when the mask slips off and the monster who can justify his worst impulses does so because his ego won't permit any serious questioning of his authority.

This is Trump – from reports based on feedback from those in his presence, he's gone full Jessep and whatever mask he's worn has slipped off. He's given illegal orders, in direct opposition to his oath of office and the Constitution, the law and a court order, when he demanded the separation of asylum-seeking families at the border while “ranting and raving” that “border security security was his issue.”

He believes he is the law, as if he's king.

No one in the White House seems able to disabuse him of this concept – if they are trying at all.

A number of senior staff have been fired throughout Trump's 26 months in office, the latest such termination resulting in the departure of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen.

It's not clear whether the departure of Secret Service director Randolph Alles was for the same

reason; he denies it but the timing is suspicious given the appearance of a purge across DHS leadership.

One employee whose continued employment suggests they aren't explaining the limits of executive authority is White House counsel Pat Cipollone. His presence was noted in reports about a meeting in which Trump had a narcissistic meltdown about DHS' inability to stop asylum seekers at the border. Why was Nielsen the sole target two weeks later instead of Cipollone?

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In *A Few Good Men*, the story arc centers on the two Marines charged with Santiago's death as a result of the Code Red. They argued they were following orders from their superior officer, and as we see in the climax, Col. Jessep finally admits he gave the order. The court renders its verdict:

The Nuremberg defense will not hold; an illegal order is illegal no matter the rank of the person issuing it, and obeying it is illegal as well. Government employees who commit illegal acts even at the order of the president violate the law as well as their oaths of office:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God." (5 USC 3331)

Support and defend the Constitution. Well and faithfully discharge the duties of office. Obeying an illegal order fulfills neither of these.

Founding father John Adams said, "We are a nation of laws, not of men." Walls are useless if they defend not the law and our country's values, but one man's sick, skewed ego.