

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FROM OLIVIA TROYE

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Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government

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The threat of weaponization of the federal government is a serious topic that requires sober analysis. Unfortunately, what we see here today—and what we have seen from this Committee over the past year—is instead a politically motivated fantasy detached from reality. Members of this Committee and their witnesses make grand and vague accusations about government censorship, but those foggy allegations are refuted by the facts: that private social media companies moderating content on their own, private platforms is not government censorship. It is those private companies exercising their own First Amendment rights to rid their platforms of misinformation. In my experience as a national security official, the federal government strictly adhered to the First Amendment by advising and assisting social media platforms in combatting misinformation, while the ultimate decision about what action if any to take rested solely with the platforms themselves.

I know what real weaponization of the federal government looks like because I've seen it with my own eyes. I worked in the Trump White House, where I served as Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor to Vice President Pence. On numerous occasions, I witnessed President Trump and his allies attempt to use the powers of the presidency to further his private political agenda at the expense of the American people. Trump administration officials attempted to manipulate intelligence assessments to support its ban on nationals from Muslim countries entering the United States. They delayed natural disaster aid to blue states who had not supported President Trump's election. In the early days of the pandemic, they resisted sending federal assistance to New York as thousands of innocent Americans suffered.

Instead of continuing to spread conspiracy theories about government censorship, this Committee should instead focus on the very real and very dangerous threat posed by the leading Republican candidate openly threatening to use every lever of presidential power against his political opponents if he returns to the White House. Former President Trump has promised "retribution" against those who have "wronged and betrayed" him and his political movement. He has pledged to "root out" the "radical-left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country." Trump has called the press the "enemy of the people" and has vowed to "come down hard" on MSNBC and "make them pay" for its critical coverage of him. He has promised to "arrest" his "political opponents," saying he would have "no choice" but to "lock [them] up." He has said that his own Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff committed "treason" and that "in times gone by, the punishment would have been death!" Most ominously, he has called for "the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution."

As a lifelong Republican, I have dedicated my entire career to protecting Americans from terrorist attacks, regardless of their partisan affiliation. Former President Trump's menacing promise to wield the powers of government as a weapon against his political adversaries poses a grave threat to the rule of law in the United States of America. The American people deserve that their representatives in Congress see that threat and speak to it honestly, instead of the political theater we see here today.