



POLITICS

What's a 'Covfefe'? Trump Tweet Unites a Bewildered Nation

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER MAY 31, 2017





An image of President Trump’s Twitter account. “Despite the constant negative press covfefe,” the post began, at 12:06 a.m. And there it ended.

WASHINGTON — And on the 132nd day, just after midnight, President Trump had at last delivered the nation to something approaching unity — in bewilderment, if nothing else.

The state of our union was ... covfefe.

The trouble began, as it so often does, on Twitter, in the early minutes of Wednesday morning. Mr. Trump had something to say. Kind of.

“Despite the constant negative press covfefe,” the Twitter post began, at

12:06 a.m., from @realDonaldTrump, the irrepressible internal monologue of his presidency.

And that was that.

A minute passed. Then another. Then five.

Surely he would delete the message.

Ten. Twenty. It was nearly 12:30 a.m.

Forty minutes. An hour. The questions mounted.

Had the president's lawyers, so eager to curb his stream-of-consciousness missives, tackled the commander in chief under the cover of night?

Perhaps, some worried aloud, Mr. Trump had experienced a medical episode a quarter of the way through his 140 characters.

Or maybe he had simply gazed upon his work, paused and thought: "Yes. Nailed it."

No one at the White House could immediately be reached for comment

overnight.

But by 1 a.m., the debate had effectively consumed Twitter — or at least a certain segment of insomniac Beltway types, often journalists and political operatives — ascending the list of trending topics. “Of course #covfefe is real word,” wrote [@Diane 7A](#), recalling an invented tragedy once invoked by the Trump White House. “It was coined during the [Bowling Green Massacre](#).”

“What if this is it,” asked [Emily Nussbaum](#), The New Yorker television critic, after just five minutes. “That is his final tweet & the rest of history stops.”

Some appeared to temper their whimsy as more sobering news dominated the medium: a [huge explosion in Kabul](#), Afghanistan, leaving dozens dead or wounded.

Yet the instinct to linger was powerful, for those who had glimpsed the initial post, even if they did not seem entirely sure why they were still awake.

“Covfefe,” said [Tasneem Raja](#), a journalist, perhaps chafing at the growing communal giddiness. “There, I participated.”

Eventually, the jokes lurched into delirium. Twitter users held forth on the former F.B.I. director James Covfefe. They pledged to order a grande covfefe during their next Starbucks runs. They announced they had at last discovered what Bill Murray whispered to Scarlett Johansson at the end of “Lost in Translation.”

And as the hour wore on, stragglers turned their lonely eyes to the only account that could save them. “Help, @MerriamWebster,” pleaded [Jessica Taylor](#), a reporter at NPR, one of several to make the request.

The dictionary [obliged](#).

“Wakes up. Checks Twitter. Uh...” [it began](#). “Regrets checking Twitter. Goes back to bed.”

Just after 6 a.m., the president resurfaced, finally deleting the Twitter post and tapping out another.

“Who can figure out the true meaning of ‘covfefe’ ???” he wrote. “Enjoy!”

Little became clearer in daylight hours.

Consensus proved elusive — to say nothing of pronunciation guidelines — and the White House appeared disinclined to help. “The president and a small group of people know exactly what he meant,” Sean Spicer, the press

secretary, said flatly. He did not elaborate.

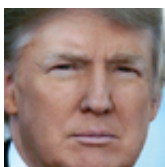
But someone else had a theory — the American perhaps most attuned to the power of the president’s Twittering hand. “I thought it was a hidden message,” Hillary Clinton [told a crowd](#) in California, “to the Russians.”

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A version of this article appears in print on June 1, 2017, on Page A15 of the New York edition with the headline: Trump’s ‘Covfefe’ Tweet Unites U.S. in Confusion. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

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