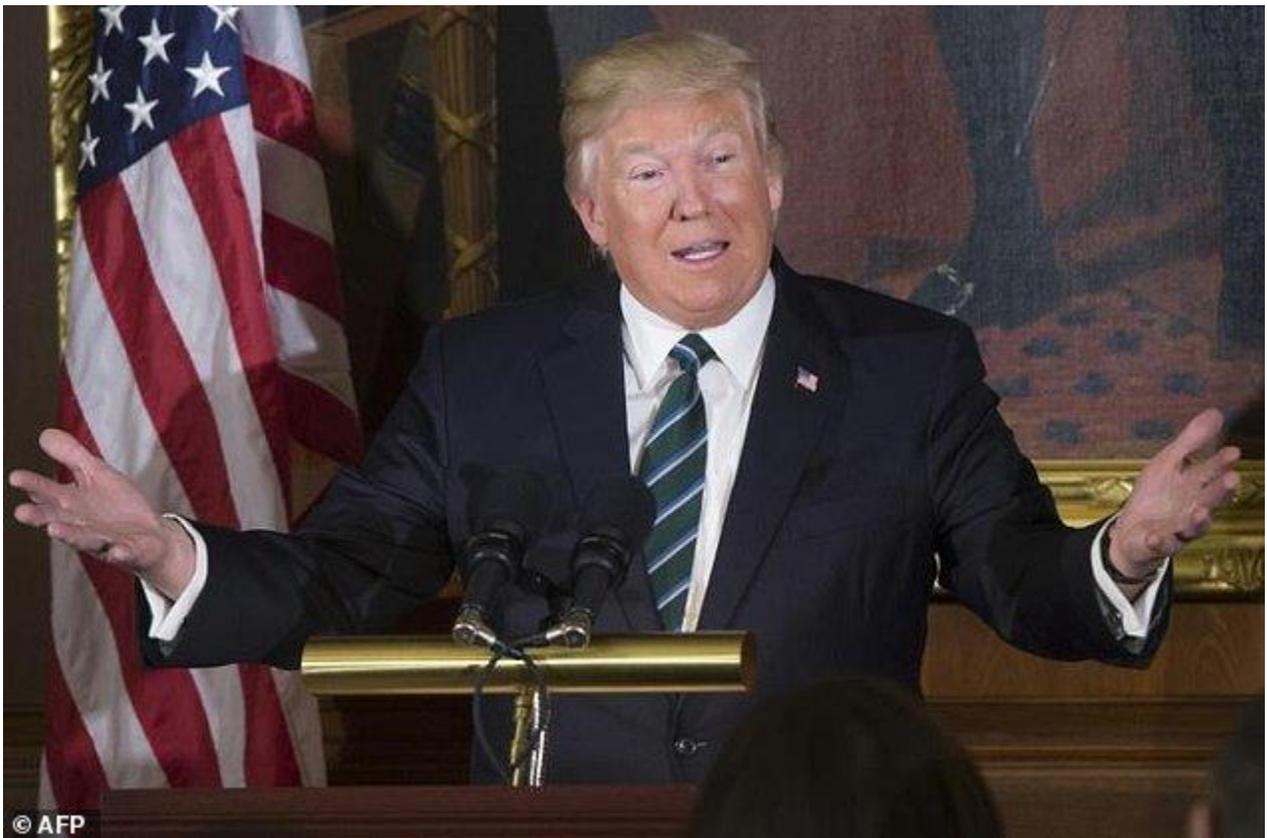


Snags slow Trump's White House debut

By [Afp](#)

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US President Donald Trump speaks during the Friends of Ireland Luncheon for the visit of Taoiseach of Ireland Enda Kenny at the US Capitol March 16, 2017

Donald Trump wants to act swiftly, but 55 days after moving into the White House the president has little to show for his hustle, hamstrung by Congress, the courts and his own unorthodox style.

Two of his flagship campaign promises have yet to be fulfilled.

Judges have blocked both versions of the billionaire tycoon's executive order to temporarily close US borders to refugees and nationals from several Muslim-majority nations.

Trump's highly promoted effort to replace "Obamacare," the health coverage law implemented under his predecessor, has lagged in Congress, where some fellow Republicans are opposed to the new plan.

The first two months of the Trump presidency have been a testimony to both the constitutional limits of US executive power and the sluggish pace of on-the-job training for the first-time politician, who has surrounded himself with government novices.

"They simply have fallen far behind their schedule for... the main things that they planned to accomplish during the first few weeks," said Steven Smith, a political science professor at Washington University in St. Louis.

The Republican reform of health care is a case in point.

"The Trump campaign and the Trump transition did not have a plan for replacing Obamacare," Smith told AFP.

Complicating matters, Trump the campaigner promised coverage for everyone, and vowed not to touch key entitlements Medicare and Medicaid.

"All of that simply forced the House Republicans to take more time than they expected to get a bill prepared," the professor said.

- Accomplishments -

The record is not without signs of progress.

"It's been a little over 50 days since my inauguration and we've been putting our America First agenda very much into action," Trump declared at a campaign-style rally Wednesday in Nashville, Tennessee.

"We're keeping our promises."

Among his undeniable early successes is his move to change the culture in Washington by appointing outsiders into his political circle, including several entrepreneurs but also members of the Trump organization and his son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The stock market has soared into record territory, and unemployment is down.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a rally in Nashville, Tennessee on March 15, 2017, where he said "We're keeping our promises"

Trump has kept his word on several commitments: withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact, relaunch of the Keystone XL pipeline, and freezing federal hires.

He has given law-enforcement broader discretion in deporting undocumented immigrants.

The number of arrests of people illegally crossing from Mexico into the United States decreased by 40 percent from January to February compared to last year, according to the Department of Homeland Security, which usually sees an increase in the period.

- Slow start -

No major Trump-backed legislation has passed Congress however, aside from a trio of repeals of Obama-era regulations on finance, the environment and firearms.

At this stage of his presidency, in 2009, Barack Obama had signed a massive economic recovery bill into law in response to the financial crisis.

The 30 executive orders signed by Trump are for the most part policy signposts or decrees that concern long term goals.

The saga over the order to bar US entry to nationals of certain mainly Muslim nations illustrates the improvisational nature of several early actions by the Trump White House.

This is attributed in part to the fact that his cabinet is still not fully in place, due to unprecedented obstruction by opposition Democrats in the US Senate.

But the urge to act quickly, bypassing certain institutional safeguards, paradoxically has blurred the presidential message, especially in foreign policy.

"This is a president whose management style is very difficult to figure," Smith said.

"Sometimes he jumps in and gets involved in minutiae, in sometimes unpredictable ways," he added. "In other cases he seems to be disinterested, and it's left to the others."

- 'Deep state' -

Trump expended early political capital by commenting on the issue of Russian meddling in the US election, and refuting any collusion between his associates and Moscow.

His repeated interventions have ruffled feathers among congressional Republicans.



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Faced with various hurdles, the president and his supporters have denounced what he sees as partisan judges and biased media.

Trump supporters have spoken out against a so-called "Deep State," the idea that there is a conspiracy of bureaucrats determined to secretly manipulate or control the presidency through the use of intelligence services and leaks to the press.

It is a concept that has seduced some on the far right, but experts remain skeptical.

"From my experience, the great majority of Washington leaks come from the White House and Congress, not from inside the intelligence community," former CIA officer John Sipher wrote on The Cipher Brief.