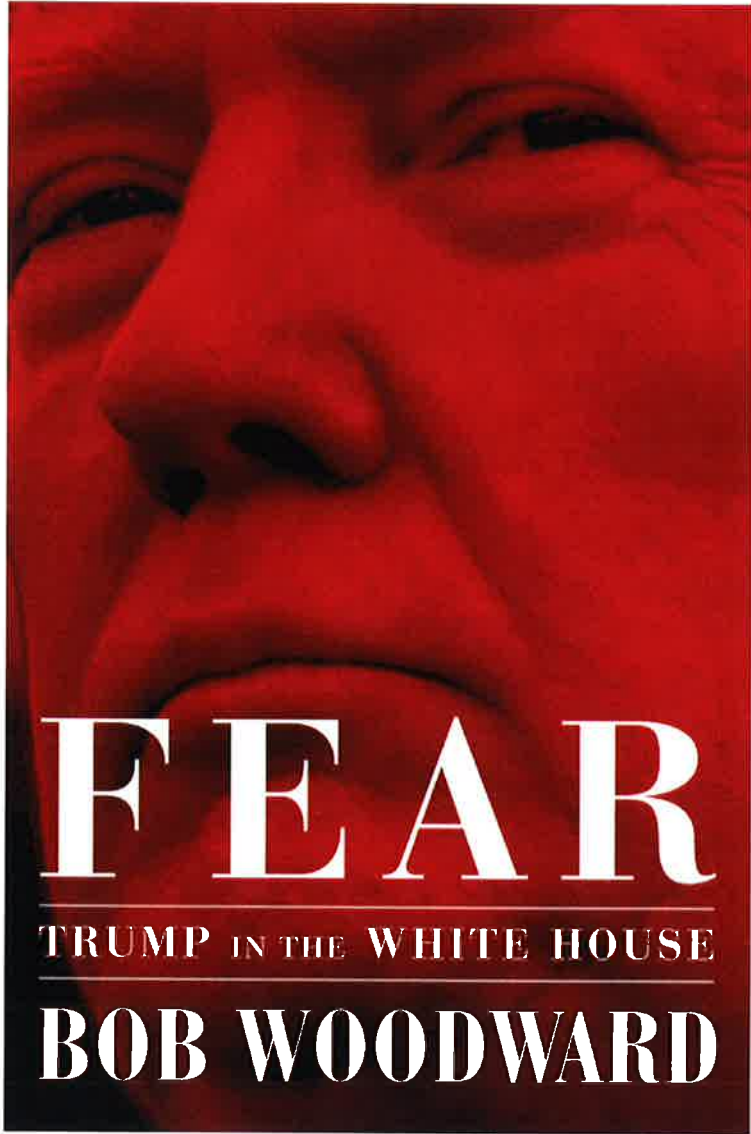


Fear



FEAR

TRUMP IN THE WHITE HOUSE

BOB WOODWARD

FEAR

Trump in the White House



**Bob
Woodward**

Simon & Schuster

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

“Real power is—I don’t even want to use the word—fear.”

Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump in an interview with Bob Woodward and Robert Costa on March 31, 2016, at the Old Post Office Pavilion, Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Note to Readers

Interviews for this book were conducted under the journalist ground rule of “deep background.” This means that all the information could be used but I would not say who provided it. The book is drawn from hundreds of hours of interviews with firsthand participants and witnesses to these events. Nearly all allowed me to tape-record our interviews so the story could be told with more precision. When I have attributed exact quotations, thoughts or conclusions to the participants, that information comes from the person, a colleague with direct knowledge, or from meeting notes, personal diaries, files and government or personal documents.

President Trump declined to be interviewed for this book.

PROLOGUE



In early September 2017, in the eighth month of the Trump presidency, Gary Cohn, the former president of Goldman Sachs and the president's top economic adviser in the White House, moved cautiously toward the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

In his 27 years at Goldman, Cohn—6-foot-3, bald, brash and full of self-confidence—had made billions for his clients and hundreds of millions for himself. He had granted himself walk-in privileges to Trump's Oval Office, and the president had accepted that arrangement.

On the desk was a one-page draft letter from the president addressed to the president of South Korea, terminating the United States–Korea Free Trade Agreement, known as KORUS.

Cohn was appalled. For months Trump had threatened to withdraw from the agreement, one of the foundations of an economic relationship, a military alliance and, most important, top secret intelligence operations and capabilities.

the South and operated the most highly classified and sensitive Special Access Programs (SAP), which provided sophisticated Top Secret, codeword intelligence and military capabilities. North Korean ICBM missiles now had the capability to carry a nuclear weapon, perhaps to the American homeland. A missile from North Korea would take 38 minutes to reach Los Angeles.

These programs enabled the United States to detect an ICBM launch in North Korea within seven seconds. The equivalent capability in Alaska took 15 minutes—an astonishing time differential.

The ability to detect a launch in seven seconds would give the United States military the time to shoot down a North Korean missile. It is perhaps the most important and most secret operation in the United States government. The American presence in South Korea represents the essence of national security.

Withdrawal from the KORUS trade agreement, which South Korea deemed essential to its economy, could lead to an unraveling of the entire relationship. Cohn could not believe that President Trump would risk losing vital intelligence assets crucial to U.S. national security.

This all stemmed from Trump's fury that the United States had an \$18 billion annual trade deficit with South Korea and was spending \$3.5 billion a year to keep U.S. troops there.

Despite almost daily reports of chaos and discord in the White House, the public did not know how bad the internal situation actually was. Trump was always shifting, rarely fixed, erratic. He would get in a bad mood, something large or small would infuriate him, and he would say about the KORUS trade agreement, "We're withdrawing today."

But now there was the letter, dated September 5, 2017, a potential trigger to a national security catastrophe. Cohn was worried Trump would sign the letter if he saw it.

Cohn removed the letter draft from the Resolute Desk. He placed it in a blue folder marked