



## Buzzfeed Runs With and Defends Yet Another “Fake News” Trump/Russia Collusion Story

Buzzfeed — apparently never tiring of publishing fantastic fabrications about President Trump — is standing by a report that “[President Trump Directed His Attorney Michael Cohen To Lie To Congress About The Moscow Tower Project.](#)” The news site claims the story is true, despite even Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s office releasing a statement disputing the article’s claims.

It is worth remembering that BuzzFeed “broke the [story](#)” on the now universally discredited Trump “dossier” that claimed that Donald Trump was at the same time both the victim of Russian blackmail and the recipient of Russian help in the 2016 election. And just as BuzzFeed continued to stand behind that story even after it [collapsed under its own weight](#), the site — described then and now by President Trump as “fake news” — is refusing to admit that this new story is not worth the pixels it takes to display it on a computer monitor.

The BuzzFeed piece cites two unnamed “federal law enforcement officials involved in an investigation of the matter” as saying that Cohen told Mueller’s investigators that Trump directed him “to lie to Congress about negotiations to build a Trump Tower in Moscow.” As BuzzFeed reported last week:

President Donald Trump directed his longtime attorney Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about negotiations to build a Trump Tower in Moscow, according to two federal law enforcement officials involved in an investigation of the matter.

Trump also supported a plan, set up by Cohen, to visit Russia during the presidential campaign, in order to personally meet President Vladimir Putin and jump-start the tower negotiations. “Make it happen,” the sources said Trump told Cohen.

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Buzzfeed — citing those same unnamed “officials” — also reported that while publicly denying having any business deals with Russia, “Trump and his children Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr. received regular, detailed updates about the real estate development from Cohen, whom they put in charge of the project.” The article goes on to claim that “Cohen also told the special counsel that after the election, the president personally instructed him to lie — by claiming that negotiations ended months earlier than they actually did — in order to obscure Trump’s involvement.”

Some Democrats — without waiting for anything resembling confirmation of the fantastic report —





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seized the moment to suggest that this could be grounds to begin the process of impeaching President Trump. And CNN — appearing eager to smear the president — fell into the same trap as before: Based on nothing except BuzzFeed’s report, CNN hastened to run an article under the headline, “BuzzFeed: Sources say Trump directed Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about proposed Moscow project.”

If the story were true, it may have been enough to wash the stink of “fake news” off BuzzFeed’s and CNN’s reporting on the bogus “dossier.” Unfortunately for the dastardly duo, the story had scarcely been published when a statement from the office of Robert Mueller — whom no one can accuse of being a Trump supporter — called the story out for being inaccurate and revealing it for what it was: more fake news from BuzzFeed. The statement issued by Peter Carr, a spokesperson for Mueller’s office, said, “BuzzFeed’s description of specific statements to the Special Counsel’s Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen’s Congressional testimony are not accurate.”

What are the “specific statements to the Special Counsel’s Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by [Mueller’s] office, regarding Michael Cohen’s Congressional testimony” made by BuzzFeed?

Besides those listed above, BuzzFeed’s anonymous sources claimed that “the special counsel’s office learned about Trump’s directive for Cohen to lie to Congress through interviews with multiple witnesses from the Trump Organization and internal company emails, text messages, and a cache of other documents. Cohen then acknowledged those instructions during his interviews with that office.” Furthermore the article states, “On the campaign trail, Trump vehemently denied having any business interests in Russia. But behind the scenes, he was pushing the Moscow project, which he hoped could bring his company profits in excess of \$300 million,” adding, “The two law enforcement sources said he had at least 10 face-to-face meetings with Cohen about the deal during the campaign.”

The BuzzFeed report characterized the summation of that alleged evidence as “the first known example of Trump explicitly telling a subordinate to lie directly about his own dealings with Russia.” Of course, with Mueller’s office flatly stating that BuzzFeed’s “description of specific statements ... and characterization of documents and testimony ... are not accurate,” this cannot be the “first known example of Trump explicitly telling a subordinate to lie directly about his own dealings with Russia.” The statement by Mueller’s office sets that counter back to zero.

It is highly uncommon for Mueller’s office to issue statements on the anything related to specifics of the myriad tributaries of the “Trump/Russia collusion” investigation, so this statement stands out in even sharper contrast. None of that, though, is enough for BuzzFeed to back down on the story; instead, the “news” site is doubling down.

Ben Smith, BuzzFeed’s editor-in-chief, tweeted, “In response to the statement tonight from the Special Counsel’s spokesman: We stand by our reporting and the sources who informed it, and we urge the Special Counsel to make clear what he’s disputing.” It appears to this writer that Mueller’s office already did that, and BuzzFeed is invoking smoke and mirrors to obfuscate what is clear: BuzzFeed’s article is false.

President Trump also turned to Twitter to respond, tweeting late Friday night, “Remember it was BuzzFeed that released the totally discredited ‘Dossier,’ paid for by Crooked Hillary Clinton and the Democrats (as opposition research), on which the entire Russian probe is based. A very sad day for journalism, but a great day for our Country!”



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While it seems obvious that BuzzFeed's report is proof that the site has failed to learn a lesson from the fake dossier story and is still in the "fake news" business, it may not be a clear case of making a story up out of thin air. At the very least, it is a case of the folks over at BuzzFeed missing out on the lesson taught in journalism classes everywhere: "Guard yourself against confirmation bias." With the deeply ingrained predisposition to believe that President Trump is guilty of collusion with Russia, this "confirmation" of that "bias" appears to have led the two investigative reporters responsible for the story and their editors to jump without asking basic questions and without confirmation of the claims of their sources.

Furthermore, those two reporters (Anthony Cormier and Jason Leopold) do not appear to have other things about their story straight, either. Because Cormier appeared on CNN's *New Day* and admitted that he had not seen the "evidence" on which the article was based. He said, "No, I've not seen it personally." He was quick to add, though, that "the folks we have talked to — two officials we have spoken to are fully, 100 percent read into that aspect of the Special Counsel's investigation." Leopold — in a separate statement — claimed he had seen at least some of the evidence.

But Leopold is (to put it mildly) less than credible. Even CNN host Alisyn Camerota acknowledged that when she asked Cormier how he could trust Leopold's claims considering his "dubious past." The dubious past to which she referred includes a 2002 false report Leopold wrote for *Salon* which was later retracted and removed from the magazine's website and a report he wrote in 2006 claiming that Karl Rove was under indictment.

Camerota said, "He was in trouble for perhaps claiming to have sources he really didn't have. His stories didn't wash. Executive directors and editors have had to apologize after some of his big blockbuster stories." She then asked Cormier, "How can you be so sure today?" Cormier — appearing to forget that he admitted he had not seen the "evidence," defended the article by stating, "My sourcing on this goes beyond the two on the record" and that he, Cormier, was "the individual who confirmed and verified" the information in the article. He added, "It's 100 percent."

Well, except that it's not.

One is left to wonder not only why Cormier would trust Leopold at all but also why he would defend an article based on claims made by anonymous sources whose "evidence" he has never seen. But then one is also left to wonder why Leopold is even still taken seriously by anyone, considering that he has been caught twice writing articles with no basis in truth. BuzzFeed continues — by publishing and defending this fabrication — to prove that it is an outlet of "fake news" lacking in anything remotely acquainted with journalistic integrity.



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