



Intelligence Community and Media Threaten Liberty in Maligning Trump

As the spurious allegations of the intelligence community — including an unconfirmed litany of ridiculous claims of bizarre sexual goings-on — against President-elect Trump continue to fill headlines, they appear to say more about those making and repeating the allegations than they do about the man being so unceremoniously maligned.

Many in the liberal mainstream media have taken the story and run with it as if it were verified fact, when in reality it has not been — and appears *impossible* of being — verified. While the claims of the dossier are far-fetched and stretch the imagination past the breaking point, the claims of the online community, 4Chan, that [anonymous users of the site created the story out of thin air](#), seem much more credible. This would mean that both these mainstream media outlets and the intelligence community are guilty of sacrificing basic investigative techniques and critical thinking by running with a story simply because it fit a preconceived prejudice. And fed a narrative.

While this has been a divisive issue — drawing fairly clear lines between those at one end of the political spectrum and those at the other — there are some in the media who have maintained some sense of journalistic and investigative integrity and have not bought into the frenzy. Notably, neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* published details of the alleged dossier because they could not verify its authenticity.

In fact, in his first press conference since his electoral victory, Trump — while blasting media organizations such as BuzzFeed and CNN for giving this story their imprimatur — took the time to voice his appreciation for those media organizations that wisely stayed away from pretending this was anything more than the outlandish speculation that it is.

While both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have certainly been guilty of reporting falsely in the past and may reasonably be expected to do so again in the future, *this* issue appears to have been too far beyond the pale *even for them*.

If journalistic and investigative integrity can be measured on a spectrum, BuzzFeed, CNN, and others who treated this as confirmed intelligence would be at one extreme end and — at least in this case —





Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on January 12, 2017

the *Times* and *Post* would be somewhere in the middle with the other extreme end of that spectrum occupied by Glenn Greenwald of *The Intercept*.

Greenwald — a man no one could accuse of being a Trumpeteer — chose neither to stay away from the story nor to rubber-stamp it as genuine. He did what he does best: he reported on this by stating *facts* and providing *context*. Rather than simply avoid the story as the *Times* and *Post* did, Greenwald chose to *attack* it and *expose* it as the dangerous propaganda it is. In an article published online on Wednesday, Greenwald made the salient observation that those who — because of their hatred and distrust of Trump — bought into this without demanding proof are guilty of ignoring President Eisenhower’s farewell address advice to “guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.”

While expressing his view — which is shared by many across the political spectrum — that a Trump presidency is fraught with danger, Greenwald [wrote](#):

The serious dangers posed by a Trump presidency are numerous and manifest. There are a wide array of legitimate and effective tactics for combating those threats: from bipartisan congressional coalitions and constitutional legal challenges to citizen uprisings and sustained and aggressive civil disobedience. All of those strategies have periodically proven themselves effective in times of political crisis or authoritarian overreach.

But cheering *for the CIA* and its shadowy allies to unilaterally subvert the U.S. election and impose its own policy dictates on the elected president is both warped and self-destructive. Empowering the very entities that have produced the most shameful atrocities and systemic deceit over the last six decades is desperation of the worst kind. Demanding that evidence-free, anonymous assertions be instantly venerated as Truth — despite emanating from the very precincts designed to propagandize and lie — is an assault on journalism, democracy, and basic human rationality. And casually branding domestic adversaries who refuse to go along as traitors and disloyal foreign operatives is morally bankrupt and certain to backfire on those doing it.

Regardless of whether one is enthusiastic or fearful of a Trump presidency, Greenwald makes a good point. Allowing the intelligence community — made up of a group of secretive agencies whose stock in trade is deception — to [tell Americans what to believe without any burden of providing proof](#) empowers a secret government to rule over the citizens without limit. There is no version of that that ends well.

Both the intelligence community and the media have a responsibility to prove their claims. The more weight those claims have, the greater the burden for providing proof. In this case, that burden is high and that side of the scale sits conspicuously empty.

Photo of President-elect Trump at his first post-election news conference, Jan. 11, 2017: AP Images

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