



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on February 18, 2017

Trump Calls Media Out for “Fake News”

In his press conference at the White House on Thursday, President Trump took the mainstream media to task, saying they speak “not for the people but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system.” He also accused the media of “dishonesty” and creating “fake news” and said that he was “making this presentation directly to the American people” and that the media were merely “present.”



During the press conference, the phrase “fake news” was used 12 times and the word “fake” was used in the context of news stories based on fabricated information at least another nine times.

While answering the first question from the assembled press — about whether he “fired” General Mike Flynn from his post as national security advisor — President Trump first introduced the theme of “fake news.” The president said:

Mike Flynn is a fine person, and I asked for his resignation. He respectfully gave it. He is a man who — there was a certain amount of information given to Vice President Pence, who is with us today. And I was not happy with the way that information was given.

He didn’t have to do that, because what he did wasn’t wrong, what he did in terms of the information he saw. What was wrong was the way that other people, including yourselves in this room, were given that information, because that was classified information that was given illegally. That’s the real problem. And you can talk all you want about Russia, which was all a fake news, fabricated deal to try and make up for the loss of the Democrats, and the press plays right into it. In fact, I saw a couple of the people that were supposedly involved with all of this — they know nothing about it. They weren’t in Russia, they never made a phone call to Russia, they never received a phone call. It’s all fake news. It’s all fake news.

President Trump merged two ideas in that response. The first was that the information the media reported — [about the conflict between Flynn’s statement to the vice president and his recorded phone call to the Russian ambassador](#) — was illegally leaked to the media, who were only too happy to report it. To that point, the president added:

Everybody saw this, and I’m saying — the first thing I thought of when I heard about it is, how does the press get this information that’s classified? How do they do it? You know why? Because it’s an illegal process, and the press should be ashamed of themselves. But, more importantly, the people that gave out the information to the press should be ashamed of themselves. Really ashamed.

The other idea is that the mainstream media — besides being privy to illegally leaked (and possibly illegally recorded) classified information — also manufactures stories, sometimes out of thin air. To that point, the president answered a question about Russia by first reiterating what he has said since Hillary Clinton first raised the question during the second presidential debate:

I can tell you, speaking for myself, I own nothing in Russia. I have no loans in Russia. I don’t have



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any deals in Russia. President Putin called me up very nicely to congratulate me on the win of the election. He then called me up extremely nicely to congratulate me on the inauguration, which was terrific. But so did many other leaders — almost all other leaders from almost all other countries. So that's the extent.

He then added, "Russia is fake news. Russia — this is fake news put out by the media." He went on to say that recent reporting by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* that [the intelligence community is keeping him in the dark](#) about matters of foreign relations as they relate to national security over fears that he cannot be trusted were the work of the "dishonest" political media. He said:

And just while you're at, because you mentioned this, *Wall Street Journal* did a story today that was almost as disgraceful as the failing *New York Times* story yesterday. And it talked about — you saw it, front page. So, Director of National Intelligence just put out — acting — a statement: "Any suggestion that the United States intelligence community" — this was just given to us — "is withholding information and not providing the best possible intelligence to the President and his national security team is not true."

So they took this front-page story out of the *Wall Street Journal* — top — and they just wrote the story is not true. And I'll tell you something, I'll be honest — because I sort of enjoy this back and forth, and I guess I have all my life, but I've never seen more dishonest media than, frankly, the political media. I thought the financial media was much better, much more honest. But I will say that I never get phone calls from the media. How do they write a story like that in the *Wall Street Journal* without asking me? Or how do they write a story in the *New York Times*, put it on front page?

Of course, as this writer said in a [previous article](#), President Trump's dismissal of the idea that the intelligence community is keeping him in the dark could be a case of attempting to smooth the waters while looking at options for dealing with the intelligence community. Because — since President Trump's attempts to reform the intelligence community by way of appointing new leadership have failed to produce any real reform — he appears to be ready to take more drastic steps by calling for a broad review of the intelligence agencies.

The president also said that while he respects "good reporters" and can even handle a "bad story" as long "as it's true," he does not extend that respect and acceptance "when it is fake."

So one thing that I felt it was very important to do — and I hope we can correct it, because there is nobody I have more respect for — well, maybe a little bit — than reporters, than good reporters. It's very important to me, and especially in this position. It's very important. I don't mind bad stories. I can handle a bad story better than anybody as long as it's true. And over a course of time, I'll make mistakes and you'll write badly and I'm okay with that. But I'm not okay when it is fake.

Of course, when the media make up stories about either the president or any other government official, the real victim is the unsuspecting public. After singling out CNN as an example of "fake news" driven by an "anti-Trump" bias, President Trump had an exchange with Jim Acosta, senior White House correspondent for CNN, in which the president made that point very clearly:

Jim, you know what it is? Here's the thing. The public isn't — they read newspapers, they see television, they watch. They don't know if it's true or false because they're not involved. I'm involved. I've been involved with this stuff all my life. But I'm involved. So I know when you're telling the truth or when you're not.



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In the midst of that exchange, Acosta accused the president of undermining confidence in the media by calling it “fake news.” Trump’s response? “I’m changing it from fake news, though. Very fake news now.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pcp_DQheGZ0

This is not the first time Trump and Acosta have had a public exchange about the “fake news” put out by CNN. In his first press conference after winning the election, Trump refused to take a question from Acosta after CNN reported on the spurious “dossier” claiming that he was being blackmailed by the Kremlin due to sexually perverse goings-on with Russian prostitutes. In that earlier exchange, Trump dismissed Acosta, saying, “You are fake news.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZmqhe_8jA0

The tone of Thursday’s press conference was nothing like that earlier exchange. While President Trump did not hesitate to call a spade a spade, he did so as a president fighting a battle on his own turf. Perhaps he summed it up best when he said:

Tomorrow they will say, Donald Trump rants and raves at the press. I’m not ranting and raving. I’m just telling you, you’re dishonest people. But — but I’m not ranting and raving. I love this. I’m having a good time doing it. But tomorrow the headlines are going to be: Donald Trump Rants and Raves. I’m not ranting and raving.

President Trump may not have been “ranting and raving,” but he certainly hit his mark, calling many in the mainstream media out as outlets of “fake news.”

Photo of President Trump: AP Images



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