



Episode 1,371: The Mueller Report and Fake News

Guest: Mike Cernovich

WOODS: I couldn't help contacting you after this news broke, because it just seemed like if this isn't an example of fake news, what is? And it's not even like the Covington Catholic students, where for 24 hours, people believed one thing about them, and then suddenly that narrative was thrown into question. This is something that's been going on for years at this point, and in which we've been assured by people, night after night, that this is meaningful, that there's something to this, that the president's in big trouble, over and over and over. 2019 has not been a good year for the media.

CERNOVICH: No, it's been a — it hasn't been a good decade [laughing], or a good —

WOODS: Yeah.

CERNOVICH: I don't know, 20 years, or if you watch *Hoaxed*, I don't know, it hasn't been a good 50 years for the media, hasn't been — financial bailouts of Wall Street, buy a house, there is no housing bubble, WMDs in Iraq, the Gulf of Tonkin incident. It's crazy, man. It really is. I think about these issues all the time when I'm driving — introvert brain, right? You're always talking to yourself. And I'm trying to think, what have they got right, might be a more interesting and difficult and challenging conversation than what they got wrong.

WOODS: You can't trust them on foreign policy at all. I mean, just assume that what information you can gather has to come from international sources. Just forget about the American media. But this thing, now, I'm looking at the numbers, which I didn't realize just how extensive this was. But apparently, the Special Counsel issued more than 2,800 subpoenas and 500 search warrants and interviewed 500 witnesses, backed by a team of 40 FBI special agents, analysts, and other experts. And the conclusion as summarized by the Attorney General is: "The Special Counsel's investigation did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its efforts to influence the 2016 US presidential election." Well, that's pretty much all there is. The Democrats are sputtering, some of them, trying to find some other way to keep this going. But that is a pretty big exclamation mark.

CERNOVICH: Yeah, no Russia collusion, the end, end of story. Or it should be, but it's not. And that's to me, Tom, why I really love this stuff, because I don't care about current affairs. Current news of the day bores me. I don't watch cable news. I'm not interested in — one of the funniest pictures I've ever seen in my life was a screen cap from I think Wolf Blitzer's show, *The Situation Room*, and there was a lengthy, horseshoe-shaped table with, I don't know, eight or nine people, the big panel, like they're the CIA. And I thought, what a

confederacy of dunces right there [laughing]. I'm sure they're sitting there thinking they're very important and very interesting, and I looked there and thought this really shows what a farce it is. But I always like to think in terms of what are the lessons for high-cognitive people like your audience, people who want to live better lives and be more informed. And I think the answer is: we just don't want to admit when we're wrong.

WOODS: That's true. That's true of any of us. It's hard to admit when you're wrong. But usually you're wrong — I mean, sometimes you're wrong on the facts, and sometimes you're wrong to insinuate something that turns out to be untrue. Usually, we're wrong on our opinions. Gee, I shouldn't have supported this particular health care plan. It turns out it didn't work as well as I thought. Or, man, this tax policy hasn't been such a — whatever. But with these people, it's not just a matter of their opinions were wrong and, you know, everybody makes mistakes. This is insinuations on the basis of apparently nothing or anonymous sources that had nothing to back it up. Have you followed at all the writing of Peter van Buren on this topic?

CERNOVICH: No, I have not.

WOODS: Because he's really good. I mean, he's been thrown off Twitter, so you know he's a good guy. And van Buren, who was a State Department guy for a long time and who wrote a really good book about the Iraq war, this is how he summarized — because the thing is, the average person observing this catches glimpses in headlines and a fugitive sentence here and there, and it sounds like there's something, because well, wasn't this guy indicted and that guy indicted? So here's van Buren's summary. He says, all right, here's what we had:

"There was a guilty plea from Michael Flynn, Trump's National Security Advisor, on one count of perjury unrelated to Russiagate. Flynn lied about a legal meeting with the Russian ambassador. Rick Gates, deputy campaign manager, pled guilty to conspiracy and false statements unrelated to Russiagate. George Papadopoulos, a ZZZ-level advisor, pled guilty to making false statements about legal contact with the Russians. Michael Cohen, Trump's lawyer, pled guilty to lying to Congress about a legal" — and when I say "a legal," I mean *a* legal, not *illegal* — "Moscow real estate project. Paul Manafort, very briefly Trump's campaign chair, pled guilty to conspiracy charges unrelated to Russiagate and that for the most part occurred before he even joined the campaign. Roger Stone, who never officially worked for Trump, awaits a trial that will happen long after the Special Counsel turns off the last light."

So that's pretty much what they've got. But it sounds to the observer who's not following very closely as if, well, where there's smoke, there's fire. But it turns out there wasn't even really any smoke.

CERNOVICH: No, there's nothing. And again, I like to think of it in terms of who can we trust. Really, I think about this all the time, actually, probably more than I should, which is: you can't really trust any of these people. Because right-wing media or, you know, Fox — I don't even know what right-wing media is, I guess, anymore. I would consider maybe people like Malice, even though he's not even necessarily right-wing — Michael Malice, of course. Who can you trust? It's so diffuse right now. The country's in a crisis of trust, where I can tell you honestly, Tom, if I read an article in most publications about you, and they claimed they had a video of you saying or doing something, I would honestly just believe it's doctored. I wouldn't even take anything at face value anymore. I don't know if that's good for the country. What do you think?

WOODS: Well, I agree. It's not good for the society, that's for sure. But on the other hand, it means that people will be on their toes. It's good for people like you and me who are likely to be attacked and who are likely to be unjustly attacked, that people will be more skeptical about accepting — you know, it's funny. I don't want to mention his name, but there's a guy out there. He doesn't amount to a hill of beans. But 30 years ago, he was accused of something that he absolutely, resolutely claims he did not do. And a lot of people piled on and piled on. And then when the smoke cleared, they looked at the evidence again and said, you know, we weren't fair to this guy. And it was an awful ordeal for him. Well, just the other day, this very same guy who was put through the ringer for something he insists he did not do or was distorted or misunderstood, was attacking me on precisely the same grounds on stuff that has obviously been distorted and misunderstood. So this guy has learned nothing.

For me, I feel like attacks that I've endured have made me more empathetic; have made me, as you've said, more skeptical, less likely to believe these sorts of things when they're thrown at somebody else. And I would hope that for people of goodwill, that would be the effect. So I mean, the fact is, with the internet, everybody has a voice. So that's the benefit. But also at the same time, everybody is equally vulnerable to a sudden mob attack, a swarm, where it's very, very hard to get your version of the story out. Anything that makes people distrust the mob more is probably a net plus.

CERNOVICH: Oh, yeah, 100% a net plus. And war, it would be very hard to do WMDs in Iraq again. The Vietnam draft could never happen. Again, maybe we should talk about this. Everybody loves to hate on social media. I love social media. I think it's fantastic. And I was thinking about the Vietnam draft, just because I like to think of — I always say don't use drugs, because when you think about reality, it doesn't make sense. So 17- and 18-year-olds were forced to leave the country to go to Vietnam — which, I've been there. It's a very humid, dense — I've been in the jungles of Vietnam — to go shoot at people their own age, who they didn't know and who had never done anything to them. And you had to go to Vietnam under the draft or you would go to prison. And I still can't comprehend that, that that was we had that in America, and it wasn't that long ago. But I was thinking about social media. That would never happen with social media now. There would be millions of people rioting. Just, you couldn't do it. The kind of ways that the American populace were abused by the government, and there is no — slavery. I don't know how we talk about reparations, and we don't talk about reparations for people who were drafted into the Vietnam War. That is slavery, and that would never happen today because of social media.

WOODS: Even if you could just get a little video clip smuggled out and posted up on YouTube, we would have a better understanding of what was going on than by listening to Walter Cronkite's version. I mean, that thing about when you were sitting with the guy — who was the guy who interviewed you on *60 Minutes*?

CERNOVICH: Scott Pelley.

WOODS: And was he the guy who you were talking about Hillary when she had her — it was some, what, a 9/11 thing or something? She collapsed as she was going to her car. We all had the video of it. And he confidently said to you, "Well, that's because she had pneumonia." And then you just asked him, "How do you know she had pneumonia?" And he said, "Well, the campaign told us that." I mean, what kind of a doofus do you have to be to say, "Oh, well, the campaign wouldn't mislead us."

CERNOVICH: Yeah, and again, what blows my mind about reporters is that — because I used to be a conspiracy theorist in terms of media narratives. I thought, you know, there was some secret meeting or something. And it really is just groupthink and they're dumb-dumbs. Whereas Scott Pelley really did believe in all of his heart when the campaign said she was fine. *What's the issue?* And I'm thinking, wait a minute, your job is to not trust anything these people ever tell you. I don't trust Trump and what he says. If the Trump campaign says something about Trump — I like the guy, but I don't trust anything that comes out of a campaign from either side, and no credible reporter would, and yet 99% of the media is willing to take anything the Clintons say at face value. It blows my mind to this day.

WOODS: Now, let me ask you, though, about Russiagate specifically. I'm quite certain that you have been speaking about this as it's been unfolding, as the nothingness has unfolded. And people on the other side could very well say: *Look, okay, if I'm being strictly honest here, I can't absolutely know that there was collusion. I just think that the circumstantial evidence seems to point in that direction. But how can you, Mike Cernovich, be equally certain that there wasn't collusion?* And how would you answer that?

CERNOVICH: Yeah, there's a number of issues. One is the classic, you learn this in freshman year English when you're dealing with logical fallacies, disprove a negative. Well, prove that some event didn't happen. That's a fundamental thinking lesson that you learn when you're in high school or in college or taking a critical thinking course: disprove a negative, prove something didn't happen. So one is it's impossible. It's one of those logical paradoxes.

Two is that the Trump campaign — and I said this from the beginning — they couldn't collude with social media. They couldn't collude with people who are influential on Twitter and Facebook. People think of the Trump campaign as some kind of monolith. The Trump campaign was Trump with his phone, tweeting, and it was everybody else around him reacting to whatever he said, minute by minute, and then it was Brad Parscale buying Facebook ads. That was it. That was the Trump campaign. [laughing] And so you just didn't have it. Now, if it had been more organized and less chaotic, then I would say, well, maybe. Yeah, maybe there was a back channel for the Russians. But based on how it was actually run, there was no collusion. They couldn't collude with each other. Jared and Bannon couldn't even collude with each other, let alone Bannon and Trump or some sophisticated foreign Russian operation while everybody's being spied on.

WOODS: What do you think is — it's hard to know, right, what the consequences of this will be, if the general public will now come to mistrust the news, or if they'll just think that Trump is more wily than we thought. How do you think this all shakes out in that regard?

CERNOVICH: What we do know — there's a great book that everybody listening should read. I read it 15 years ago, changed my life. It's called *When Prophecy Fails*. And it's a book about doomsday cults. What happens if you're in a doomsday cult and they tell you, okay, the world is going to end tonight at midnight or at, you know, 11:59pm, and the world doesn't end? You would think that everybody would say, "Well, son of a gun, it happens. I fell for it. That's the way it is, and let's move on with their lives." But actually, the opposite happens. People double down, because the cognitive dissonance of admitting, "I was wrong. I blew it," that's too much for most people's egos to deal with. So instead, they double down, and they say, "Oh, we must have misinterpreted something. Let's look even harder for the solution."

So what you're seeing right now is the Mueller prophecy failed, and now the media has doubled down and saying, *Well, we did amazing journalism. Oh, and by the way, collusion's really, really hard to prove anyway, and the collusion was so good that even Mueller couldn't find it.* So that they are they are doubling down.

Now, in terms of us, ethical, honest, people like you, people of integrity, it's a benefit for us, because when we are unfairly targeted, our people just won't trust anything they read in the media now. If there's a big report, front page, whatever, our people will just be like, *Oh, God it's probably all lies, probably all fabrication.* And we saw that thinking play out with the Tucker Carlson audio. Three years ago, that's the end of Tucker Carlson's career. It's just, you're over, it's done, too late. But now he's fine because of the James Gunn thing, the media lies, the media double standards. So like Michael Malice said something, and I rarely disagree with him. And he said if right-wing media had any power to hold the media accountable, then the media never would have run the Russiagate hoax. And he's right in a sense. In another sense, if our people don't trust the media, we're going to win. And our people don't trust the media at all anymore.

WOODS: Where did this whole Russiagate story come from? What was the spark that gave it legs to begin with?

CERNOVICH: Two days before the election, Podesta and the Clinton campaign cooked it up as a plan B. We actually cover this in *Hoaxed* movie. They cooked it up, and then they cooked up the fake news thing also. So they had things in reserve in case Hillary Clinton lost.

WOODS: But surely they had to point to something other than mere speculation. What was the something? Was there a something?

CERNOVICH: No, no, there was no something. And what they even tried to say is the something was a joke. *Hey, Russia, if you're listening, let me get them Hillary Clinton 33,000 emails or whatever.* Yeah, I'm sure that's how you would contact a hacker, right?

WOODS: Yeah.

CERNOVICH: And then of course, they did say that the Podesta emails came from WikiLeaks and that was a Russian operation. And they did say that *RT* and others pushed Trump as a win. Now, the flip side to that, because there's always multiple ways of looking at it, is I think the Russians thought Trump was such a buffoon that they wanted him to win not to collude with him, but because they thought that they would be able to leverage him more than they would Hillary Clinton. So even if the Russians tried to help Trump through a few means — and as we dig deeper, it was like 5,000 Facebook ads or something like that — it wasn't because they liked the guy; it's because they thought it would maybe divide America. And another thing people don't mention is Michael Moore went to an anti-Trump rally. Media never brings this up. So Russian media was sowing division in America any which way they could. So if we had a media that had integrity, they would say: *Hey, Americans, left, right, center, far left, far right, we all need to realize that there's a war going on right now for our minds and that Russian media, they were helping Michael Moore. They were helping the left. They were trying to just find any kind of wedge issue to divide America on. Let's figure this out.* Of course, that is not what the media said.

WOODS: When I looked through the articles that have come out about this written by people I trust, like Dan McCarthy and Tim Carney and the editorial at the *Washington Examiner*, Peter van Buren, and they summarize what's been going on, it seems so thin. It's amazing to me that this has had two years' worth of legs to it. I've just tuned it out because it seemed so preposterous. And just to listen to Rachel Maddow, fearing about the influence of the Russians, it just sounded so cartoonish and stupid. I thought these people don't realize how stupid they sound? Plus, I wish they'd been half this worked up back when the Russians had gulags. I wish they would have been as concerned about the Russians at that time. But it's amazing that this thing had this many legs when there is so little. There's just so little to it. It's amazing. I mean, and so it seems like what you had was a lot of ordinary Americans who bought into what is frankly a deep-state narrative that they were fed by people they trusted night after night. And those people, well, yeah, they bear share the blame for not being more inquisitive. But the real people who share the blame, obviously, are the propagandists. So you're saying that — okay, well, obviously the Clintons are one thing. But do you think that the typical journalist or media commentator who was insinuating that it was a certainty that there was Russian collusion, these people were just knowingly lying?

CERNOVICH: Good question. And I think it's 50 — well, I don't know if I would say 50/50, but I will say they just didn't really care what the truth was. And their job is to help Democrats win, and whatever they can use to weaponize against Trump, they'll do it. I'll give you a good example. There's a CNN guy, and I won't name him because he'll, you know, cry on the internet about being bullied or whatever. But he likes to say, "Pro-Trump media says X. Pro-Trump media says Y." And if you're a logical person, you would say, okay, if there's a pro-Trump media, who is the anti-Trump media? You never see that in the media. And in fact, Malice and I, we talk about that a lot. You'll see "far-right activist Mike Cernovich." Like okay, well, who's the far-left-wing activist? No, nobody's far left. Well, how do you have a pro-Trump media without an anti-Trump media? But in their mind, anyone who's not bashing the president, even though I criticize Trump quite a bit, enough that I've probably lost 100,000 Twitter followers through all of this, they call us pro-Trump media. Well, who's anti-Trump media. So if we had an actual objective media, then they would look at both sides. But they don't.

WOODS: Can we just go through just this year alone? So Russiagate collapses. We had the Covington Catholic High School thing. But I know there were — has there been any big, major thing that they've screwed up this year that I'm forgetting?

CERNOVICH: Oh, man, too many, too many to count. I mean, BuzzFeed reported that Michael Cohen had been ordered by Trump to obstruct justice and that Mueller had proof of this.

WOODS: That's right. And then they had to back off that.

CERNOVICH: Yeah. And then *The Guardian* reported that Manafort met with Julian Assange three times, which is some *Mission Impossible*-level shish. So it's been one after another. I wish that we had — I need like to hire an intern or something to track them, because I used to be able to keep track of them, but there are so many. It isn't like one or two big ones a year. It's a little one every day they lie about and then a big one about once a week. I mean, think about Covingtongate. That wasn't even that long ago. And the Michael Cohen story wasn't that long ago. *The Guardian*, Julian Assange thing wasn't that long ago. They really are like, "Oh, by the way, breaking news, Michael Avenatti is being charged with criminal fraud in the Southern District of New York."

WOODS: Really?

CERNOVICH: [laughing] Yeah, just hit.

WOODS: I didn't know about that. Well, yeah, if it just it.

CERNOVICH: Nobody did. It happened ten minutes ago, yeah.

WOODS: Oh, my gosh. All right, who knows? 2019 is going to be a crazy roller coaster now.

CERNOVICH: Yeah.

WOODS: Because now Trump is insinuating — now, I don't know if this is the sort of traditional Trump bluster or if there's anything to it, but I at least saw a headline where Trump said that now it's time to investigate the investigators to get to the bottom of what this was all about, who was really behind it, who was pushing something they had to know was false. Do you think anything comes to that?

CERNOVICH: Nah, man. When it comes to Trump actually using his executive power, it just doesn't happen. And that's been one of my biggest criticisms of Trump from the beginning. It's been one of the biggest failures of his presidency, is that he just has never shown any interest in saying, "What are my powers and how can I use them?" It's unfortunate.

WOODS: Yeah, well, the irony of that is — I mean, whether it's a good idea or not, is that everyone assumes that this is the dictator Trump and this and that. But the number of vetoes — what does he have, one veto or something? You know, you compare that to other presidents. I mean, Andrew Johnson, one of the things they wanted to impeach him over was that he vetoed too much. They felt like, you know, that you're not supposed to be doing that. So let me ask you this: anytime your name comes up, there's a narrative about you. And when I had you on last time, I got some people saying, "Well, it's pretty rich for Cernovich of all people to make a fake news documentary, when he's the very personification of fake news." What do you say to that?

CERNOVICH: Sure, a number of things. One is that what everybody keeps bringing up — and I love too, because they go, "Cernovich has never talked about Pizzagate?" It's like, yes, I talk about it in *Hoaxed*. I've talked about it like 100 times. I'm sorry that you're the victim of fake news, those of you who criticize me, and you think that I was talking about some pizza parlor, because I was talking about Jeffrey Epstein posting to the hashtag. Lo and behold, Mike Cernovich is in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals with *The Miami Herald*, spending \$50,000 of my own money to get records involving Jeff Epstein, a convicted pedophile, and I'm in court with Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and everyone else. So for me, they always bring up Pizzagate, and I say, well, I was never talking about the pizza parlor; I was talking about Jeff Epstein, and how do these people get away with this stuff? And I went to federal court to fight for these records, and now there's all this deep reporting by *The Miami Herald*. Epstein did get away with it, and that was always my point.

And then the other thing that cracks me up, because these people, they are the victims of fake news, how many people know that I'm made John Conyers, a longstanding member of Congress, resign for sexual harassment? Right? Not many. Most people be would be like, "Wait,

what?" Yes, as a matter of fact, I obtained confidential records involving a sexual harassment settlement that John Conyers entered into with taxpayer money. I gave the documents to BuzzFeed, of all places, and they did deep, deep reporting on the story. John Conyers resigned a week later. Okay, so I made a member of Congress resign. I broke the Susan Rice unmasking story, and that's going to come more into play now with FISA abuse and unmasking is looked into by Trump actually. Well, who broke the Susan Rice unmasking story? I did. Broke a ton of other stories here and there. So for me, quite frankly, I feel bad for people who think that I'm fake news, because it only goes to show that they've been victimized by the fake news media.

WOODS: And finally, I guess, because I insist on trying to get back to my 30-minute episodes, at least for a little while, but I have perhaps the most important question of all, and I've been waiting two full episodes to haul it out. Here it is: what do you like best about Michael Malice?

CERNOVICH: Everything about Michael Malice. The guy, he's one of those people that should be a household name. I mean, he's doing well for himself. The guy is charming, funny, witty, he's able to troll but in a good-humored way. He's never nasty about it or personal about it. So I would say, if I had to put it in a phrase, I would just say he's a very good-humored person, and we need more good-humored people in this world.

WOODS: Not to mention he's so quick. He's so quick on his feet with it. So I don't even bother trying to go toe-to-toe with him. I just give up. I just have resolved that, in his presence, I am the straight man. That's okay. I'm perfectly happy to be the straight man to Michael Malice's troll. All right, so of course people need to watch this *Hoaxed* documentary, which is highly recommended both by me and by Michael Malice, who was voted the number-one guest on *The Tom Woods Show*. So how can people get hold of that documentary?

CERNOVICH: Go to *Hoaxed* the movie, HoaxedMovie.com. And check it out.

WOODS: You will definitely, definitely find it to be worth your time. Well, Mike, I appreciate your joining me again today. Thanks so much.

CERNOVICH: My pleasure. Thank you, Tom.