



Written by [James Murphy](#) on August 29, 2018

CNN Stands by Phony Story About Trump Jr./Russia Meeting

Back on July 26, CNN reported a [“bombshell” story](#) citing an anonymous source, who claimed that former Donald Trump attorney Michael Cohen was willing to testify that then-candidate Trump had prior knowledge of, and approved, the infamous Trump Tower meeting that Donald Trump, Jr., took with a Russian attorney. Unfortunately for the beleaguered network, the person who many believe is the anonymous source, Cohen’s attorney and Clinton crony Lanny Davis, is now backtracking from the assertion.



Last week, Davis told CNN, “I think the reporting of the story got mixed up in the course of a criminal investigation. We were not the source of the story.”

But since then, in an interview with BuzzFeed, Davis has confessed that he was at least one of the anonymous sources of the story originally reported by CNN. Davis also admitted to providing false confirmations of the story to several news sources including the *New York Post* and the *Washington Post*, both of which went on to retract their versions of the story.

As of today, CNN has not retracted anything about the story. “We stand by our story, which had more than one source, and are confident in our reporting of it,” a corporate spokesperson said.

While it’s possible that CNN had more sources for the story, the fact that Cohen’s own lawyer now repudiates it makes that hard to believe. What’s more, Axios has reported that Cohen testified under oath to Congress that he had no prior knowledge of the Trump Tower meeting. Did Cohen lie to Congress then, tell Davis something different in the interim, and then retract what he said again?

The closest thing that CNN has come to a retraction is to offer a story with the headline, [“Attorney for Michael Cohen keeps changing his story on Trump Tower meeting.”](#) The story complains of Davis bobbing and weaving and not giving straight answers and not raising issues with CNN about its reporting on the subject.

Davis played the fall-guy, telling Anderson Cooper, “I should have done a much better job of speaking with suspicion than certainty, and I regret my mistake.”

Whatever happened, Davis is now insisting that Cohen — who last week pled guilty to five counts of tax evasion, one count of making a false statement to a lending institution, and two campaign-finance violations, which directly implicate the president — had no prior knowledge of the Trump Tower meeting and cannot and will not tell Robert Mueller he did if required to testify.

Another interesting note is that, in the July 26 “bombshell” story, CNN specifically claimed that Davis refused to speak with them about the story. This means either Davis or CNN is lying, since Davis is now on the record claiming that he was among the unnamed sources for the original story. How can CNN



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claim that Davis refused to speak with them if he was one of the sources for the story?

If Davis is not lying (and being who he is, that's far from certain), then CNN is guilty of a major breach of public trust. It would have specifically claimed that Davis refused to speak about the subject of Cohen being willing to testify about the Trump Tower meeting when, in fact, Davis *was* the anonymous source. In simple terms, they would have lied to the American public.

This is not the first time CNN has utterly blown a story when it comes to the Trump/Russia investigation. There are many examples, but the most egregious occurred last December, as breathless reports of another "bombshell" originated with CNN. "The most trusted name in news" reported that WikiLeaks had offered the Trump campaign special access to Democratic National Committee (DNC) e-mails before they were released on the Internet.

The report was based on an e-mail acquired by CNN that Donald Trump, Jr., allegedly received on September 4, offering access to the DNC e-mails. CNN believed that this proved collusion between the Trump campaign and WikiLeaks, at the very least. The network went on to hype the story for a full day before the *Washington Post* noted that the e-mail in question was actually sent on *September 14*, the exact day the DNC e-mails were made public to everybody.

And they wonder why President Trump refers to them as Fake News.

In the news business, first to the story still means something, even in this age where everything happens so quickly. An occasional incorrect story with a quick retraction can be forgiven. But CNN stubbornly sticks to incorrect stories for hours and days after they've been debunked. By doing this, they give fresh meat to those who wish to believe such stories, whether retractions are issued or not. It's journalistic malfeasance. It's Fake News.

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