

DONALD TRUMP

Read President Trump's Interview With TIME on Truth and Falsehoods

TIME Staff

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President Trump spoke with TIME Washington Bureau Chief Michael Scherer on March 22 for **a cover story about the way he has handled truth and falsehood** in his career.

This is a transcript of the exchange, with some minor edits. The transcript does not include requests he made of his staff during the interview, or a comment he made after asking to go off the record.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Hey, Michael.

TIME: Hey Mr. President, Thank you for taking the time.

Absolutely. How have you been, OK?

Yeah, it has been a wild couple months. You keep us busy.

Yeah, it's been good though. It's been good.

Do you want me to give you a quick overview [of the story]?

Yeah, it's a cool story. I mean it's, the concept is right. I predicted a lot of things, Michael. Some things that came to you a little bit later. But, you know, we just rolled out a list. Sweden. **I make the statement, everyone goes crazy.** The next day they have a massive riot, and death, and problems. Huma [Abedin] and Anthony [Weiner], you know, what I tweeted about that whole deal, and then it turned out he had it, **all of Hillary's email on his thing. NATO, obsolete,** because it doesn't cover terrorism. They fixed that, and I said that the allies must pay. Nobody knew

that they weren't paying. I did. I figured it. **Brexit, I was totally right about that.** You were over there I think, when I predicted that, right, the day before. Brussels, I said, Brussels is not Brussels. I mean many other things, **the election's rigged** against Bernie Sanders. We have a lot of things.

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But there's other things you said that haven't panned out. The peg for this story is the wiretapping hearing on Monday, in which [FBI Director James] Comey and [NSA Director Mike] Rogers testified about your tweets there.

Yeah well if you'd look at, in fact I'll give you the front page story, and just today I heard, just a little while ago, that **Devin Nunes had a news conference**, did you hear about this, where they have a lot of information on tapping. Did you hear about that?

I have not, no.

Now remember this. When I said wiretapping, it was in quotes. Because a wiretapping is, you know today it is different than wire tapping. It is just a good description. But wiretapping was in quotes. What I'm talking about is surveillance. And today, [House Intelligence Committee Chairman] Devin Nunes just had a news conference. Now probably got obliterated by **what's happened in London**. But just had a news conference, and here it is one of those things. The other one, election, I said we are going to win, we won. And many other things. And I think this is going to be very interesting.

So you don't feel like Comey's testimony in any way takes away from the credibility of the tweets you put out, even with the quotes?

No, I have, look. I have articles saying it happened. But you have to take a look at what they, they just went out at a news conference. Devin Nunes had a news conference. I mean I don't know, I was unable to see it, because I am at meetings, but they just had a news conference talking about surveillance. Now again, it is in

quotes. That means surveillance and various other things. And the New York Times had a front-page story, which they actually reduced, they took it, they took it the word wiretapping out of the title, but its first story in the front page of the paper was wiretapping. And a lot of information has just been learned, and a lot of information may be learned over the next coming period of time. We will see what happens. Look. I predicted a lot of things that took a little of bit of time. Here, headline, for the front page of the New York Times, "Wiretapped data used in inquiry of Trump aides." That's a headline. Now they then dropped that headline, I never saw this until this morning. They then dropped that headline, and they used another headline without the word wiretap, but they did mean wiretap. Wiretapped data used in inquiry. Then changed after that, they probably didn't like it. And they changed the title. They took the wiretap word out.

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Harry Benson

One of my ideas here is that throughout the campaign and now as president, you have used disputed statements, this is one of them that is disputed, the claim that **three million undocumented people voted in the election...**

Well I think I will be proved right about that too.

The claim that **Muslims celebrated on 9-11 in New Jersey...**

Well if you look at the reporter, he wrote the story in the Washington Post.

But my idea is that whatever the reality of what you are describing, the fact

that they are disputed makes them a more effective message, that you are able to spread the message further, that more people get excited about it, that it gets on TV.

Well now if you take a look at the votes, when I say that, I mean mostly they register wrong, in other words, for the votes, they register incorrectly, and/or illegally. And they then vote. You have tremendous numbers of people. In fact I'm forming a committee on it.

But there's no evidence that 3 million people voted with...

We'll see after the committee. I have people say it was more than that. We will see after we have. But there will be, we are forming a committee. And we are going to do a study on it, a very serious problem.

Is there anything different about making these kinds of predictions without having the factual evidence as President?

I'm a very instinctual person, but my instinct turns out to be right. When everyone said I wasn't going to win the election, I said well I think I would. You know it is interesting, somebody came up to me and said the other day, gee whiz, the New York Times and other people, you know other groups, had you down at one percent, well, I said no I think I am going to win, and people smiled, **George Stephanopoulos laughed**, you remember. He thought it was very cute, and very funny. Other people smiled. And some people, the smart people or the people that know me didn't laugh at all. There are people that know me, like Carl Icahn and many others, that didn't laugh at all, they thought I was going to win, because they understand how I, they understand me. They get it. But you take a look and guess what, I won, and I won easily. I predicted Brexit. Remember they said there was no way to get to 270? Well I ended up at 306. I had election night, 306. But there was no way to get to, in fact I went to Maine four times, four times I went to Maine, because I had to get one vote, because there was no way to get to 270, but I ended up getting to 306. Brexit, I predicted Brexit, you remember that, the day before the event. I said, no, Brexit is going to happen, and everybody laughed, and

Brexit happened. Many many things. They turn out to be right. And now today, Devin Nunes, just had a news conference.

I'll look that up.

Yeah, just had it. Now the problem, the thing is, I'm not sure they are watching anything other than that, let's see members of Donald Trump transition team, possibly, oh this just came out. **This is a Politico story.** Members of the Donald Trump Transition team possibly including Trump himself were under surveillance during the Obama administration following November's election. House intelligence chairman Devin Nunes told reporters, wow. Nunes said, so that means I'm right, Nunes said the surveillance appears to have been ... incidental collection, that does not appear to have been related to concerns over Russia.

But so incidental collection would not be wiretapping of you, it would be wiretapping of...

Who knows what it is? You know, why, because somebody says incidental. Nunes is going to the White House.

Nunes has also said that he has no evidence that your tweet was right, previously.

Well, he just got this information. This was new information. That was just got. Members, of, let's see, were under surveillance during the Obama Administration following November's election. Wow. This just came out. So, ah, just came out.

Mitch McConnell has said he'd rather you stop tweeting, that he sees it as a distraction.

Mitch will speak for himself. Mitch is a wonderful man. Mitch should speak for himself.

But you don't see any problems caused by these kinds of controversies. Does

this, when we are talking in the press about whether the president was wiretapped or not, is this good for you or bad for you?

Probably neither. Probably neither. What I said, look I said, Donna Brazile had information, and she had information on Hillary's debate questions. I said why didn't Hillary apologize. Donna Brazile just admitted that that was right. I said the election was rigged against Bernie, a lot of people agree with that one, a lot of people hated the statement when I made it.

But I grant you some of those. But you would agree also that some of the things you have said haven't been true. You say that Ted Cruz's father was with Lee Harvey Oswald.

Well that was in a newspaper. No, no, I like Ted Cruz, he's a friend of mine. But that was in the newspaper. I wasn't, I didn't say that. I was referring to a newspaper. A Ted Cruz article referred to a newspaper story with, had a picture of Ted Cruz, his father, and Lee Harvey Oswald, having breakfast.

That gets close to the heart...

Why do you say that I have to apologize? I'm just quoting the newspaper, just like I quoted the judge the other day, Judge Napolitano, I quoted Judge Napolitano, just like I quoted Bret Baier, I mean Bret Baier mentioned the word wiretap. Now he can now deny it, or whatever he is doing, you know. But I watched Bret Baier, and he used that term. I have a lot of respect for Judge Napolitano, and he said that three sources have told him things that would make me right. I don't know where he has gone with it since then. But I'm quoting highly respected people from highly respected television networks.

But traditionally people in your position in the Oval Office have not said things unless they can verify they are true.

Well, I'm not, well, I think, I'm not saying, I'm quoting, Michael, I'm quoting highly respected people and sources from major television networks.

Did you see the *Wall Street Journal* opinion page today, the editorial page?

I thought it was, I thought it was a disgrace that they could write that.

But let me just, the hypothetical they started with, you have to announce to the country or to the world that some serious national security event has happened, and...

The country believes me. Hey. *I went to Kentucky two nights ago*, we had 25,000 people in a massive basketball arena. There wasn't a seat, they had to send away people. I went to Tennessee four nights ago. We had a packed house, they had to send away thousands of people. You saw that, right. Did you see that?

Yes I did.

The country's not buying it, it is fake media. And the Wall Street Journal is a part of it.

Ok. So you don't worry that your credibility, that if you've cited things that later turn out to be wrong, based on anonymous sources that that hurts you.

Name what's wrong! I mean, honestly.

Fox News said...

Brexit. Wait a minute. I predicted Brexit. What I said about NATO was true, people aren't paying their bills. And everyone said it was a horrible thing to say. And then they found out. And when Germany was over here I said, we are going to have a great relationship with Germany but you have to pay your NATO bills, and they don't even dispute it, ok. So what have I said that is wrong? Everyone, I got attacked on NATO and now they are all saying I was right. I got attacked on Brexit, when I was saying, I said long before the day before, I said the day before the opening, but I was saying Brexit was going to pass, and everybody was laughing, and I turned out to be right on that. I took a lot of heat when I said Brexit was going to pass. Don't forget, Obama said that U.K. will go to the back of the line,

and I talked about Sweden, and may have been somewhat different, but the following day, two days later, they had a massive riot in Sweden, exactly what I was talking about, I was right about that.

But even in that Sweden quote, you said look at what happened on Friday in Sweden. But you are now saying you were referring to something that happened the following day.

No I am saying I was right. I am talking about Sweden. I'm talking about what Sweden has done to themselves is very sad, that is what I am talking about. That is what I am talking about. You can phrase it any way you want. A day later they had a horrible, horrible riot in Sweden and you saw what happened. I talked about Brussels. I was on the front page of the New York Times for my quote. I said Brussels is not what it used to be, very sad what has happened to Brussels. I was absolutely lambasted. A short time later they had the major attack in Brussels. One year ago today. Exactly one year ago today. And then people said you know Trump was right. What am I going to tell you? I tend to be right. I'm an instinctual person, I happen to be a person that knows how life works. I said I was going to win the election, I won the election, in fact I was number one the entire route, in the primaries, from the day I announced, I was number one. And the New York Times and CNN and all of them, they did these polls, which were extremely bad and they turned out to be totally wrong, and my polls showed I was going to win. We thought we were going to win the night of the election.

So when you...

And then TIME magazine, which treats me horribly, but obviously I sell, I assume this is going to be a cover too, have I set the record? I guess, right? Covers, nobody's had more covers.

I think Richard Nixon still has you beat. But he was in office for longer, so give yourself time.

Ok good. I'm sure I'll win.

If you go back to Comey testifying that he and the Justice Department have no information to back up your tweet, the head of the NSA testifying that there is no information to back up your tweet, or the claim made by Judge Napolitano...

On front page of the New York Times, OK? It's in the title of the front page. And I would like you to officially—I know you are going to write a bad article because you always do—[mention] wiretap data used in inquiry of Trump aides. OK. Wiretapped data used in inquiry of Trump aids. Ok? Can you possibly put that down? Front page, January 20th. Now in their second editions, they took it all down under the internet. They took that out. Ok? But that's the way it is. And then they just had a news conference now where they turned out, you watch. You watch.

That is different...

I'm not criticizing anybody, I'm just saying.

That is different than the president wiretapping you which would be a crime outside of a court.

Well I don't know where these wiretaps came from. They came from someplace. That is what they should find out. And you know the real story here is about the leakers. OK? You don't write about that. But the real story here is, who released General Flynn's name? Who released, who released my conversations with Australia, and who released my conversation with Mexico? To me, Michael, that's the story, these leakers, they are disgusting. These are horrible people.

And apparently there is an investigation into that as well.

Well should be, because that's where the whole, who would think that you are speaking to the head of Mexico, the head of Australia, or General Flynn, who was, they are not supposed to release that. That is the most confidential stuff. Classified. That's classified. You go to prison when you release stuff like that. And

who would release that? The real story is, they have to work, intelligence has to work on finding out who are the leakers. Because you know what? When things get involved with North Korea and all the problems we have there, in the Middle East, I mean, that information cannot be leaked out, and it will be by this, this same, and these people were here in the Obama years, because he had plenty of leakers also. But intelligence has to find out, who are these people. Because the biggest story here is, who is leaking this classified information.

But isn't there, it strikes me there is still an issue of credibility. If the intelligence community came out and said, we have determined that so and so is the leaker here, but you are saying to me now, that you don't believe the intelligence community when they say your tweet was wrong.

I'm not saying—no, I'm not blaming. First of all, I put Mike Pompeo in. I put Senator Dan Coats in. These are great people. I think they are great people and they are going to, I have a lot of confidence in them. So hopefully things will straighten out. But I inherited a mess, I inherited a mess in so many ways. I inherited a mess in the Middle East, and a mess with North Korea, I inherited a mess with jobs, despite the statistics, you know, my statistics are even better, but they are not the real statistics because you have millions of people that can't get a job, ok. And I inherited a mess on trade. I mean we have many, you can go up and down the ladder. But that's the story. Hey look, in the mean time, I guess, I can't be doing so badly, because I'm president, and you're not. You know. Say hello to everybody OK?

Thank you very much, Mr. President.
