



Enduring Media Lies And Myths About Julian Assange: DEBUNKED

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Glenn Greenwald (GG): All day today, in response to the news about Assange being released, just a tsunami of lies and propaganda from every major media outlet trying to justify, obviously, why it is that Assange spent so much time in prison only for our government to release him and let him go free without standing trial. Now, the fact that it was the Biden administration that agreed to release him meant that these media outlets that are completely pro-Biden couldn't criticise the Biden administration. That's not what they do. So they were willing to say, yeah, I guess it's fine that we finally let him out. But they also had to justify why he deserved to be in prison. And I actually forgot how many lies – and when I say lies, I mean things I can prove to you and will prove to you are actually false – have always been spread all over the media to justify Assange's imprisonment. Either, these people have no idea what they're talking about, or they're actively lying, or both. But these are the media outlets, like this CNN interview I'm about to show you, that incessantly claim that they're here to combat disinformation. And yet they spread constant, demonstrable lies.

So Kaitlan Collins, a CNN host, had on her show to talk about the Assange case – not any members of those press freedom and civil liberties groups who denounce this as the greatest threat to press freedom – she decided to invite on her show an FBI official, former FBI official. And not just any former FBI official, but Andrew McCabe, who was kicked out of the FBI in disgrace because he got caught admitting, essentially that he was motivated by anti-Trump animus in the FBI's investigation that led to all the Russiagate hoaxes. A career-proven liar who, of course, CNN immediately went and hired. And watch the claims that Kaitlan Collins allowed Andrew McCabe to make about Julian Assange and why he's not a journalist and why he's actually a criminal – because so many of these claims are provably false.

Kaitlan Collins (KC): The US effort to extradite and prosecute Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has now ended with him walking free, avoiding any prison time here in the United States. Of course, Wikileaks published this video of him leaving a British prison this morning after he reached an agreement with the US Justice Department by pleading guilty to a felony charge involving one of the largest leaks of classified information in US history. The deal allows Assange to immediately return to Australia, his native country. You may recall the 2010 leak included hundreds of thousands of confidential military records about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Under the plea deal, the roughly five years in prison that US prosecutors were seeking for Assange would be equal to the time that he already served in a British prison. Remember, President Biden said a few months ago that he was considering ending the prosecution against him. I want to talk about this with Andrew McCabe, the former FBI deputy director. And obviously, this is a huge step down, Andrew McCabe, from the 18 charges, the potential 175-year prison sentence that he was facing. What do you make of the terms that prosecutors have come to with Julian Assange?

Andrew McCabe (AM): You know, you're right, Kaitlan. It's a big – it's a far cry from the charges that were brought against him. But I think it's the right call at this point –

GG: So just look at this: CNN wants to talk about the imprisonment of somebody who reported on the crimes of the US government. And who did they invite on? The former FBI deputy director. And again, not just any FBI former deputy director, but one whose career was destroyed because of corruption and lying. So here's what he says.

AM: – in this saga. And, you know, don't get me wrong, I think that the charges and the indictment and the prosecution of Julian Assange is entirely appropriate. Julian Assange was indicted by a grand jury in the Eastern District of Virginia. A grand jury who listened to the entire investigation and determined there's probable cause to believe he committed a crime.

GG: Okay, just on that point, I'm not going to say that's a lie, but everybody knows that's incredibly misleading. There's that old adage that you can indict a ham sandwich in a grand jury. A grand jury is a process where only the government appears. The defendant has no right to appear. There's no counter evidence presented to the grand jury to conflict with or negate any of the government's claims. So it's a meaningless process. It's a rubber stamp that the grand jury will always give in essentially every case, an indictment. And only a propagandist would try and claim that the validity of Assange's criminality was demonstrated because they got a grand jury to indict him.

AM: It's easy to see how they concluded that, because the facts here are not in dispute. He did what the law says you cannot do, right? He solicited that information, he published that information, and gave it to people who are not entitled to receive it. But at this point, we are, you know, many, many, many years into this prosecution. And I think the fact that continuing to try to extradite him, to bring him here, to hear those charges, to face those charges in court, really raises significant questions, concerns, about what sort of precedent that result might have on legitimate journalistic activity.

GG: Let me just stop there because, he said, and this is obviously a lie, that there's no dispute that Julian Assange did that which the law says you cannot do. And what he said that the law says you cannot do, is solicit sources to bring you classified information and then publish that information without the consent of the government. That is something that every major media outlet in the world does every day.

Here, for example, is this instrument called Securedrop, which was actually created by an internet freedom activist named Aaron Swartz. It was then taken over by the Freedom of Press Foundation, which I co-founded with Laura Poitras and Daniel Ellsberg and others, principally to support Wikileaks. And it's a technological device that allows media outlets to tell sources, if you want to leak to us, all you have to do is upload these secret documents to us, and that will give you anonymity. And here's the organisations that use them: The Washington Post, The Guardian, The Intercept, TechCrunch. I believe The New York Times uses it now and they all use very similar ones. So these media outlets do exactly what Andrew McCabe just described was indisputably a crime, namely encouraging sources to give them classified information and then publishing that classified information without the consent of the government. And that's exactly why, if you accept this indictment, it means that every journalistic outlet in the country can be prosecuted. Now, here are the two lies that he actually tells that I want to show you and demonstrate the proof of the lie.

KC: Well, I mean, it's notable to hear you say that. Obviously, his team argued that he should be protected by the same walls that journalists are. Or that he was releasing sensitive information but in the public's interest. And so, you know, he's been alternatively celebrated by some and reviled by others. So it is striking for me to hear you, given your former, you know, position as the deputy FBI director, to say you think this is the right call.

AM: I do think it's the right call. And don't get me wrong, I think Julian Assange did the wrong thing. Julian Assange hurt the United States government. He put the lives of our troops in danger. He put the lives, particularly of Iraqi citizens who had helped our effort in the war in Iraq in danger. So this guy did a lot of bad things. But what he did, some of what he did, was very similar to the way that journalists conduct their business. Of course, in other ways, very different, right? There wasn't any of those conversations prior to publication that journalists typically have when they're going to reveal classified and sensitive information to find out what, you know, reach out to the government entity involved to seek comment and then have a conversation; give the government an opportunity to say, hey, please don't do this because these people might die as a result. So, very big differences there. But the fact is that going forward with this prosecution would run the risk of putting all of those processes in those protections kind of up for grabs. And that could set a very dangerous precedent going forward and have a chilling effect on the journalistic news gathering process and how that impacts the First Amendment.

GG: Okay. Now, one of the reasons he's obviously saying he agrees with what the Biden administration did is because he's a pro-Biden hack. But he made two arguments about why

Julian Assange is different from what he considers to be journalists. And I don't think there's anything more dangerous than having the FBI or CIA operatives decide, oh, this is a real journalist, but this is not. Those are the last people you should want making those decisions, because obviously the people they consider to be real journalists are the people they can control. And since they can't control Assange, then they don't consider him a real journalist. But the more important point is that if you actually read the First Amendment, a list of a series of rights: freedom of speech, the free exercise of religion. And a free press, to name a few. And none of those is limited to some special priesthood called "journalist". You don't have to be a journalist, whoever decides what that is, to claim the right of press freedoms under the Constitution. That is an activity like speech, or the free exercise of religion that is available to all citizens. And so anybody, journalist or pilot or engineer or architect or just regular citizens, have the right to engage in press freedoms under the Constitution. You don't have to prove that you're a journalist. But the argument that he gave as to why Julian Assange is different from the respectable journalist who he thinks should be protected is because, according to McCabe, Assange never contacted the government in advance before publishing secret information to give the government an opportunity to be heard about which particular documents might be dangerous or put people in harm's way before he published them. He simply published them without ever contacting the government. That's what Andrew McCabe said on CNN today with no pushback from Kaitlan Collins. That is an absolute lie. It is just a completely demonstrable falsehood.

Here is Foreign Policy Magazine in 2010 – and I was involved in this at the time, I reported on this at the time, I remember it very well – Julian Assange contacted the State Department before releasing diplomatic cables and said, look, we have a bunch of diplomatic cables that we think are in the public interest to know, but we would like to give you the opportunity to tell us which ones you think we shouldn't publish, because they actually might cause danger that we can't anticipate, but that you might know. In other words, Wikileaks and Assange did exactly what Andrew McCabe this morning on CNN insisted he never did. And in response, the State Department under Hillary Clinton refused to engage in that process with Wikileaks and said, we're not going to talk to you at all. Here from Foreign Policy in November of 2010: *The State Department refuses to negotiate with Wikileaks*. Quote, "The State Department wrote Saturday to the leaders of the self-described whistleblowing website Wikileaks, telling them the US government won't negotiate ahead of the expected release of hundreds of thousands of sensitive documents. The State Department's top legal adviser, Harold Koh, wrote Saturday to Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and his attorney, Jennifer Robinson, in response to a letter Wikileaks sent the same day to US ambassador to the UK, Louis Susman. The State Department rejected Wikileaks request for the names of any individuals who may be 'at significant risk of harm' due to the release of sensitive documents."

They weren't looking to negotiate with the State Department. They were engaged in the practice that, as Andrew McCabe said, all journalists before they published secret information do, which is you call the government and you don't look for permission, you just tell them: I'm going to publish these documents but if you have arguments to make about why there

may be dangers that I don't see to publishing certain documents, I'm willing to listen. Andrew McCabe on CNN this morning insisted that what differentiates Julian Assange from real journalists is that Assange refuses to do that, he never did it. And in fact, Julian Assange did exactly that on many occasions, including in 2010. But the State Department refused to talk to him. I just can't – it just drives me crazy that CNN runs around constantly saying how they combat disinformation, and they repeatedly put falsehoods on the air like that. And I showed this on social media today. I'm going to send it to Kaitlan Collins and I guarantee you they won't correct it. Because they are happy to publish absolutely false claims as long as it serves the cause that they want.

Now, the other claim Andrew McCabe made, which is the most common one, is that the reason why Julian Assange should be imprisoned is because documents he published endangered the lives of multiple people, including Iraqi informants. I defy anybody to show one document Wikileaks published that endangered in any way the life of a single person. And in fact, McClatchy, which was a part of Knight Ridder, the only major media outlet before the war in Iraq that got the story about Iraqi WMDs correct – they were constantly publishing articles saying there was no evidence of Iraqi WMDs. In 2010, they investigated these claims from the Pentagon that Wikileaks has blood on their hands, that they endangered the lives of a huge number of people, and here's what they concluded. Here's McClatchy, September 25th, 2010. The date on the article is 2013, because they went back three years later and did a minor correction, but the actual date of publication is 2010. And the headline is: *Officials may be overstating the danger from Wikileaks*. Quote, "American officials in recent days have warned repeatedly that the release of documents by Wikileaks could put people's lives in danger. But despite similar warnings ahead of the previous two massive releases of classified US intelligence reports by the website, US officials concede that they have no evidence to date that the documents led to anyone's death."

And again, all of these documents are documents that Wikileaks partnered with The New York Times and The Guardian to publish. And both those newspapers, as well as Wikileaks, went to the government beforehand and said: if there are documents in here that you think could endanger people, tell us what they are. And many of those documents were in fact redacted to protect the lives of innocent people. But it is commonplace to hear over and over people like this saying Wikileaks put the lives of people in danger with these publications. They have no analysis about what they did that was different from The New York Times and The Guardian. In every single case – you go back and look at the Snowden release or the release of the Pentagon Papers – the government always claims the release of these documents put people's lives in danger. I spent years after and during the Snowden reporting, when people said that and they often did, saying, give me one example of one document that put anyone's life in danger and nobody ever could. Same with the Pentagon Papers. Nobody's life was endangered by the Pentagon Papers. The only people who are endangered by these leaks are the criminals inside the US government whose crimes end up being revealed. But you would think if a FBI deputy director went on to CNN to claim that these Wikileaks documents published with the New York Times and The Guardian, put people's lives in danger, someone like Kaitlan Collins would say: well, how specifically did they do that?

Which documents did The New York Times and The Guardian and Wikileaks publish, and whose lives ended up being endangered? Or they would refer to this investigation, showing that even the government admitted they had no evidence to justify that claim. Or there would be push-back when Andrew McCabe just lies and says "Wikileaks, unlike other journalists, doesn't contact the government before publication", when clearly that is exactly what he did.

Now, here is just to give you a sense of the kinds of lies and the way they circulate – here's what Mike Pence said. And of course, he has been a defender of the US security state his entire life. He went onto Twitter today and said, quote, "Julian Assange endangered the lives of our troops..." Again, an absolutely baseless claim. "...in a time of war and should have been prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The Biden administration's plea deal with Assange is a miscarriage of justice and dishonours the service and sacrifice of the men and women of our armed forces and their families. There should be no plea deals to avoid prison for anyone that endangers the security of the military or the national security of the United States. Ever." Now, obviously nobody endangered the security of the United States more than the people who lied the country into a war in Iraq, created a vacuum there that led to ISIS. People like Mike Pence. Here is some goon who worked for the CIA for ten years, named Gail Helt. She went on to X today and wrote the following, quote: "Folks, Julian Assange is no hero. He is a despicable Russian asset..." Obviously, there's never been proof of that. "...who harmed hundreds of people and dismissed them like they didn't matter." That same claim. "I'm okay with the plea agreement because I hope it means I'll see his name in my social media feed a lot less. But that's not venerate the man. He caused great harm." And there you see her biography. She was a CIA analyst from 2003 to 2014, during the Iraq War, during the War on Terror. So of course she wants Julian Assange in prison. And of course she is pretending she supports the plea deal because she doesn't want to criticise the Biden administration. And then she goes on separately to say this, quote, "A journalist –", someone had said, "But you're imprisoning a journalist." And she said, "– who is a journalist? Assange? Haha. That's an insult to actual journalists who do the work with integrity, who I hold in enormously high regard."

Now, as I've said before, most of the people who work in corporate media, who go to the White House gala, who are celebrated as journalists, don't do any kind of real journalism at all, except the kind that people in the CIA think you should do. Which is you call up the CIA, you call up the FBI, you call up the Pentagon and you repeat what they tell you to say. People like Natasha Bertrand at Politico and CNN and Ken Dilanian at NBC News. I mean, again, the last people we should want determining who is a real journalist are people who work for the US security state. But aside from the fact that Assange has broken more major stories than all of these people combined – which is the metric of what journalism is – Assange has won journalism awards all around the world. Here, just to give you a few examples. The Guardian in 2011: *Julian Assange wins the Martha Gellhorn Journalism Prize*. Here is The Sydney Morning Herald, the big newspaper in Australia, August of 2019: *Julian Assange wins EU journalism award*. And it says: "Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has been given an award established in honour of an assassinated journalist". Now we move to the next one, which is The International Journalist Network, in 2019: *Wikileaks founder Julian Assange*

captures top journalism prize. And then here is a graphic: Julian Assange's awards for journalism. "He's won many awards for publishing and journalism, including from Amnesty, Time Magazine and Walkley Awards." And it shows the multiple journalism awards that he's won all throughout the years.

Now again, it doesn't matter who is and is not a journalist from the perspective of who can claim the First Amendment protections of press freedom. Those are available to everybody. But it's so revealing about how these people see journalism. In order to be a journalist to them, you have to work for a large corporation, be completely controlled by the government, and only reveal information that the US government wants you to reveal. The minute you're not controlled by the US government, the minute you're actually adversarial to the government, the minute you expose the things they want to keep concealed and don't want the public to know, that's when you become the enemy, because that's what real journalism is. And if there's anyone who deserves the title of real journalist of all these people who talk about journalism constantly, I can't think of anyone more deserving of that title than Julian Assange. And he isn't in prison or wasn't in prison for the last 15 years despite that fact, but precisely because he is engaged in the pure acts of journalism. That was the reason why he spent the last 15 years of his life deprived of his freedom.

Thanks for watching this clip from System Update, our live show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. Eastern exclusively on Rumble. You can catch the full nightly shows live or view the backlog of episodes for free on our Rumble page. You can also find full episodes the morning after they air across all major podcasting platforms, including Spotify and Apple. All the information you need is linked below. We hope to see you there.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO:	PAYPAL:	PATREON:	BETTERPLACE:
Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.	E-Mail: PayPal@acTVism.org	https://www.patreon.com/acTVism	Link: Click here
Bank: GLS Bank			
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600			
BIC: GENODEM1GLS			

The acTVism Munich e.V. association is a non-profit organization with legal capacity. The association pursues exclusively and directly non-profit and charitable purposes. Donations from Germany are tax-deductible. If you require a donation receipt, please send us an e-mail to: info@acTVism.org