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Fake News Curated by the Deep State: Government Spin Doctors Control the News Cycle

“We Americans are the ultimate innocents. We are forever desperate to believe that this time the government is telling us the truth.”—Former *New York Times* reporter Sydney Schanberg

Let’s talk about fake news stories, shall we?

There’s the garden variety fake news that is not really “news” so much as it is titillating, tabloid-worthy material peddled by anyone with a Twitter account, a Facebook page and an active imagination. These stories run the gamut from the ridiculous and the obviously click-bait to the satirical and politically manipulative.

Anyone with an ounce of sense and access to the Internet should be able to ferret out the truth and lies in these stories with some basic research. That these stories flourish is largely owing to the general gullibility, laziness and media illiteracy of the general public, which through its learned compliance rarely questions, challenges or confronts.

Then there’s the more devious kind of news stories circulated by one of the biggest propagators of fake news: the U.S. government.

In the midst of the government and corporate media’s carefully curated apoplexy over fake news, you won’t hear much about the government’s own role in producing, planting and peddling propaganda-driven fake news—often with the help of the corporate news media—because that’s not how the game works.

Why?

Because the powers-that-be don’t want us skeptical of the government’s message or its corporate accomplices in the mainstream media. They don’t want us to be more discerning when it comes to what information we digest online. They just want us to be leery of independent or alternative news sources while trusting them—and their corporate colleagues—to vet the news for us.

Indeed, in recent years, Facebook and Google have conveniently appointed themselves the arbiters of truth on the internet in order to screen out what is blatantly false, spam or click-bait.

Not only does this establish a dangerous precedent for all-out censorship by corporate entities known for colluding with the government but it's also a slick sleight-of-hand maneuver that diverts attention from what we should really be talking about: the fact that the government has grown dangerously out-of-control, all the while the so-called mainstream news media, which is supposed to act as a bulwark against government propaganda, has instead become the mouthpiece of the world's largest corporation—the U.S. government.

As veteran journalist Carl Bernstein, who along with Bob Woodward blew the lid off the Watergate scandal, reported in his expansive 1977 *Rolling Stone* piece, "The CIA and the Media":

"More than 400 American journalists ... in the past twenty-five years have secretly carried out assignments for the Central Intelligence Agency... There was cooperation, accommodation and overlap. Journalists provided a full range of clandestine services... Reporters shared their notebooks with the CIA. Editors shared their staffs. Some of the journalists were Pulitzer Prize winners, distinguished reporters... In many instances, CIA documents show, journalists were engaged to perform tasks for the CIA with the consent of the managements of America's leading news organizations."

Bernstein is referring to Operation Mockingbird, a CIA campaign started in the 1950s to plant intelligence reports among reporters at more than 25 major newspapers and wire agencies, who would then regurgitate them for a public oblivious to the fact that they were being fed government propaganda.

In some instances, as Bernstein shows, members of the media also served as extensions of the surveillance state, with reporters actually carrying out assignments for the CIA.

Executives with CBS, the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine also worked closely with the CIA to vet the news. Bernstein writes: "Other organizations which cooperated with the CIA include the American Broadcasting Company, the National Broadcasting Company, the Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Hearst Newspapers, Scripps-Howard, *Newsweek* magazine, the Mutual Broadcasting System, the *Miami Herald* and the old *Saturday Evening Post* and *New York Herald-Tribune*."

In fact, in August 1964, the nation's leading newspapers—including the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*—echoed Lyndon Johnson's claim that North Vietnam had launched a second round of attacks against American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. No such attacks had taken place, and yet the damage was done. As Jeff Cohen and Norman Solomon report for *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, "By reporting official claims as absolute truths, American journalism opened the floodgates for the bloody Vietnam War."

Fast forward to the early post-9/11 years when, despite a lack of any credible data supporting the existence of weapons of mass destruction, the mainstream media jumped on

the bandwagon to sound the war drums against Iraq. As *Los Angeles Times* columnist Robin Abcarian put it, “our government ... used its immense bully pulpit to steamroll the watchdogs... Many were gulled by access to administration insiders, or susceptible to the drumbeat of the government’s coordinated rhetoric.”

John Walcott, Washington bureau chief for Knight-Ridder, one of the only news agencies to challenge the government’s rationale for invading Iraq, suggests that the reason for the media’s easy acceptance is that “too many journalists, including some very famous ones, have surrendered their independence in order to become part of the ruling class. Journalism is, as the motto goes, speaking truth to power, not wielding it.”

If it was happening then, you can bet it’s still happening today, only it’s been reclassified, renamed and hidden behind layers of government secrecy, obfuscation and spin.

In its article, “How the American government is trying to control what you think,” the *Washington Post* points out “Government agencies historically have made a habit of crossing the blurry line between informing the public and propagandizing.”

Thus, whether you’re talking about the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the government’s invasion of Iraq based upon absolute fabrications, the Russo-Ukrainian War, or the government’s ongoing war on terror, privacy and whistleblowers, it’s being driven by propaganda churned out by one corporate machine (the corporate-controlled government) and fed to the American people by way of yet another corporate machine (the corporate-controlled media).

“For the first time in human history, there is a concerted strategy to manipulate global perception. And the mass media are operating as its compliant assistants, failing both to resist it and to expose it,” writes investigative journalist Nick Davies. “The sheer ease with which this machinery has been able to do its work reflects a creeping structural weakness which now afflicts the production of our news.”

But wait.

If the mass media—aka the mainstream media or the corporate or establishment media—is merely repeating what is being fed to it, who are the masterminds within the government responsible for this propaganda?

Davies explains:

The Pentagon has now designated “information operations” as its fifth “core competency” alongside land, sea, air and special forces. Since October 2006, every brigade, division and corps in the US military has had its own “psyop” element producing output for local media. This military activity is linked to the State Department’s campaign of “public diplomacy” which includes funding radio stations and news websites.

This use of propaganda disguised as journalism is what journalist John Pilger refers to as “invisible government... the true ruling power of our country.”

Clearly, we no longer have a Fourth Estate.

Not when the “news” we receive is routinely manufactured, manipulated and made-to-order by government agents.

Not when six corporations control 90% of the media in America.

Not when, as Davies laments, “news organizations which might otherwise have exposed the truth were themselves part of the abuse, and so they kept silent, indulging in a comic parody of misreporting, hiding the emerging scandal from their readers like a Victorian nanny covering the children’s eyes from an accident in the street.”

And not, as I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, when media outlets have become propagandists for the false reality created by the American government.

After all, as Glenn Greenwald points out, “The term propaganda rings melodramatic and exaggerated, but a press that—whether from fear, careerism, or conviction—uncritically recites false government claims and reports them as fact, or treats elected officials with a reverence reserved for royalty, cannot be accurately described as engaged in any other function.”

So where does that leave us?

What should—or can—we do?

I’ll close with John Pilger’s words of warning and advice:

Real information, subversive information, remains the most potent power of all — and I believe that we must not fall into the trap of believing that the media speaks for the public. That wasn’t true in Stalinist Czechoslovakia and it isn’t true of the United States. In all the years I’ve been a journalist, I’ve never known public consciousness to have risen as fast as it’s rising today...yet this growing critical public awareness is all the more remarkable when you consider the sheer scale of indoctrination, the mythology of a superior way of life, and the current manufactured state of fear.

[The public] need[s] truth, and journalists ought to be agents of truth, not the courtiers of power. I believe a fifth estate is possible, the product of a people’s movement, that monitors, deconstructs, and counters the corporate media. In every university, in every media college, in every news room, teachers of journalism, journalists themselves need to ask themselves about the part they now play in the bloodshed in the name of a bogus objectivity. Such a movement within the media could herald a perestroika of a kind that we have never known. This is all possible. Silences can be broken... In the United States wonderfully free rebellious spirits populate the web... The best reporting ... appears on the web ... and citizen reporters.

The challenge for the rest of us is to lift this subjugated knowledge from out of the underground and take it to ordinary people. We need to make haste. **Liberal Democracy is moving toward a form of corporate dictatorship.** ##

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A State of Never-Ending Crisis: The Government Is Fomenting Mass Hysteria

“This country has been having a nationwide nervous breakdown since 9/11. A nation of people suddenly broke, the market economy goes to shit, and they’re threatened on every side by an unknown, sinister enemy. But I don’t think fear is a very effective way of dealing with things—of responding to reality. Fear is just another word for ignorance.”—Hunter S. Thompson, gonzo journalist

We have become guinea pigs in a ruthlessly calculated, carefully orchestrated, chillingly cold-blooded experiment in how to control a population and advance a political agenda without much opposition from the citizenry.

This is mind-control in its most sinister form.

With alarming regularity, the nation is being subjected to a spate of violence that terrorizes the public, destabilizes the country, and gives the government greater justifications to crack down, lock down, and institute even more authoritarian policies for the so-called sake of national security without many objections from the citizenry.

Take this latest shooting in Nashville, Tenn.

The 28-year-old shooter (a clearly troubled transgender individual in possession of several military-style weapons) opened fire in a Christian elementary school, killing three children and three adults.

Already, fingers are being pointed and battle lines are being drawn.

Those who want safety at all costs are clamoring for more gun control measures (if not at an outright ban on assault weapons for non-military, non-police personnel), widespread mental health screening of the general population, more threat assessments and behavioral sensing warnings, more CCTV cameras with facial recognition capabilities, more “See Something, Say Something” programs aimed at turning Americans into snitches and spies, more metal detectors and whole-body imaging devices at soft targets, more roaming squads of militarized police empowered to do random bag searches, more fusion centers to centralize and disseminate information to law enforcement agencies, and more surveillance of what Americans say and do, where they go, what they buy and how they spend their time.

This is all part of the Deep State’s master plan.

Ask yourselves: why are we being bombarded with crises, distractions, fake news and reality TV politics? We're being conditioned like lab mice to subsist on a steady diet of bread-and-circus politics and an endless spate of crises.

Caught up in this "crisis of the now," the average person has a hard time keeping up with and remembering all of the "events," manufactured or otherwise, which occur like clockwork in order to keep us distracted, deluded, amused, and insulated from reality.

As investigative journalist Mike Adams points out:

"This psychological bombardment is waged primarily via the mainstream media which assaults the viewer by the hour with images of violence, war, emotions and conflict. Because the human nervous system is hard wired to focus on immediate threats accompanied by depictions of violence, mainstream media viewers have their attention and mental resources funneled into the never-ending 'crisis of the NOW' from which they can never have the mental breathing room to apply logic, reason or historical context."

Professor Jacques Ellul studied this phenomenon of overwhelming news, short memories and the use of propaganda to advance hidden agendas. "One thought drives away another; old facts are chased by new ones," wrote Ellul.

All the while, the government continues to amass more power and authority over the citizenry.

When we're being bombarded with wall-to-wall news coverage and news cycles that change every few days, it's difficult to stay focused on one thing—namely, holding the government accountable to abiding by the rule of law—and the powers-that-be understand this.

Yet as John Lennon reminds us, "nothing is real," especially not in the world of politics.

In other words, it's all fake, i.e., manufactured, i.e., manipulated to distort reality.

Much like the fabricated universe in Peter Weir's 1998 film *The Truman Show*, in which a man's life is the basis for an elaborately staged television show aimed at selling products and procuring ratings, the political scene in the United States has devolved over the years into a carefully calibrated exercise in how to manipulate, polarize, propagandize and control a population.

This is the magic of the reality TV programming that passes for politics today.

As long as we are distracted, entertained, occasionally outraged, always polarized but largely uninvolved and content to remain in the viewer's seat, we'll never manage to present a unified front against tyranny (or government corruption and ineptitude) in any form.

The more that is beamed at us, the more inclined we are to settle back in our comfy recliners and become passive viewers rather than active participants as unsettling, frightening events unfold.

Reality and fiction merge as everything around us becomes entertainment fodder.

We don't even have to change the channel when the subject matter becomes too monotonous. That's taken care of for us by the programmers (the corporate media).

"Living is easy with eyes closed," says Lennon, and that's exactly what reality TV that masquerades as American politics programs the citizenry to do: navigate the world with their eyes shut.

As long as we're viewers, we'll never be doers.

Studies suggest that the more reality TV people watch—and I would posit that it's all reality TV, entertainment news included—the more difficult it becomes to distinguish between what is real and what is carefully crafted farce.

"We the people" are watching a lot of TV.

On average, Americans spend five hours a day watching television. By the time we reach age 65, we're watching more than 50 hours of television a week, and that number increases as we get older. And reality TV programming consistently captures the largest percentage of TV watchers every season by an almost 2-1 ratio.

This doesn't bode well for a citizenry able to sift through masterfully-produced propaganda in order to think critically about the issues of the day, whether it's fake news peddled by government agencies or foreign entities.

Those who watch reality shows tend to view what they see as the "norm." Thus, those who watch shows characterized by lying, aggression and meanness not only come to see such behavior as acceptable and entertaining but also mimic the medium.

This holds true whether the reality programming is about the antics of celebrities in the White House, in the board room, or in the bedroom.

It's a phenomenon called "humilitainment."

A term coined by media scholars Brad Waite and Sara Booker, "humilitainment" refers to the tendency for viewers to take pleasure in someone else's humiliation, suffering and pain.

"Humilitainment" largely explains not only why American TV watchers are so fixated on reality TV programming but how American citizens, largely insulated from what is really happening in the world around them by layers of technology, entertainment, and other distractions, are being programmed to accept the brutality, surveillance and dehumanizing treatment of the American police state as things happening to *other* people.

The ramifications for the future of civic engagement, political discourse and self-government are incredibly depressing and demoralizing.

This is what happens when an entire nation—bombaraded by reality TV programming, government propaganda and entertainment news—becomes systematically desensitized and acclimated to the trappings of a government that operates by fiat and speaks in a language of force.

Ultimately, the reality shows, the entertainment news, the surveillance society, the militarized police, and the political spectacles have one common objective: to keep us divided, distracted, imprisoned, and incapable of taking an active role in the business of self-government.

Look behind the political spectacles, the reality TV theatrics, the sleight-of-hand distractions and diversions, and the stomach-churning, nail-biting drama, and you will find there is a method to the madness.

How do you change the way people think? You start by changing the words they use.

In totalitarian regimes—a.k.a. police states—where conformity and compliance are enforced at the end of a loaded gun, the government dictates what words can and cannot be used.

In countries where the police state hides behind a benevolent mask and disguises itself as tolerance, the citizens censor themselves, policing their words and thoughts to conform to the dictates of the mass mind.

Even when the motives behind this rigidly calibrated reorientation of societal language appear well-intentioned—discouraging racism, condemning violence, denouncing discrimination and hatred—inevitably, the end result is the same: intolerance, indoctrination, infantilism, the chilling of free speech and the demonizing of viewpoints that run counter to the cultural elite.

Labelling something as “fake news” is a masterful way of dismissing truth that may run counter to the ruling power’s own narrative.

As George Orwell recognized, “In times of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

Orwell understood only too well the power of language to manipulate the masses. In Orwell’s 1984, Big Brother does away with all undesirable and unnecessary words and meanings, even going so far as to routinely rewrite history and punish “thoughtcrimes.”

In this dystopian vision of the future, the Thought Police serve as the eyes and ears of Big Brother, while the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defense, the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation), the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing), and the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda). The mottos of Oceania: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

Orwell's Big Brother relied on Newspeak to eliminate undesirable words, strip such words as remained of unorthodox meanings and make independent, non-government-approved thought altogether unnecessary.

Where we stand now is at the juncture of Oldspeak (where words have meanings, and ideas can be dangerous) and Newspeak (where only that which is "safe" and "accepted" by the majority is permitted).

Truth is often lost when we fail to distinguish between opinion and fact, and that is the danger we now face as a society. Anyone who relies exclusively on television/cable news hosts and political commentators for actual knowledge of the world is making a serious mistake.

Unfortunately, since Americans have by and large become non-readers, television has become their prime source of so-called "news." This reliance on TV news has given rise to such popular news personalities who draw in vast audiences that virtually hang on their every word.

In our media age, these are the new powers-that-be.

Yet while these personalities often dispense the news like preachers used to dispense religion, with power and certainty, they are little more than conduits for propaganda and advertisements delivered in the guise of entertainment and news.

Given the preponderance of news-as-entertainment programming, it's no wonder that viewers have largely lost the ability to think critically and analytically and differentiate between truth and propaganda, especially when delivered by way of fake news criers and politicians.

The bottom line is simply this: Americans should beware of letting others—whether they be television news hosts, political commentators or media corporations—do their thinking for them.

A populace that cannot think for themselves is a populace with its backs to the walls: mute in the face of elected officials who refuse to represent us, helpless in the face of police brutality, powerless in the face of militarized tactics and technology that treat us like enemy combatants on a battlefield, and naked in the face of government surveillance that sees and hears all.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, it's time to change the channel, tune out the reality TV show, and push back against the real menace of the police state.

If not, if we continue to sit back and lose ourselves in political programming, we will remain a captive audience to a farce that grows more absurd by the minute. ##

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