

# Donald Trump and His 'Magic Mirror'

**Exclusive:** President Trump's vain tirades about crowd size and voter fraud make him look like Snow White's evil queen gazing into her mirror, but he could turn that around by telling some important truths, says Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

By insisting that he is the legitimate winner of the U.S. popular vote and the man who drew the largest inaugural crowd ever, President Trump is behaving like the evil queen in "Snow White" gazing into a "magic mirror" and refusing to accept that he isn't the "fairest of them all."

To protect his giant but fragile ego, Trump concocts fantasies about three million to five million illegal votes – enough to cover his actual deficit of 2.8 million – and he disputes the obvious fact that his inaugural turnout was far less than Barack Obama's.

Having attended both Obama's inaugural in 2009 and Trump's in 2017, I can assure you that Obama's crowd was much bigger. While my son Jeff and I had to squeeze into and out of packed Metro stations on Jan. 20, 2009, we had no trouble getting on a train on Jan. 20, 2017.

Even at the outskirts of Trump's inauguration, protesters far outnumbered celebrants. One vendor selling Trump-inaugural tee shirts remarked that he had been sitting there for four hours and had only sold five shirts.

Of course, none of that is too surprising since Obama was the first African-American president and Washington D.C. and its surrounding suburbs have large black populations as well as being heavily Democratic districts. In other words, it was easier for many Obama supporters to get to his inaugural than it was for Trump's backers to travel longer distances to get to his.

As for the crowds on the Mall, Trump's turnout was further depressed by the fact that large numbers of protesters, especially north of the inaugural parade route, clogged the security checkpoints. Some protesters even locked arms to slow the entry process.

So there were logical reasons – not reflective of Trump's overall popularity – explaining why his numbers were a lot lower than Obama's. But rather than accept this minor slight – as well as the fact that he lost the national popular vote by a significant margin – Trump has behaved like Snow White's vain queen who can't accept the inevitability of her fading beauty and the unwelcome news that someone younger has supplanted her as "the fairest" in the land.

Trump could have scored valuable political points by demonstrating some uncharacteristic grace, acknowledging that as the popular vote loser whose crowds fell short of Obama's record turnout, he recognizes his responsibility to be the president of all the people and to respect dissenting opinions.

Instead, he marred his first week in the White House by pushing easily debunked claims that he was the victim of conspiracies to disparage his inaugural turnout and deny him a popular-vote victory.

### **More Dangerous Lies**

While Trump's refusal to accept unpleasant realities raises fresh concerns about his fitness for office – since his presidency will surely face some painful reversals and rejecting reality is a dangerous way to respond – he is certainly not the first president to lie to the American people.

One difference between Trump's lies and many other lies, however, is that Trump's are both more personal and more obvious. Only his most benighted followers will continue to contest his popular vote loss and the comparatively small size of his inaugural crowds. Most government lies are both harder to detect and more sinister in their consequences.

Think, for example, of President George W. Bush's falsehoods about Iraq's WMDs and Saddam Hussein's alleged collaboration with Al Qaeda. That deceptive propaganda led to the deaths of more than 4,500 U.S. soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, not to mention a price tag of more than \$1 trillion and the spreading of chaos across the Middle East and into Europe.

President Obama also found deception a useful tool for herding the American people behind his administration's foreign interventions. For instance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other senior officials lied about Muammar Gaddafi engaging in "genocide" against the people of eastern Libya when that was clearly not true. But they wanted to justify another "regime change" project, so the truth was readily sacrificed in the name of the "Clinton Doctrine" and her idea of "smart power."

Similarly, in trying to justify direct U.S. military intervention in Syria, Secretary of State John Kerry repeatedly claimed "we know" that Bashar al-Assad's military was responsible for a sarin gas attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013. Kerry made the false claim of certainty to justify a "retaliatory" assault.

Although Obama ultimately decided not to bomb Syria's army, he also asserted no doubt about Assad's guilt. Obama declared in a formal address to the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 24, 2013, that "It's an insult to human reason

and to the legitimacy of this institution to suggest that anyone other than the regime carried out this attack.”

Yet, we now know that Obama’s own intelligence analysts were among those who questioned whether Assad’s military was responsible. I was hearing in real time from intelligence sources that a number of U.S. analysts believed that the attack might well have been a provocation by Syrian rebels to draw the U.S. military into the conflict on their side, a suspicion later confirmed by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh.

### **No Slam Dunk**

And, we learned last year from The Atlantic’s long interview with Obama about his foreign policies that he was told by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper that there was no “slam dunk” evidence implicating the Syrian government in the sarin attack.

However, instead of informing the American people about these doubts, Secretary Kerry and President Obama insisted that there were no doubts. In other words, they lied – and those lies helped justify continued U.S. arms shipments to “moderate” rebels, who were largely under the command of Al Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate which ultimately got possession of many of those sophisticated weapons.

To this day, the false sarin certainty remains part of Official Washington’s conventional wisdom with CNN’s Jake Tapper citing the “Assad gassed his own people” claim on Wednesday in challenging Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, about her decision to meet with the Syrian president during a recent fact-finding trip to the war-ravaged country.

Similarly, the Obama administration pushed propaganda themes to justify another “regime change” project in Ukraine, on Russia’s border. Obama’s State Department fed dubious and false claims to credulous mainstream reporters, including accusations that elected President Viktor Yanukovich was responsible for the bloodshed that preceded the putsch that ousted him on Feb. 22, 2014.

Obama and his team also concealed evidence about who was behind the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. Though I was told that some U.S. intelligence analysts had determined that a rogue element of the Ukrainian military had fired the fateful missile, Obama withheld the intelligence community’s findings while the guilt was pinned on Russia.

Early last year when the father of the one U.S. citizen killed among the 298 dead on the flight was begging the U.S. government to open its files, a well-placed intelligence source told me that the request was given serious

consideration but was rejected because the truth would “destroy the narrative,” which had made Russian President Vladimir Putin the villain and thus was a key factor in justifying the New Cold War.

By withholding the U.S. intelligence evidence, Obama gave the MH-17 murderers more than two years to get away and cover their tracks – and allowed the disreputable Ukrainian intelligence service, the SBU, to take control of the supposedly “Dutch-led” investigation and thus steer the conclusions in support of the anti-Russian propaganda narrative. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Troubling Gaps in the New MH-17 Report”](#) and [“The Official and Implausible MH-17 Scenario.”](#)]

### **Double Standards**

Obama’s secretive approach toward those pivotal events was in marked contrast to his eagerness to have his intelligence agencies brief reporters [on allegations that Putin had helped Trump’s campaign and had blackmailed him over evidence of supposedly salacious behavior with Moscow prostitutes.](#)

Even though Obama’s intelligence officials [presented no evidence](#) to support those accusations, the charges undermined Trump’s legitimacy as many Democrats echoed Hillary Clinton in calling Trump Putin’s “puppet.”

The contrast between Obama’s eagerness to release secret allegations to disparage Trump and Obama’s refusal to give the public substantive information for judging issues of war or peace reflects the elitism that came to infect Obama’s administration.

Information – or disinformation – was valued for guiding the American people in desired directions. Facts didn’t have an intrinsic value as a way to empower the public to understand the world and to make informed judgments. Instead, “information war” was viewed as a means to weaken and defeat “enemies,” part of “smart power.”

To cite another children’s fable, Obama’s administration went down the rabbit hole in its foreign policy where reality and logic no longer prevailed. But pretty much the entire Washington establishment was there, too, Republicans, Democrats and the mainstream media, so there was a self-reinforcing quality to the madness.

President Trump clearly doesn’t have the mainstream media on his side nor much of the establishment, so he cannot expect the kind of nodding acquiescence that greeted false claims by George W. Bush and Barack Obama – or, for that matter, presidents dating back generations.

But Trump does not help himself by destroying his own credibility by making easily debunked claims about crowd sizes and voter fraud, what one of his aides called “alternative facts.”

Still, Trump could reverse his image as a self-absorbed con man by standing up for real government transparency and showing genuine trust in the American people. He could start by declassifying evidence on the Syrian sarin case, the Ukrainian coup, the MH-17 shoot-down and other turning-point moments in recent history. He could show bipartisanship, too, by revealing some historic secrets about Republican administrations as they also sought to manipulate the American people.

Trump could arm Americans with real facts and show genuine respect to the citizens as the nation’s true sovereigns, the “We the People” of the U.S. Constitution’s opening words, not lambs for herding to the next war-of-choice slaughterhouse.

If he could stop gazing into that mirror, Trump could transform himself from being just one more villain feeding fantasies to the American people into a real-world hero by telling important truths. But he has gotten off to a very rocky start by telling some very petty lies.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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