



Episode 1: Whirlwind

Producer:

Previously on The Asset:

Max Bergmann:

This is the story of how a Russian asset became President of the United States.

Asha Rangappa:

He is incredibly easy to manipulate.

John Sipher:

He grew up very comfortable working outside the system, very comfortable working with mafia kind of people.

Asha Rangappa:

A lay person can see that it's very easy to get him to behave in very predictable ways.

John Sipher:

Clearly a zipper problem over the years.

Asha Rangappa:

You know, I don't think you would actually need to be like, "Donald, you are now a spy for Russia," to be able to use him and use those vulnerabilities that he has, exploit them.

David Corn:

Trump helped an attack against the country and it's fair to say that's an act of betrayal.

Max Bergmann:

January 6, 2017: everything changed.

Newscast:

Breaking news tonight, intelligence sources say the FBI agrees with the CIA, that the Russians interfered in the election in part to help Donald Trump win.

[Barack Obama:](#)

Based on uniform intelligence assessments, the Russians were responsible for hacking the DNC.

[Newscast:](#)

This week, a nightmare for American democracy, the nation's intelligence agencies, the White House,



claiming the worst, that Russia not only hacked campaign 2016 but tried to influence the outcome of the election and that the hacks were directed from the heart of the Kremlin, the office of President Vladimir Putin himself.

Max Bergmann:

We found out there were two campaigns to elect Donald Trump: a campaign run out of Trump Tower, the Trump campaign; and a campaign right out of the Kremlin, the Russian campaign. I'm Max Bergmann and this is The Asset.

Max Bergmann:

The Russia scandal became topic number one in the first six months of 2017. In a whirlwind of bombshell stories and breaking developments, Trump's Russia ties went from a fringe topic ignored by the national media to a national media obsession.

[Donald Trump:](#)

As far as hacking, I think it was Russia.

Newscast:

President Trump himself acknowledged that he is under investigation for possible obstruction of justice.

Newscast:

It was a dramatic development late night last night after what can only be described as an afternoon and evening of confusion at the White House over the fate of General Michael Flynn ...

Newscast:

...reporting is raising new questions about whether more could've been done to prevent Russian meddling in the 2016 election and it comes as the Russia probes by the Special Counsel and by lawmakers on Capitol Hill are, yet again, inching closer to the president ...

Newscast:

US intelligence and law enforcement agencies reportedly are investigating whether Russia launched a covert operation to disrupt the 2016 election.

Newscast:

We're about to find out if the new president of our country is going to do what Russia wants.

Newscast:

Attorney General Jeff Sessions is under new pressure to withdraw from an investigation into Russian interference with the 2016 election.



Max Bergmann:

During the 2016 election, Trump's laudatory comments about Russia did not go unnoticed. Frankly, it was weird. For 70 years, the Republican party had defined itself by being hawkish on Russia. Here's presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012.

[Mitt Romney:](#)

This is without question our number one geopolitical foe. They fight every, uh, cause for the world's worst actors.

Max Bergmann:

Yet here was Trump praising Putin.

[Donald Trump:](#)

As far as Putin is concerned, I think Putin has been a very strong leader for Russia. He's been a lot stronger than our leader, that I can tell you.

Max Bergmann:

Trump was no traditional Republican candidate. He had little foreign policy interest, and he was changing his stance on all sorts of issues to align with the standard Republican positions. He flip-flopped on health care.

[Newscast:](#)

Donald Trump: Everybody's got to be covered. This is an un-Republican thing for me to say because a lot of times the say, no, no, the lower 25% they can't afford private but—

Newscaster: Universal health care?

Donald Trump: I am going to take care of everybody. I don't care if it costs me votes or not.

[Donald Trump:](#)

That begins with immediately repealing and replacing the disaster known as Obamacare.

Max Bergmann:

And he flip-flopped on the minimum wage.

[Newscast:](#)

Trump: I would raise it somewhat. You need to help people and I know it's not very Republican. Just say...

Interviewer: So do not raise the minimum wage.

Trump: I would not raise the minimum.

Max Bergmann:



He even flip-flopped on abortion.

[Newscast:](#)

Donald Trump: I'm very pro-choice.

Interviewer: Do you believe in punishment for abortion? Yes or no? Is it principal?

Trump: The answer is that there has to be some form of punishment.

Interviewer: For the woman?

Trump: Yeah, there has to be some form.

Max Bergmann:

But why? Why would Trump stay so committed to praising Putin and building a relationship with Russia? In a presidential debate, Hillary Clinton had her theory.

[Debate:](#)

Clinton: ...rather have a puppet as president.

Trump: No puppet, no puppet.

Max Bergmann:

A few months before that, and right before the Democratic convention, emails stolen from the DNC were released by WikiLeaks. Here is Clinton Campaign Chairman Robby Mook speaking with CNN, Jake Tapper from the convention:

[Robby Mook:](#)

What's disturbing to us is that we, uh, experts are telling us that Russian state actors broke into the DNC, stole these emails, and, uh, other experts are now saying that they are, the Russians are, releasing these emails for the purpose of actually helping Donald Trump.

Max Bergmann:

And in the very next segment, CNN turned to Donald Trump Jr., acting as a Trump campaign surrogate.

[Donald Trump Jr.:](#)

I mean, they'll say anything to be able to win this.

Max Bergmann:

At that time no one knew that a month earlier Donald Trump Jr. was meeting with representatives of the Russian government to get dirt on Hillary Clinton. But, the idea that Russia, our longtime foe, actually interfered in our election, manipulated the voting public, and sought to put their preferred candidate in the White House, was a pill just too big for the media to swallow. It seemed too fantastical, too much like a conspiracy theory. The press shrugged—just another Trump quirk. But then, on January



6, 2017 the US intelligence community dropped a bomb.

Newscast:

In another major story tonight, US intelligence has concluded that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his military to help Donald Trump win the election. Today, the Director of National Intelligence took the unusual step of releasing an unclassified version of an investigation that details computer hacking, propaganda, and fake news articles. President-elect Trump was briefed on the classified report today, but he concluded that the hacking of sensitive Democratic Party files had no effect on the election.

Max Bergmann:

Here is Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, just days later testifying before Congress.

James Clapper:

We have high confidence that President Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. The goals of this campaign were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. Putin and the Russian government also developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump. Russia aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.

Max Bergmann:

That's when we learned there were two campaigns to elect Donald Trump: a campaign run out of Trump tower, the Trump campaign; and a campaign run out of the Kremlin, the Russian campaign. What was left out of the report from our intelligence services was whether these two campaigns coordinated, conspired, or colluded. And all of the subsequent reporting, all the investigations over the last two years have been about answering that question.

-Break-

Max Bergmann: The Moscow Project is an initiative of the Center for American Progress Action Fund dedicated to analyzing the facts behind Trump's connections with Russia. Our work at The Moscow Project is made possible through the generous support of people like you. If you would like to support our work and this podcast, please go to www.themoscowproject.org and click on the donate tab. That's themoscowproject.org. Thank you.

-Break-

Max Bergmann:

It was five days after the intel report was released, on January 11. We were a little more than a week from Trump being inaugurated as the 45th president when another huge bombshell exploded. An



anonymous dossier was published by *BuzzFeed*. This intelligence report, just 35 pages long, has taken on a life of its own in the Trump-Russia story. And I remember very clearly when I first read the dossier. I was coming out of the SCIF, a secure compartment where you read classified intelligence. I had just read the US Intelligence Committee report on Russian interference and I was shaken and I left the SCIF and I grabbed both my phones, my government phone and my personal phone, and I noticed on my personal phone it was blowing up. There was some dossier that had leaked. It was anonymous. I immediately open it up and started scrolling through it as I walked through the halls in Foggy Bottom. My initial reaction was: this was a US government intelligence document. And the reason why, is because it looked in read exactly like the intelligence documents that I would read every morning. Human intelligence sources, and the way it was compiled, and the way it was structured, all read like an official government document. But the thing about human intelligence, even something as well sourced as this dossier appeared, is you have to be skeptical. We soon found out the dossier came from Christopher Steele, a retired British intelligence officer and an expert in Russian espionage. I asked John Sipher, the former Deputy Bureau Chief of the CIA in Moscow, for his assessment of the dossier.

John Sipher:

The way human intelligence works is the case officer, which we call ourselves, we're meeting these people and sources around us and my job is to develop a source, make it clear what that person's access is and what motivates them, you know, where they know a lot and where they might speculate. And then my job is to accurately write up what that source tells me, with an assessment of that source. What Christopher Steele did it, and it looked like just like the British intelligence reports that I saw, a human report, is was reporting information from sources he had and was trying to accurately say what those sources told him. In an intelligence organization, that fits into the process, and then it's all sort of put together and looked at before a final intelligence finished report comes out that puts it all together and analyzes it. So, Steele's reporting is raw source reporting. Some of those sources might be better than others. Some of them he might trust less than others. We don't know because he didn't tell us more about the sources. From that raw reporting, which would normally be followed up on and other information will be put together on it, it provided a narrative that's strikingly accurate several years later. The narrative from the Trump campaign was, "Are you kidding me? We have no contact whatsoever with any Russians. This is fake news. Nothing." What Mr. Steele was telling us by June 2016 was, he was giving us all the names of people who now are really known to us, you know, Carter Page, Michael Cohen, Manafort. He told us that, you know, they had the Clinton emails and they had information they were trying to use, that they had been looking at Donald Trump, you know, and some of his activities over these years. So, a lot of that stuff now sort of fits into what we've seen from all the rest of the material we have. And it's a lot more accurate than what was the Trump narrative.

Max Bergmann:

We now know the dossier was just one of many pieces of evidence that the FBI had on hand. The dossier wasn't what launched the FBI investigation, but it was what alerted the public to Trump's ties to Russia. Steele's credibility, the origins of the dossier, and who paid for his work all became key topics as people



sought to assess the dossier's shocking details. Trump's backers say the dossier was a Democratic hit job. Some skeptics suggest the Russians might have found out about Steele and fed him misinformation. And others, including many intelligence analysts, view it as a credible human intelligence document.

John Sipher:

The Steele information is essentially raw data points that professional investigators can then check. That's the thing was with Steele. You know, there's so much focus on him, the Republicans are attacking him and others are, where that information came, who paid for it. It's sort of irrelevant. If the information is true, then it's true. If it's not, they're not going to waste their time with it.

Max Bergmann:

The dossier created a major inflection point. The investigation was no longer just about what Russia did. Now we needed to know: What did Donald Trump do? There was a huge amount of attention paid to the part of the dossier that discussed the infamous tape of Trump's behavior with prostitutes in a Moscow hotel. The president-elect even addressed it in a press conference.

[Donald Trump:](#)

Does anyone really believe that story? I'm also very much of a germaphobe, by the way.

Max Bergmann:

The most shocking details weren't about a tape. They were about Trump's coordination with Russia. The most jaw-dropping allegation in the dossier has also been the most ignored. The dossier cites four different sources claiming that Trump's relationship with Russian intelligence began between 2008 and 2011, years before he ran for president.

[Dossier excerpt:](#)

Source close to Trump campaign confirms regular exchange with Kremlin has existed for at least eight years, including intelligence fed back to Russia on oligarchs' activities in US.

Max Bergmann:

And then later on in the dossier, it says that a senior Russian foreign-ministry figure, and a former top-level Russian intelligence officer that was still active inside the Kremlin, said perhaps the most damning phrase in the entire dossier.

[Dossier excerpt:](#)

The Russian authorities had been cultivating and supporting US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump for at least five years.

Max Bergmann:



The day after the dossier was released, we learned on January 12 that Michael Flynn, Trump's designated national security advisor, had multiple phone calls with the Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak right after the Obama administration had announced new sanctions against Russia in late December. Meanwhile, those of us in the State Department were scratching our heads. We had been bracing for Putin's response to the sanctions. We were waiting for evictions of our diplomats in Russia and the closing down of our diplomatic facilities. We expected Putin to respond, because he always responds. It is what Putin does. Yet, he didn't, and it was baffling.

Newscast:

We just got a tweet from Donald Trump, his first public response since the sanctions that were issued by the United States against Russia. And it's really a breathtaking tweet. Here you have Donald Trump saying, "Great move on delay by Vladimir Putin"—that is to say Putin deciding not to retaliate. "I always knew he was very smart."

Max Bergmann:

This was still a major question as I left government and Donald Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States.

[Donald Trump:](#)

Together we will make America great again. Thank you, God bless you and God bless America.

Max Bergmann:

Had the Trump transition team promised the Russians something? Then we learned that Flynn had discussed sanctions, and a few days later he is out.

Newscast:

General Michael Flynn suddenly resigned late last night. This follows questions about his conversations with Russian officials during the presidential transition.

General Flynn admitted he didn't tell Vice President Mike Pence and other officials everything about those discussions. He is the shortest-serving national security advisor now in modern history.

Max Bergmann:

The Russia scandal had just taken down the national security adviser. These revelations changed everything. Major media organizations, who had not devoted much energy to what seemed like an implausible story were now setting up massive investigative reporting teams to dig, and that's when we set up The Moscow Project to help connect the dots. As folks started digging, stories in breaking news came fast and furious. On the evening of March 1, dueling stories from *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* sent TV networks into a spasm.

Newscast:



The New York Times reporting that as the Obama administration learn more about these possible contacts between Russia and close associates of Donald Trump during the campaign, the White House tried to spread the information it was gathering to as many government agencies as possible, in part to prevent the incoming Trump administration from finding, covering up, or destroying the evidence.

Max Bergmann:

The story included a shocking detail. British and Dutch intelligence provided information on meetings in Europe between Trump associates and Russian officials working for Vladimir Putin. A bit later, *The Guardian* would elaborate on this story saying that UK and European intelligence agencies were the first to pick up on these meetings and contacts. Not only that, but a senior UK intelligence official flew to Washington in the midst of the election specifically to brief his US intelligence counterparts. This was not normal. The intelligence that he had was so sensitive, so volatile, it couldn't just be passed through normal channels. It had to be delivered face to face. Next, *The Washington Post* reported that Jeff Sessions met twice with the Russian ambassador during the campaign.

Newscast:

The Washington Post is out with a headline that reads "Sessions," the Attorney General, "spoke twice with Russian ambassador during Trump's presidential campaign."

Max Bergmann:

Remember, at his confirmation hearing Sessions said he never met with Russian officials during the election.

[Jeff Sessions:](#)

Let me state this clearly, colleagues: I have never met with or had any conversation with any Russians or any foreign officials concerning any type of interference with any campaign or election in the United States. Further, I have no knowledge of any such conversations by anyone connected to the Trump campaign.

Max Bergmann:

Democrats were furious. Even Republicans called on Jeff Sessions to recuse himself. Here's then-Republican congressman Jason Chaffetz.

Jason Chaffetz:

I do think he needs to clarify and I do think he should recuse himself. Absolutely.

Max Bergmann:

The next day Sessions recuses himself.

[Jeff Sessions:](#)



My staff recommended recusing. They said that since I had involvement with the campaign, I should not be involved in any campaign investigation. I have studied the rules and considered their comments and evaluations. I believe those recommendations are right and just.

Max Bergmann:

There are calls in Congress for an investigation. Democrats are worried that information will be destroyed, that Trump won't be investigated. Republicans in Congress are decrying all the leaks. And let's be clear, there were a lot of leaks. There are also indications that the FBI is investigating Trump's Russia ties, but no one seems certain. Republicans in Congress finally yield to pressure and agree to hold an investigation, but instead of establishing an independent commission as John McCain and others called for, they decide to place the investigations in the secretive intelligence committees, where information is routinely withheld from the public. But for the first hearing on March 20, the Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Devin Nunes, makes it public. The witness: FBI Director James Comey. It was his first public testimony since the election, and Democrats were pissed. Just eleven days before the 2016 election, Comey had sent a letter to Congress seeming to reopen the Clinton email investigation, causing a huge uproar and possibly, even likely, swinging the election. As all the Russia news was swirling, Democrats kept asking, "Why aren't they investigating Trump?" The FBI had leaked endlessly about Clinton and Comey had even held a press conference about the email investigation, yet Comey and the FBI had not said a word about Trump. And then, in his opening statement, he did.

[James Comey:](#)

As you know, our practice is not to confirm the existence of ongoing investigations, especially those investigations that involve classified matters. But in unusual circumstances where it is in the public interest, it may be appropriate to do so, as Justice Department policies recognize. This is one of those circumstances. I have been authorized by the Department of Justice to confirm that the FBI, as part of our counterintelligence mission, is investigating the Russian government's efforts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. And that includes investigating the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian government, and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia's efforts.

Max Bergmann:

The FBI was investigating collusion. Wow. Suddenly, Trump's Russia ties could no longer be dismissed as some crazy liberal internet fever dream. James Comey's FBI was investigating. Comey, the guy who in liberal minds threw the election for Trump, was leading the charge. This was real. This was happening, and Trump panicked big time.

-Break-

Max Bergmann:



Trump had been attacking the Russia claims from the outset. He said his wires were tapped, there was a deep-state conspiracy against him, and Obama administration officials had spied on the Trump transition team. So, the night after the James Comey hearing, there's Devin Nunes riding in an Uber with a staffer. He gets a message on his phone and immediately he jumps out of the Uber. His staffer has no idea where he's going yet. Yet, the next morning, Devin Nunes, bright and early meets with the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, and then he convenes a press conference. And at that press conference, Devin Nunes says a whistleblower has come forward with damaging information about the Obama administration, saying that they effectively spied on the Trump transition team. Devin Nunes then says he needs to go to the White House to inform them of this whistleblower's information. He then goes to the White House, has a meeting in the White House, and then after that meeting, Devin Nunes holds another press conference, this time on the White House grounds.

[Devin Nunes:](#)

Well, I can tell you this, that uh, we've been asking for people to come forward, uh, and it was, and they came through the proper channels. They have the proper clearances and I'm just going to leave it at that.

Max Bergmann:

So who was the whistleblower? Well, it turned out when Devin Nunes got out of the Uber, he went to the White House. The White House was the whistleblower. He got his information from the White House. So, when he went up to the White House to tell them about the information that they had given him, it was all a stunt. It was all to distract from the Russia investigation. The next day, Sean Spicer has to go to the microphone.

Newscast:

Sean Spicer: It's actually something we'd briefed the President on but I don't know why he would come to brief the President on something that we gave them.

Reporter: That's why it was confusing to many of us.

Sean Spicer: Right. I don't know that that makes sense. I did not sit in on that briefing. I'm not, it just doesn't, so I don't know why he would travel, brief the Speaker, and then come down here to brief us on something that we would have briefed him on. It doesn't really ...

Max Bergmann:

The whole charade blows up in Nunes' face. It prompts a House Ethics Committee investigation and he's forced to actually step aside from the Russia investigation temporarily. But Nunes had set the tone. The intelligence committee was known as the most bipartisan committee on Capitol Hill, and Nunes had just plunged them into a partisan war. This was not going to be a bipartisan investigation. It was going to be a knife fight. But this stunt failed, and the stories keep coming. Secret meetings in Trump Tower with Russian ambassador during the transition where Jared Kushner proposes using the secret communications channels in the Russian embassy. *The Washington Post* reveals that there was a secret meeting in the Seychelles with Erik Prince, who was an emissary for the Trump transition and brother of



Betsy DeVos, the woman who would later become Education Secretary. Erik Prince meets with Kirill Dmitriev, the head of the Russian sovereign wealth fund and a man who is closely tied with Vladimir Putin. And on May 8, Sally Yates, the Deputy Attorney General at the start of the Trump administration says that Michael Flynn was compromised at a Senate hearing.

[Sally Yates:](#)

To state the obvious, you don't want your national security advisor compromised with the Russians.

Max Bergmann:

The pressure is building. And then just like that, on Tuesday, May 9, Trump fires Comey. The media is stunned.

Newscast:

On the future of the FBI director. What have you learned?

Newscast:

The President of the United States has terminated the director of the FBI, James Comey.

Newscast:

The President has fired James Comey, the FBI director.

Newscast:

Historic shake-up in Washington echoing across the nation. President Trump firing FBI Director James Comey, citing his mishandling of the investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails.

Newscast:

The president today fired the man in charge of the investigation into the Trump campaign.

Newscast:

I just spoke to a senior official a short time ago who said they had no idea this was happening.

Newscast:

Surprise move this evening, President Trump fired the director of the FBI...

Max Bergmann:

The story from the White House was ludicrous. They were claiming that James Comey was fired for unfairly treating Hillary Clinton during the email investigation. Vice President Pence even goes out and tells the press that's the reason. They hold up a memo from the Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, whose first act in office was to write a memo saying that James Comey had poorly handled the email investigation, but Trump played chants of "Lock her up" during the campaign.



Campaign rally:

"Lock her up, lock her up, lock her up."

Max Bergmann:

And now he thinks that she was treated unfairly by the FBI? No one is buying it. Then, in an interview with Lester Holt of NBC, Trump drops the charade.

[Donald Trump:](#)

Oh, I was going to fire regardless of recommendation. He made a recommendation. He's highly respected, very good guy, very smart guy. The Democrats like him, the Republicans like him. He made a recommendation, but regardless of recommendation, I was going to fire Comey.

Max Bergmann:

Trump fired the FBI director for investigating him. He admitted to obstruction of justice on national television. Now, there have been a lot of insane weeks in the Trump administration, but this May week takes the cake. The day after Comey was fired, it just so happens the Russians are in town. Trump is meeting with the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, and Ambassador Kislyak in the Oval Office. During this meeting, Trump reportedly blows the identity of a top-secret Israeli agent embedded in Syria and brags about the firing of "nutjob Comey," which according to a White House readout that leaks, says the firing will take off "great pressure from the Russia investigation." He tells this to the Russian Ambassador and the Russian Foreign Minister in the Oval Office. In fact, we saw photos of these figures because the Russian media released them, not the White House.

Newscast:

It's about the controversial Oval Office meeting back in May between Donald Trump, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and then-Russian Ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak. A meeting that took place the day after former FBI director James Comey was fired. A meeting from which American journalists were barred while members of the Russian press corps were allowed in.

Max Bergmann:

Washington is in shock. Talk of obstruction of justice and murmurs of impeachment are growing. All eyes are on the Deputy Attorney General, Rod Rosenstein. What would he do? Suspicion abounded. Rosenstein is a Republican, he was appointed by Trump, and his first major act in office was providing a rationale for Trump to fire the FBI director who was investigating the President. Would Rosenstein kill the investigation, or would he appoint a special counsel as a bipartisan group of leaders was calling for? As Washington was spinning, no one had any idea how crazy things actually were in the Justice Department. According to reports that Rosenstein contests, he discussed wearing a wire and secretly taping conversations with the President. He speculated on trying to get other cabinet officials to invoke the 25th Amendment, which allows for the removal of the president if he's incapacitated. The firing of



Comey also appeared to be the last straw for the FBI. For months Trump insisted that his campaign might be under investigation, but he personally was definitely not. But now, he was. We now know that this is when the FBI opens a counterintelligence investigation into the president. They were now investigating Trump himself to determine whether Donald Trump, the President of the United States, was a Russian asset. And then Rosenstein made his decision.

Newscast:

After serving as the Deputy Attorney General for 22 days, the Deputy Rod Rosenstein today took himself out of overseeing the Russia investigation, turning that over to Robert Mueller. He is the former FBI director who served twelve years in that job. He was actually held over two extra years before James Comey became the FBI director. He will have the full authority to investigate that any US attorney would, including the power to file criminal charges.

Max Bergmann:

Mueller's appointment attested to the seriousness of this investigation. Trump's own Deputy Attorney General, who had just been confirmed, looked at the facts and decided to appoint not some no-name Justice Department official, but the former FBI director. It is met with near universal approval, not just from Democrats but from Republicans as well. In the White House, Mueller's appointment is met with horror. Trump comments, "This is the end of my presidency. I'm [explicit content]." The whirlwind of stories and revelations didn't stop after the appointment of Mueller. But the dizzying first five months of 2017 leading to Mueller's appointment was critical in shaping our understanding of what was to follow. Many of the big Russia revelations came during that period, as current and former officials panicked that Trump was somehow going to quash evidence or kill the investigation, and began sounding the alarm by going public. But as Mueller took over, the leaking subsided. Investigative-reporting teams dug deep reporting every drip and every detail of information. But over time, the daily deluge of stories revealing different details, different shady Russian figures, made the story of what happened, of Trump's relationship with Russia, seem even more confusing and complex. It was almost like reading a novel with the pages out of order. In this podcast, we're going to put the pages back in order, and this means starting just as the FBI would if it were conducting a counterintelligence investigation. You have to...

[Movie Clip: All the President's Men:](#)

"Follow the money"

Producer:

The Asset is a production of the Center for American Progress Action Fund, Protect the Investigation, and District Productive. Paul "Woody" Woodhull, Max Bergmann, and Andrea Purse, Executive Producers, and Peter Ogburn, Senior Producer. The Asset is written by Max Bergmann and the good people at The Moscow Project, Jeremy Venook, Talia Dessel, and Siena Cicarelli, and the team at Protect the Investigation and Paul "Woody" Woodhull and his cohort at District Productive. To learn more about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, go to themoscowproject.org and



protecttheinvestigation.org. Please subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast app and please leave a rating and review. Thank you.

[Donald Trump:](#)

President Putin, he just said it's not Russia. I will say this, I don't see any reason why it would be.

Max Bergmann:

Protect the Investigation is a nonpartisan initiative to educate the American people about the importance of the special counsel investigation and its findings. You too can join Protect the Investigation in demanding that the Justice Department released the full report of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. Go to www.protecttheinvestigation.org to sign up now.