## Rod Rodriguez (00:00):

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#### Rod Rodriguez (00:34):

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#### Rod Rodriguez (01:17):

Just a quick warning. This episode contains themes of violence against children. Listener discretion is advised. On June 15th, 2018. Matthew Phillip Wright, a 30 year old Marine veteran drove an armored truck onto the middle of the Michael Callahan, Pat Tillman Memorial bridge near the Hoover dam there. He blocked traffic and stood outside of the vehicle, holding up a sign that read "release the OIG report." When the authorities showed up, wright, went back into his armor truck and engaged in a 90 minute standoff from inside the armor truck, right? Posted several videos to social media.

#### Matthew Wright (<u>01:54</u>):

We, the people demand full disclosure of the OIG report. No more lies. We want the truth. We deserve the truth.

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>02:04</u>):

Witnesses claimed that Wright was pointing a gun through portholes on the side of the truck. The ordeal came to a head when he tried to flee the scene and the tires of the armor truck were punctured by road spikes. The vehicle came to a stop a few miles Southeast of the bridge and right, was taken into custody. What would compel this Marine veteran to make such a public and dangerous stance? What is the OIG report? What does all of this have to do with Q? Where we go one, we go all, and in this episode, we're going to explore the world of QAnon and what that might have to do with our veterans and our armed forces. I'm rod Rodriguez. This is military matters.

#### Rod Rodriguez (02:48):

Some of you listening may not have heard about QAnon by name, but you're probably familiar with some of the concepts behind it because some of those ideas have made it into major headlines, child pedophilia rings, pizzagate, and the existence of a deep state are terms that have made their way into the mainstream. Before we jump into the deep and murky waters, that is QAnon, we need to understand a little bit about where it came from and exactly what it is. If you want any more expanded explanation of QAnon's history. I highly recommend you check out the podcast. QAnon anonymous

episode, one introduction to QAnon. In fact, one of the hosts of that podcast, Travis View answered some of my questions that I had about QAnon. And we'll hear from him later in this episode. So to understand QAnon, we have to go back to October 17th, 2017 on the infamous 4chan image board. 4chan is another term you've probably heard because of its connection, not only to QAnon, but to investigations and arrests connected to child pornography, threats of violence and internet attacks.

# Rod Rodriguez (03:50):

So 4chan is where this all kind of starts with an anonymous post by user calling himself Q in a thread called calm before the storm, where Q wrote quote, Hillary Clinton will be arrested between 7:45 AM and 8:30 AM Eastern standard time on Monday, the morning on August 30th, 2017. And after this Q begins to post sporadically in these posts, Q claims to be a U S intelligence official with special government access and knowledge. Now, this is where things get a bit complicated. You see, there's no way really to identify who Q is. The postings are anonymous, is Q one person, several people, a hoax? There's very little to go on. On top of it. Q's postings are often cryptic leaving the reader to develop their own conclusions, which has led to a lot of different ideas about what Q's message really is.

# Travis View (<u>04:45</u>):

We're like one sort of organization. Uh, it seems to be, uh, you know, the combination of like maybe a, uh, some sort of a, some sort of clever manipulative people on these chan sites who assume the idea, the, of Q, and also it's in part a real genuine grassroots kind of movement.

# Rod Rodriguez (<u>05:04</u>):

That's Travis view, cohost of QAnon Anonymous and a Washington post contributor. So the general Q Anon theory alleges that there exists a conspiracy, a cabal of Satan worshiping pedophiles, operating a child sex trafficking operation at the highest levels of the entertainment industry and within our own government. And that the president specifically president Trump is at war with this cabal. And that soon there will be a day of reckoning also known as the Q Anon circles as the coming storm.

# Travis View (05:34):

The rest of it is sort of like is sort of the content of the general beliefs are created by the QAnon followers themselves. Uh, we sometimes call QAnon as like a big tent conspiracy theory in the sense that it sort of accepts people with a broad variety of different conspiratorial beliefs. So if you believe in something, you know, as, uh, something like a spy gate for example of course, you'll Find a home in the QAnon community

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>05:58</u>):

spy gate being the conspiracy theory. First post back in 2018 that alleges the Obama administration had placed a spy in the president's 2016 campaign.

#### Travis View (<u>06:09</u>):

But also if you believe something as deranged as the idea that JFK jr didn't actually die in a plane crash in 1999 is still alive to this day. And he's going to replace a vice president. Pence as Trump's running mate for the upcoming election, that you can find a home in QAnon, too.

Rod Rodriguez (<u>06:26</u>):

that last part about JFK jr. Replacing vice president Pence real theory that some QAnoners actually believe. Enough so that rolling stone actually published an article about this in July of last year. Let's go back to the Michael Callahan, Pat Tillman Memorial bridge near the Hoover dam. William Wright is in a standoff with police and he's holding a sign saying release the OIG report. The report right is referring to is an office of inspector general report and to the actions of FBI director James Comey. Now at the time of the standoff that OIG report had already been released. But the consensus among QAnoners was that there was another report. One that would support many of the Q Anon tenets I'm going in place deep state within our government very quickly. A deep state is the notion that a secret group of people within our government are really running the entire thing, not our elected officials.

### Rod Rodriguez (06:49):

The report Wright is referring to is an office of inspector general report and to the actions of FBI director James Comey. Now at the time of the standoff that OIG report had already been released. But the consensus among QAnoners was that there was another report. One that would support many of the Q Anon tenets I'm going in place deep state within our government very quickly. A deep state is the notion that a secret group of people within our government are really running the entire thing, not our elected officials. Now we could chalk this one violent act up to mental health issues, or maybe PTSD either way an isolated incident, but according to a paper titled the Q Anon conspiracy theory, a security threat in the making published by the combating terrorism center or the CTC earlier this year, the problem of QAnon violence might just be beginning the authors of this paper claim that QAnon represents a militant and antiestablishment ideology rooted in an apocalyptic desire to destroy the existing corrupt world to usher in a promised golden age end quote, the paper goes on to outline five QAnon-related criminal cases, including the well known comet pizza ping pong shooting incident involving Edgar Welch to the lesser known, but highly bizarre murder of a senior Gambino crime family member at the hands of Anthony Camillo, who was admittedly obsessed with QAnon beliefs to the point that he wrote a giant Q on his hand and was showing it off during his first court appearance, the authors of the CTC paper use those recent criminal cases to show how Q Anon has contributed to the radicalization of ideologically motivated violent extremists right here in the US

# Rod Rodriguez (08:33):

At a house Homeland security hearing on national security threats, The director of the FBI, Christopher Wray was asked by representative Sheila Jackson Lee, about how the Bureau addresses Q Anon as it relates to violent acts. We view

#### Christopher Wray (<u>08:43</u>):

Q Anon, uh, as, as essentially less of a, an organization and more of a, um, uh, sort of a complex set of conspiracy theories. Um, and certainly we have had cases where that properly predicated cases involving violence, uh, where people have been motivated by some of those conspiracy theories. Uh, but as you said, you know, we don't investigate the, the ideology or the conspiracy theory itself.

#### Rod Rodriguez (09:13):

So we have this, amorphous ideology, a big tent conspiracy as Travis put it where a mystery image, board poster writes cryptic messages, folks create their own ideas and conspiracy theories from those posts. And those theories have inspired some people to take violent action against what they think is a deep state cover fueled by Satanism and pedophilia. You think that with such a controversial angle, public figures, would shy away from this belief system, in fact, quite the opposite

### Michael Flynn (09:44):

... for the purpose of evasion ...

### Rod Rodriguez (09:44):

That's retired, us army, Lieutenant general and former national security advisor, Michael Flynn, leading a small group of people through an oath of office, typically taken by federally elected officials, but he finishes it with something different. That's not in the oath

### Michael Flynn (10:03):

... Where we go one, we go all. God bless America.

# Rod Rodriguez (<u>10:04</u>):

Where we go. One, we go all is a phrase, supposedly inscribed on a bell on one of John F. Kennedy sailboats. I say supposedly because I couldn't find any evidence to support that bell existed on any JFK boats. There is some evidence, and I use that term very loosely considering I'm referring to a Reddit thread and a daily beast article that the bell in question is actually on the former presidential yacht. The honey fits that boat would later be used in several movies, including the 1996, Jeff Bridges, film, white squall in which the bell can be clearly seen. And the phrase where we go, one, we go all, it's a central theme of the film, incidentally in the trailer to the film, which you can look up on YouTube. There's a scene where one of the characters says, quote, I don't want to be what I was when I left - anonymous.

Rod Rodriguez (10:52):

Am I connecting dots that don't exist now, too?

# Travis View (<u>10:55</u>):

I think what, when, when I think a differentiating factor between sort of Q Anon and general worry about the state of freedom in the, in the country is that QAnon followers. They believe that there is a plan it's like, it's like there are threats to our freedom, or there are powerful evil people who are controlling things behind the scenes, but there is a plan that the, that the military is going to execute to rid the world of evil. So we, there's sort of a fatalism there's sort of that confidence and optimism that those problems are going to be taken care of by someone else, someone else, much more powerful and frankly, more competent than myself. Whereas like, again, people who are maybe have, uh, who are more, I guess, more militia minded, they do not believe that there is a plan. They think that they, that the responsibility is on their shoulders. And they think that, you know, uh, some, some, uh, you know, uh, bad, uh, you know, uh, sort of oppressive forces could come to them and, you know, do something, uh, you know, awful if they don't resist it in a, in a very serious way.

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>12:03</u>):

When we return from the break veterans, take a stand against child sex trafficking, but is what they're standing on, stable ground. And then general Flynn might just be the tip of a Q Anon military iceberg. When we return.

#### Rod Rodriguez (12:19):

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#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>12:55</u>):

In my hometown of Tucson, Arizona, Louis Meyer captured the attention of the QAnon social media community by taking a local news channel through a deserted desert encampment, he claimed was the site of a child trafficking ring. He pointed to all manner of dirty and broken camping gear holes in the ground. And makeshift cover explaining how what viewers were watching was part of a bigger pedophilia operation. Authorities would conduct an investigation into these claims and find that there was no evidence to support the makeshift camp was anything but a place where homeless people were congregating and living out of. These facts. Didn't discourage Lewis from forming a group called veterans on patrol. Quick note Lewis himself is not a veteran.

#### Rod Rodriguez (13:39):

Louis would later be arrested for making false reports, and would continue to be arrested for trespassing on a private property. Making allegations that a local cement company was a child trafficking center, and even going so far as to destroy and steal water tanks set up by the organization Humane Borders for cross border migrants, because he claimed they were part of the child trafficking conspiracy. What stood out to me about this story is that a non-veteran would create a group called veterans on patrol. Why wrangle vets into this conspiracy? Well, the answer to that is pretty simple, actually. It goes back to why does an extremist organization want to recruit veterans or service members? Because we bring something to the table that the civilian population usually doesn't: skills and friends. A 2008 intelligence assessment from the FBI titled white supremacist recruitment of military personnel since 9/11 States, quote, extremist leaders seek to recruit members with military experience in order to exploit their discipline, Knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills, as well as in the case of active duty soldiers, their access to weapons and intelligence.

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>14:47</u>):

another value that vets and service members bring to extremist groups is our network. We're pretty tight knit community. And we have a tendency to stay in touch with folks we served with and to talk to peers within our units and our organizations. That's exactly what these groups need to grow. So Lewis claims to have exposed a desert child trafficking camp starts a group called veterans on patrol, gives these vets a sense of purpose direction and motivation for a cause. You'd be hard pressed not to call righteous: the safety of children. Now, regardless of what authorities would find the genie was out of the bottle. Suddenly stories ran through social media circles, not only within the Q Anon communities, but through veteran communities as well. I would know because I, myself am part of several veteran-centric, social media groups, especially on Facebook. I started seeing tons of videos about exploited children, how Hollywood elites were abusing kids and politically motivated messages, implicating the Clintons, George Soros, Jeffrey Epstein, even Tom Hanks and lady Gaga were spotlighted as being part of this global child sex trafficking ring.

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>15:55</u>):

One message in particular that I saw spread through my social media was that of Panda eyes. So the message was always a video or a picture of a child with deep dark bruising around their eyes were told

that those injuries were from violent sexual assaults. And that the term Panda eyes has been popularized by music, artists and lyrics and film. A little bit of digging would reveal not only are those injuries not in line with those types of assault, but that the pictures being circulated were from children in war torn countries, exposed to explosions. This messaging felt targeted toward the veteran community. I didn't see much of it anywhere else. And it makes sense we're a community that loves kids, loves our families. And we don't like sitting on the sidelines while bad things happen. Then I saw this messaging start popping up in other social media circles, such as parenting forums. The New York times even wrote an article about this Panda eyes movement. After a group was organized called mothers of Q Anon, which vowed to bring this global conspiracy to light.

### Travis View (16:56):

I mean, we talk a lot about how, like the Q Anon conception of child trafficking or human trafficking is a totally off base.

Rod Rodriguez (<u>17:04</u>): that's Travis view again,

### Travis View (<u>17:06</u>):

in fact, so off base that the several, uh, uh, human trafficking nonprofits had, they issued the statements, distancing themselves from, uh, Q Anon, uh, conspiracy theories or the Q Anon, uh, community itself.

### Rod Rodriguez (<u>17:19</u>):

Recently Wayfair and online furniture shopping site became the focal point for QAnon child trafficking. Conspiracy. That theory went viral, which resulted in his social media traffic spikes for anti-trafficking groups. But this also caused a lot of problems for those same organizations. The national human trafficking hotline issued a news release saying it had been overwhelmed with false reports. If anything, these types of sensational conspiracy theories were distorting the truth of child trafficking, turning it into some secret cabal of evildoers. When in fact, it's usually far more simple and closer to home. Laurie Cohen, the executive director of ECPATUSA, and anti-trafficking organization said, quote, it's easier to focus on public figures than to think about the reality that trafficking is happening in our midst among people we know to children we know end quote. So we know the value that vets and service members bring to the conspiracy table and that the folks pushing these theories know what buttons to push to make us more apt to digest those theories.

#### Rod Rodriguez (<u>18:26</u>):

But how far is this already gone? Who's already followed the white rabbit. That's another QAnon term.

# Jack Murphy (<u>18:32</u>):

My name is Jack Murphy. I served in the ranger regiment and in special forces for eight years. I got out of the army in 2010 majored in political science at Columbia university. And I've worked as a journalist for about the last eight years. I'm primarily covering military affairs,

Rod Rodriguez (<u>18:51</u>):

Jack Murphy's recent article for connecting vets.com analysis for some military veterans QAnon conspiracies offer comfort and belonging was the inspiration for this episode. Up until I'd read that article. I knew something felt off about some of the messaging I'd been seeing in the veterans social media circles, but I didn't understand what was happening. I didn't know what I was looking at. Jack's been studying the Q Anon phenomenon as it relates to the military community for some time now.

# Rod Rodriguez (19:17):

We've already seen general Flynn take the QAnoon oath, uh, on, on social media. And he's retired now, but it's not just young enlisted guys who are getting into QAnon. There are a for sure, retired colonels and generals involved. And I shutter to think what's going on in the upper echelon of, of some parts of the military and who else is on board with all of this craziness. And yeah, they have responsibility for men and weapons and deployments overseas. And I mean, it, it's a, it's a frightening scenario. I mean, there's all sorts of scenarios. You can start spinning in your imagination and I don't want to go overboard with it. I just wanted to point out that, yeah, this could be a national security threat.

# Rod Rodriguez (20:05):

That scenario might already be playing out. Former Navy seal. Louis Garrick Fernbaugh has been described by Portland police as a person of interest after he was identified and filmed, leaving a protest where pipe bombs were thrown into the crowd, that footage was uploaded to Twitter. And you can clearly see Fernbaugh holding what looks like a helmet with night, vision goggles attached to them.

### Witness (20:27):

Yeah. You want to stop there? You want to stop? Why are you throwing bombs at people throwing pipe bombs and people.

Louis Fernbaugh (<u>20:40</u>): look that,

Witness (<u>20:41</u>):

yeah,

Louis Fernbaugh (<u>20:42</u>): I'm not the guy you want to fuck with.

Witness (<u>20:44</u>):

Okay. Well, why are you throwing bombs with people?

Louis Fernbaugh (20:46):

I don't know what you're talking about.

Witness (<u>20:47</u>): You don't know what I'm talking about,

Louis Fernbaugh (20:48):

# But I'm not that guy you want to fuck with. I'm fucking telling you.

Witness (<u>20:52</u>): good to know.

Louis Fernbaugh (<u>20:53</u>): Yeah.

### Rod Rodriguez (20:54):

In an interview with task and purpose, Fernbaugh confirmed, he was the man in the Twitter video, but maintains that he was not the person throwing pipe bombs. When asked about why he was wearing a helmet and night vision goggles. He explained that he was doing reconnaissance on Antifa as part of his efforts to develop a service to law enforcement. He told task and purpose quote, my education and experience uniquely qualify me to develop strategies to counter this threat, end quote. Fernbaugh has been described in numerous news outlets as a conspiracy theorist with possible ties to white supremacist propaganda. It turns out that there are quite a few former special operations members who are being vocal about their conspiracy beliefs. They're referred to themselves as a force for Q and other special operatives as quote, the teeth of light. Posts like this often mentioned their desire to mete out justice and violence to those who would stand on the other side of this conspiracy. One such former SEAL, Stephen Ralston, whose Instagram is rife full of QAnon rhetoric can be heard in a teaser trailer for one of his Instagram videos saying, quote, if these people aren't brought to justice, there's going to be some fucking street justice doled out, end quote,

#### Jack Murphy (22:03):

Some people aren't gonna like me saying this, but in some ways, you know, special forces and special operations soldiers, we do amazing things. And there are so many amazing ex special forces veterans out there who are doing amazing things, but there is also a group of us that is camped out on Facebook all day, every day, posting conspiracy theories about Hillary, uh, posting fake news from dubious, perhaps Russian alternative news websites, and otherwise just kind of spouting, you know, racist nonsense all day. And I think there's a number of different reasons why this occurs and why some of our guys go down this sort of rabbit hole, if you will. And I alluded to them, you know, in the, in the op ed I wrote, I think that when we leave the military, it creates a lot of internal turbulence in ourselves, um, that we, I mean, and it's well written about, you know, that we have problems transitioning into civilian life and, and the various reasons why, but I think just to go down the line, some of the big things is that, you know, we see the world through the lens of good versus evil.

#### Jack Murphy (23:17):

Um, we don't see the sorts of shades of gray. So we identify as the hero and we see everyone who is not us as the villain. Um, we come out of the military with this sort of like Prussian mindset that we then imprint upon society at large, even though we have now left the military. So this the way this ends up getting spun is, you know, the Democrats are pure evil. Nancy Pelosi is, you know, chairman Mao or actually Obama was chairman Mao, right? Uh, Joe Biden is Joe Stalin. Okay? You don't, you don't like the Democrats don't vote for them. I get it. But it's not a question of one side being these angels protecting the US constitution and the other side are a deep state Satanists.

Rod Rodriguez (24:02):

Unfortunately it's not just our special operations veterans that succumb to these conspiracy mindsets, but also service members. Jack Posobiec was a Navy reserve intelligence officer who made a name for himself pushing the ideas of child sex rings under pizzerias, purposely agitating crowds during protests and making all manners of claims that would later be found to be false and debunked. He did this while working at the office of Naval intelligence, both as a service member and as a civilian. In 2017, his security clearance was suspended, no word on whether it was reinstated or not. What makes Q Anon so insidious is that it can plug into so many other ideologies, white supremacists can plug their racism into just about any facet of Q Anon. And they've done that. Then there's the Boogaloo movement of veterans and civilians wearing Hawaiian shirts and body armor armed with rifles showing up to protests and their distrust of the government only feeds into the idea that the deep state is the real enemy that the alphabet boys, or the FBI DEA and ATF, are all being run by the satanic cabal So it's their duty to oppose them.

# Rod Rodriguez (25:07):

Last year, the FBI Phoenix field office published in intelligence bulletin titled anti government identitybased and fringe political conspiracy theories, very likely motivate some domestic extremists to commit criminal, sometimes violent activity. The paper concludes, quote, although conspiracy theory driven crime and violence is not a new phenomenon. Today's information environment has changed the way conspiracy theories develop, spread and evolve. The advent of the internet and social media has enabled promoters of conspiracy theories to produce and share greater volumes of material via online platforms that larger audiences of consumers can quickly and easily access. Based on the increased volume and reach of the conspiratorial content due to modern communication methods, it is logical to assume that more extremist minded individuals will be exposed to potentially harmful conspiracy theories, except ones that are favorable to their views and possibly carry out criminal or violent actions as a result. The internet has also enabled a crowdsourcing effect, wherein conspiracy theory, followers, themselves shaping given theory by presenting information that supplements expands or localizes its narrative, end quote. The paper goes on to express concern by quote, some researchers who believe a rise of conspiracism fostered in part by the internet may be accompanied by a search for scapegoats. Those believed to be the conspirators allies, henchman or collaborators Jack Murphy:

# Jack Murphy (26:41):

The problem is that the human mind, the American mind has been completely rewired and reengineered by social media that we're now addicted to the dopamine, the adrenaline that comes along with the sort of outrage, uh, of social media and media mainstream media also, um, how do you wean people off of that? How do you get them, you know, detox them off of that and return to a sort of, um, sound thoughtful rationality? Uh, I don't think anyone knows how to do that. And I don't think you can just look at conspiracy theorists. I think you have to look at society as a whole, um, as having a societal wide mental health care issue at this point,

Rod Rodriguez (27:25):

Travis view,

# Travis View (27:26):

what I worry about is that what happens when she went on the file, worse, they stopped trusting the plan because they this, they still believe that this profound, evil is still creeping into the United States. They still think that this cabal is still in control. They still think that all of these high level people are

doing unimaginably evil things to children. They'll still have that belief, but they may lose hope that this sort of these magical Q team is going to come in like the cavalry and the save the day when that happens, I worry that they might think the best thing to do. Isn't take matters into their own hands. And if that happens, they may become more dangerous than they are right now.

# Rod Rodriguez (28:09):

Conspiracy theories like Q Anon are like horoscopes and a choose your own adventure had a baby. You see yourself, your fears, your beliefs reflected back at you. But the best part is that at the center of this blockbuster or Hollywood plot is you, you are an active participant in this global thriller and you can be the hero of the story. You're no longer just a person life happens to know you're now the bearer of a hidden truth. Chosen to stand up to a force of evil. You have been called upon to be part of something bigger than you and who doesn't want to answer that call. I get it. Nothing is ever so simple is it? If there's something we can walk away with from our time in service, our time in uniform, is that nothing is ever black and white. No good versus evil. Just people, people following people, people doing what they think is right at the time and hoping history doesn't judge them too harshly. Can we detox our society from the social media conspiracy? I don't know.

# Rod Rodriguez (29:10):

Are there real life conspiracies that have turned out to be true? There are sure have been, but I would encourage you to think about the message you're receiving from any source, from this source, ask yourself, what is it that you're being asked to believe asked to think asked to do? I can't tell you what value system to filter all that through, but I only hope that we don't become the victims of self fulfilled prophecies of doom because we're goes one. We go all.

#### Rod Rodriguez (29:43):

I want to thank my guests, Jack Murphy and Travis view. You can follow Jack Murphy on Twitter at Jack Murphy RGR. You can also read his work at connecting vets dot com. His article on Q Anon and special operations is in the show notes. You can hear more from Travis view on the podcast. Q Anon anonymous go to Q Anon anonymous.com and you can follow him on Twitter at Travis underscore view.

#### Rod Rodriguez (30:06):

I'm rod Rodriguez. This was military matters. You can follow me on Twitter at rod pod. Rod. Don't forget to go to stripe.com use promo code podcast to get 50% off your digital subscription. 50% off use promo code podcast.

#### Rod Rodriguez (30:19):

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#### Rod Rodriguez (30:40):

This episode is written and produced by rod Rodriguez, executive produced by Benjamin Bateman. I will see you at the next episode.