

NewsGuard and US Government Sued by Consortium News. Musk Slams ‘Scam’

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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NewsGuard, a company which claims to rate media outlets’ level of ‘trustworthiness’ and therefore has a meaningful influence over ad revenue, has been sued along with the Biden administration by Consortium News, which also named the Pentagon’s Cyber Command for “contracting with NewsGuard to identify, report and abridge the speech of American media organizations that dissent from U.S. official positions on foreign policy.”

According to the [complaint](#), NewsGuard is “acting jointly or in concert with the United States to coerce news organizations to alter viewpoints” regarding Ukraine, Russia and Syria, and has imposed a form of “censorship and repression of views” that diverge from US policies and those of its allies, the complaint says.

Consortium also notes that NewsGuard has branded the entirety of Consortium News’ 20,000+ articles as ‘unreliable’ based on just *six* examples they took issue with (which is the exact same thing they do with *ZeroHedge* and other independent media).

NewsGuard uses its software to tag targeted news sites, including all 20,000+ Consortium News articles and videos published since 1995, with warnings to “proceed with caution,” telling NewsGuard subscribers that Consortium News produces “disinformation,” “false content” and is an “anti-U.S.” media organization, even though NewsGuard only took issue with a total of six CN articles and none of its videos.

The complaint seeks a permanent injunction declaring the joint program unconstitutional; barring the government and NewsGuard from continuing such practices and more than \$13 million in damages for defamation and civil rights violations. -[Consortium News](#)

Last week former Trump administration official Mike Benz noted on X that Wikipedia co-

founder Jimmy Wales is an adviser to NewsGuard, and that the nanny organization was “knee deep in a plot to get [governments] to bankrupt alternative news. NewsGuard worked [with the] EU on new disinformation code. Its biz model has ‘disinformation compliance’ services [with the] censorship laws it promotes.”

Elon, for your peripheral vision, Jimmy Wales advises NewsGuard, which is knee deep in a plot to get gov'ts to bankrupt alternative news.

NewsGuard worked w/ EU on new disinformation code. Its biz model has “disinformation compliance” services w/ censorship laws it promotes. <https://t.co/NNiciemxu0> [pic.twitter.com/QDz1a2qFVZ](https://t.co/NNiciemxu0)

— Mike Benz (@MikeBenzCyber) [October 19, 2023](#)

Elon, there is no way EU censorship proponents can deny it. NewsGuard bragged about it. EU officers bragged about it. They had formal partnership together.

All they can do now is hold their nose & hope their own voters never learn what's been going on. [pic.twitter.com/gvcWA0tpdq](https://t.co/gvcWA0tpdq)

— Mike Benz (@MikeBenzCyber) [October 19, 2023](#)

In another X thread, Elon Musk called Newsguard a “scam” after they gave political commentator Tim Pool a strike “because we ran 5 stories out of nearly 5,000 that quoted [former President Donald] Trump.”

What a scam!

“Newsguard” should be disbanded immediately.

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [October 19, 2023](#)

According to [Uncover DC](#), NewsGuard has contracts with the DoD, WHO, Pfizer, Microsoft & AFT.

Co-CEOs Steven Brill and Gordon Crovitz claim it is the “[librarian](#) for the internet.” Set up specifically to rate online journalistic integrity, Brill states NewsGuard provides services that “[explain to people](#) something about the reliability and trustworthiness and background of those who are feeding them the news.” Eric Efron is the organization’s [Editorial Director](#).

[Brill is a Yale graduate](#) and lawyer who has authored multiple best-selling books and was, among other things, CEO of [Verified Identity Pass, Inc.](#), the first U.S. biometric Voluntary Credentialing Program that went bankrupt in 2009. It was the parent company of [CLEAR](#) which went back [online in 2010](#) and then went [public in 2021](#).

According to [MintPressNews](#), “Crovitz [held](#) a number of positions at Dow Jones and the Wall Street Journal, eventually becoming executive vice president of the former and the publisher of the latter before both were sold to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp in 2007. He is also a board member of Business Insider, which has [received over \\$30 million](#) from Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos in recent years.”

Crovitz’s alliances might account for the organization’s [favorable 100 ratings for WSJ](#) and the [Washington Post](#). He is also a contributor “to books published by the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation,” which are also [favorably rated](#) by NewsGuard.

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NewsGuard’s [directors](#), [advisors](#), and [investors](#) are an interesting cast of characters. One of the investors, Publicis Groupe, is “the third largest communications group in the world.” Publicis allegedly has “[shadowy ties](#) to [Saudi Arabia](#).” [Pfizer](#) and [Bayer/Monsanto](#) are two of its top clients. Ironically, many of the advisors/directors are former U.S. government officials, [entertainment](#) moguls, and journalists “associated with agencies known for [producing false news](#).”

Among the advisors is Michael Hayden, former Director of the NSA and CIA, who was “the [architect of](#) George W. Bush’s secret domestic spying program.” [Tom Ridge](#) was the first Office of Homeland Security Director following 9/11. [Richard Stengel](#) “is a former senior official in Obama’s state department who once [described his role](#) as being that of ‘chief propagandist.’”

Leftist "NewsGuard" is Microsoft partner. <https://t.co/qfPwJNy69E>

— Tom Fitton (@TomFitton) [February 14, 2023](#)

And as the [Epoch Times](#) noted in August, NewsGuard presents itself as objective and nonpartisan. Its ratings, the company says, measure media quality on nine criteria, including transparency of authorship and ownership and adherence to standard editorial practice, such as issuing corrections and labeling opinion pieces. In practice, however, most of the score boils down to whether the media present content that, in NewsGuard’s opinion, is truthful.

The first criterion specifically looks at whether the target repeatedly publishes false claims. Another examines whether it publishes news “responsibly.” But failing the first one means failing the second one, NewsGuard explains on its website. Yet another criterion is whether the target uses accurate headlines.

Again, if the headline says something NewsGuard considers to be untrue, that counts as a failure. Another criterion looks for a policy of regularly correcting errors—or what NewsGuard considers to be errors. Together, these four criteria add up to more than 60 points of the 100-point score.

Even if NewsGuard can’t find anything to dispute, it can still dock points if the target doesn’t sufficiently represent opinions the company would like to see.

Such content providers “egregiously cherry pick facts or stories to advance opinions,” it argues.

Meanwhile, at least 60 points are needed for NewsGuard to issue its “credible” rating.

This methodology becomes particularly problematic when NewsGuard itself is wrong on the facts. For example, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company considered false the notion that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was leaked from a lab in Wuhan, China. If a news outlet with a perfect score responsibly reported on the extensive circumstantial evidence indicating a lab leak, it ran the risk of NewsGuard decimating its score and falsely labelling it an “unreliable” source that “severely violates basic journalistic standards.”

The COVID-19 origins issue was a rare case in which NewsGuard eventually issued a correction, though it only went as far as saying that the lab leak hypothesis couldn’t be completely ruled out.

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