

A New Narrative Control Firm Works to Destroy Alternative Media

By [Caitlin Johnstone](#)

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[Caitlin Johnstone](#) 10 January 2019

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The frenzied, hysterical Russia narrative being promoted day in and day out by western mass media has had two of its major stories ripped to shreds in the last three days.

A [report](#) seeded throughout the mainstream media by anonymous intelligence officials back in September claimed that US government workers in Cuba had suffered concussion-like brain damage after hearing strange noises in homes and hotels with the most likely culprit being “sophisticated microwaves or another type of electromagnetic weapon” from Russia.

A recording of one such highly sophisticated attack was analyzed by scientists and [turned out to be the mating call of the male indies short-tailed cricket](#). Neurologists and other brain specialists [have challenged the claim](#) that any US government workers suffered any neurological damage of any kind, saying test results on the alleged victims were misinterpreted. The actual story, when stripped of hyperventilating Russia panic, is that some government workers heard some crickets in Cuba.

Another report which dominated news headlines all of yesterday claimed that former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort (the same Paul Manafort who the *Guardian* [falsely claimed](#) met with Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy) had shared polling data with a Russian associate and asked him to pass it along to Oleg Deripaska, who is often labeled a “Russian oligarch” by western media.

The polling data was mostly public already, and the rest was just more polling information shared in the spring of 2016, but Deripaska’s involvement had Russiagateers burning the midnight oil with breathless excitement. *Talking Points Memo’s* Josh Marshall went so far as to [publish an article](#) titled “The ‘Collusion’ Debate Ended Last Night”, substantiating his click-generating headline with the claim that “What’s crystal clear is that the transfer to Kilimnik came with explicit instructions to give the information to Deripaska. And that’s enough.”

Except Manafort didn’t give any explicit instructions to share the polling data with Deripaska, but with two *Ukrainian* oligarchs (who [are denying it](#)). The *New York Times* was forced to [print this embarrassing correction](#) to the story it broke, adding in the process that Manafort’s motivation was likely not collusion, [but money](#).

Aw, shucks. Well at least the new names are also complicated and Slavic, so readers can still draw their preferred sinister inferences <https://t.co/1NPNC5EN4m> pic.twitter.com/P2dhAN8eOg

— Michael Tracey (@mtracey) [January 9, 2019](#)

These are just the latest in a long, ongoing pattern of terrible mass media debacles as reporters eager to demonstrate their unquestioning fealty to the US-centralized empire fall all over themselves to report any story that makes Russia look bad without practicing due diligence. The only voices who have been questioning the establishment Russia narrative that is being fed to mass media outlets by secretive government agencies have been those which the mass media refuses to platform. Alternative media outlets are the only major platforms for dissent from the authorized narratives of the plutocrat-owned political/media class.

Imagine, then, how disastrous it would be if these last strongholds of skepticism and holding power to account were removed from the media landscape. Well, that's exactly what a shady organization called NewsGuard is trying to do, with some success already.

A [new report](#) by journalist Whitney Webb for *MintPress News* details how NewsGuard is working to hide and demonetize alternative media outlets like *MintPress*, marketing itself directly to tech companies, social media platforms, libraries and schools. NewsGuard is led by some of the most virulently pro-imperialist individuals in America, and its agenda to shore up narrative control for the ruling power establishment is clear.

EXCLUSIVE: As NewsGuard's project advances, it will soon become almost impossible to avoid this neocon-approved news site's ranking systems on any technological device sold in the United States.
[@_whitneywebbhttps://t.co/ftH6QnVIDn](https://t.co/ftH6QnVIDn)

— MintPress News (@MintPressNews) [January 9, 2019](#)

The product which NewsGuard markets to the general public is a browser plugin which advises online media consumers whether a news media outlet is trustworthy or untrustworthy based on a formula with a very pro-establishment bias which sees outlets like Fox News and the US propaganda outlet Voice of America getting trustworthy ratings while outlets like RT get very low ratings for trustworthiness. This plugin dominates the bulk of what comes up when you start researching NewsGuard, but circulating a plugin which individual internet users can voluntarily download to help their rulers control their minds is not one of the more nefarious agendas being pursued by this company. The [full MintPress article](#) gives a thorough breakdown of the yucky things NewsGuard has its fingers in, but here's a summary of five of its more disturbing revelations:

1. The company has created a service called BrandGuard, billed as a "brand safety tool aimed at helping advertisers keep their brands off of unreliable news and information sites while giving them the assurance they need to support thousands of Green-rated [i.e., NewsGuard-approved] news and information sites, big and small." Popularizing the use of this service will attack the advertising revenue of unapproved alternative media outlets which run ads. NewsGuard is aggressively marketing this service to "ad tech firms, leading agencies, and major advertisers".

2. NewsGuard's advisory board reads like the fellowships list of a neocon think tank, and indeed one of its CEOs, Louis Gordon Crovitz, is a Council on Foreign Relations member who has worked with the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation. Members of the advisory board include George W Bush's Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, deep

intelligence community insider Michael Hayden, and the Obama administration's Richard Stengel, who [once publicly supported](#) the need for domestic propaganda in the US. All of these men have appeared in influential think tanks geared toward putting a public smiley face on sociopathic warmongering agendas.


At a Council on Foreign Relations forum about "fake news," former Editor at Time Magazine Richard Stengel directly states that he supports the use of propaganda on American citizens - then shuts the session down when challenged about how propaganda is used against the third world pic.twitter.com/CIAT5POv7G

— William Craddick (@williamcraddick) [May 11, 2018](#)

3. Despite one of its criteria for trustworthy sources being whether or not they are transparent about their funding, the specifics of NewsGuard's financing is kept secret.

4. NewsGuard is also planning to get its news-ranking system integrated into social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter, pursuing a partnership which will make pro-establishment media consumption a part of your experience at those sites regardless of whether or not you download a NewsGuard app or plugin.

5. NewsGuard markets itself to state governments in order to get its plugin installed in all of that state's public schools and libraries to keep internet users from consuming unauthorized narratives. It has already succeeded in accomplishing this in the state of Hawaii, with all of its library branches now running the NewsGuard plugin.

Really excited to see NewsGuard now built into the latest beta of Edge on iOS . Smart service. There's also an extension for Edge on Windows 10. pic.twitter.com/Pqq9diNR8F

— Daniel Rubino (@Daniel_Rubino) [January 4, 2019](#)

We may be absolutely certain that NewsGuard will continue giving a positive, trustworthy ranking to the *New York Times* no matter how many spectacular flubs it makes in its coverage of the establishment Russia narrative, because the agenda to popularize anti-Russia narratives lines up perfectly with the neoconservative, government agency-serving agendas of the powers behind NewsGuard. Any attempt to advance the hegemony of the US-centralized power establishment will be rewarded by its lackeys, and any skepticism of it will be punished.

Whoever controls the narrative controls the world. Ruling power's desire to regulate people's access to information is so desperate that it has become as clumsy and ham-fisted as a teenager pawing at his date in the back seat of a car, and it feels about as enjoyable. They're barely even concealing their desire to control our minds anymore, so it shouldn't be too difficult to wake everyone up to their manipulations. We need to use every inch of our ability to communicate with each other before it gets shut down for good.

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