

# The Media Refutes its Own Lies: After 1,379 Days, NYT Corrects Bogus Claim that Iran ‘Sponsored’ 9/11

By [Adam Johnson](#)

Global Research, July 12, 2017  
[FAIR](#) 6 July 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation, Terrorism](#)

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*In its reporting on a dubious lawsuit alleging Iranian meta-involvement in 9/11, the **New York Times** badly misunderstood the case and maintained for more than three years, in the paper of record, that the government of Iran “sponsored” the September 11, 2001, attacks. The belated correction, issued late Wednesday night on two widely spaced articles on the topic, unceremoniously noted that Iran did not, in fact, help commit the 9/11 attacks.*

The correction came after a report about a lawsuit last week mistakenly claimed that Iran sponsored 9/11, something that had not been alleged in the suit. The article ([6/29/17, archived](#)) originally read:

The government has agreed to distribute proceeds from the building’s sale, which could bring as much as \$1 billion, to the families of **victims of Iranian-sponsored terrorist attacks, including the September 11 attacks.**

That 9/11 was an “Iranian-sponsored terrorist attack” is a spectacular claim, and one that would radically alter the official narrative of 9/11, just casually thrown into an article by the **Times**. In fact, it isn’t even something the lawsuit alleged. The [case in question](#) was a class action lawsuit for families of all terrorism victims, and since Iran was a “state sponsor of terrorism,” they were held generically responsible. (The US State Department maintains that Iran is a “[state sponsor of terrorism](#)” chiefly because of its support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Iraq’s [Kata’ib Hizballah](#), whose attacks have been mainly directed at other combatants.)

Even if this had been what the lawsuit was alleging, it’s remarkable that reporter Vivian Wang simply took this as fact: No “alleged,” no “lawsuit claims”—Iran’s guilt was simply asserted. And that assertion stood for a week until someone, evidently, got word it was grossly wrong. Late Wednesday night ([6/29/17, correction updated 7/5/17](#)), the **Times** quietly added this correction to the piece:

**Correction: July 6, 2017** An article on Friday about a jury’s decision to let the federal government seize a Midtown Manhattan skyscraper it says is controlled by Iran overstated Iran’s responsibility for the September 11 attacks. **While a federal court found that Iran had some culpability for the September 11 attacks as a state sponsor of terrorism, it has not been established that Iran sponsored the attacks, which were planned and executed by Al Qaeda.** (A similar error occurred in a September 25, 2013, article in

the **Times**.)

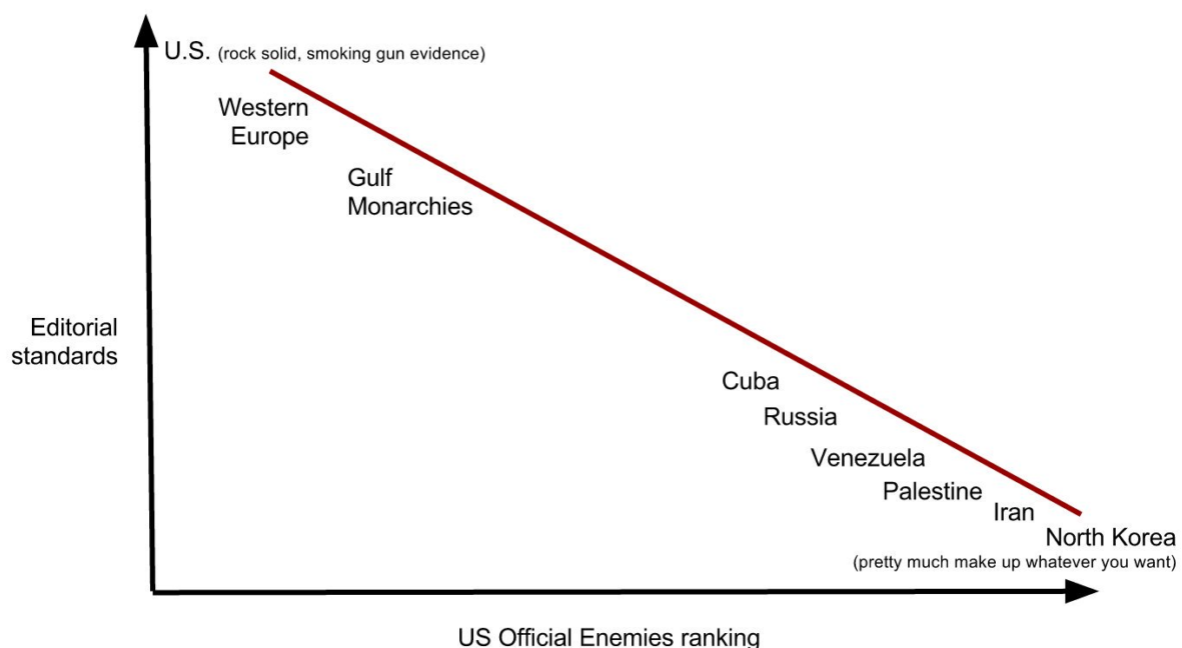
It's as if the editors at the **Times** just got the memo about who was responsible for 9/11. But the week it took to correct this massive error was nothing compared to the close to four years it took to update the very same claim the paper made in September 2013. The original article, by Julie Satow ([9/26/13, original archived](#)), read:

Proceeds from a sale would probably be used to pay some of the \$6 billion in damages claimed by family members of **victims of Iranian-sponsored terrorism, including victims of the 9/11 attacks.**

This article, published in the first year of Obama's second term, finally got corrected this week ([9/26/13, correction updated 7/5/17](#)), with basically the same correction that ran on last week's story:

**Correction: July 5, 2017** An article on Sept. 25, 2013, about the federal government's efforts to seize a Midtown Manhattan skyscraper it says is controlled by Iran overstated Iran's responsibility for the September 11 attacks. **While a federal court found that Iran had some culpability for the September 11 attacks as a state sponsor of terrorism, it has not been established that Iran sponsored the attacks, which were planned and executed by Al Qaeda.**

The corrections, belated as they were, minimized the defamation of the original articles in a lawyerly manner, conceding only that "it has not been established that Iran sponsored the attacks." It has also *not* been established that Israel or Saudi Arabia or the Bush administration sponsored 9/11, but imagine the **New York Times** framing allegations against those actors this way. It's unthinkable but, because Iran is an Official Enemy of the United States, it is not subject to the same editorial standards as those in good standing with the US State Department.



Source: FAIR

Per the [North Korea Law of Journalism](#)—which states that “editorial standards are inversely proportional to a country’s enemy status”—the **Times** can casually smear Iran as sponsoring the deadliest act of terror on US soil, and it’s not taken seriously by anyone. Just thrown into an article, forgotten about and only corrected—with no special note by the paper—almost four years later.

One would be curious what the **New York Times** public editor would say about such a glaring error but the paper eliminated the position a month ago ([FAIR.org](#), [6/1/17](#)). Perhaps the **Times**’ in-house media analyst, Jim Rutenberg, who spends much of his time hand-wringing over “[fake news](#)” and [RT](#), could spare a column on how this happened. This is unlikely, since with an Official Enemy, no amount of libel—no matter how egregious—merits a meaningful response from the paper of record.

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