

A Report to Our Readers

From Editor Robert Parry: Since we started Consortiumnews in 1995 at the dawn of the modern Internet, the threat to serious independent journalism has never been greater than it is today. Whatever one thinks of the Russia-gate imbroglio, what is perhaps the most troubling part is that it has been exploited to justify a crackdown on journalism that doesn't follow the West's dominant groupthinks.

We are seeing the U.S. Congress pressure Google, Facebook and other Internet giants to impose algorithms and other artificial intelligence to ferret out and marginalize information that a collection of mainstream media outlets, known as Google's First Draft Coalition, deems "propaganda" or "fake news." The fact that many of the coalition's members have deep-seated biases as well as a checkered record of getting facts straight is ignored in this rush to somehow "protect" American and Western audiences from deviant points of view.

Don't get me wrong: having spent my entire adult life in journalism, no one detests made-up stories and crackpot conspiracy theories more than I do.

Regular readers of Consortiumnews know how careful we try to be in presenting well-reported information that stands the test of time and indeed is so solid that it has at times helped change history (as occurred in early 2017 when our work documenting Richard Nixon's 1968 sabotage of the Vietnam War's Paris peace talks was finally – grudgingly – accepted by the major news media as true, no longer just a "rumor" as one New York Times columnist wrote).

But the current rush to create a kind of Orwellian Ministry of Truth – led by mainstream outlets that often accept whatever the State Department tells them as true – is a classic case of the cure being worse than the disease. The role of independent journalism should be to show skepticism at all times regardless of which government is telling you what, not to simply take sides based on what seems to be most popular at the moment – or safest for your career.

In our 22 years, Consortiumnews has sought to apply the highest journalistic standards and to do so evenhandedly, demanding proof, not just assertions or opinions, from powerful people. I know that has sometimes made us unpopular. Our skepticism about George W. Bush's case for invading Iraq opened us to charges that we were "Saddam apologists." But our skepticism proved to be well-founded.

Similarly, we have looked for real evidence regarding the Russian "meddling" accusations and tried to put whatever facts that are available in a reasonable perspective, not simply jump on the new bandwagon and roll blindly into a new cold war. We have tried to be as objective and fair in our journalism as

possible, setting aside our personal feelings about the personalities involved as we evaluate evidence with care.

Some of this questioning approach toward “what everybody just knows to be true” comes from my work at The Associated Press and Newsweek during the 1980s when many of claims that the Reagan administration made about foreign enemies turned out to be flat wrong or wildly exaggerated. Back then, as now, many of my mainstream colleagues went with the flow, all the better for their careers but detrimental to the principles of journalism – and devastating for some populations on the receiving end of U.S. propaganda and war.

We now face another important test for what journalism and democracy will become. I for one think that the strongest safeguard for democracy is an informed electorate, which means that journalism should provide all sides of a story, not just the “approved” one.

That means that when we see “fake news” or other false information, we denounce it. But I would much prefer continuing our traditional though imperfect method of weeding out lies one by one – and explaining to the public why these lies should be disbelieved – than allowing some benighted group of mainstream entities to impose in secret their self-interested version of the “truth” and then enforcing it through algorithms.

And, there is no better way for us to resist that dreary future than to continue producing serious, well-reported journalism that takes on misguided groupthinks – and stands up to today’s pressures on the firm ground of journalistic principle.

But that can only happen with your continued support. So please contribute what you can to our end-of-year fund drive so we can continue to work with our talented group of writers and publish an independent news product that sets the standard for what modern journalism can and should be.

You can donate by credit card online (we accept Visa, Mastercard, American Express and Discover), by PayPal (our PayPal account is named after our original email address, “consortnew @ aol.com”), or by mailing a check to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201.

We also are registered with PayPal’s Giving Fund under the name Consortium for Independent Journalism. And, since we are a 501-c-3 non-profit, donations by American taxpayers may be tax-deductible.

(To minimize the nuisance of fund drives, we only hold three a year: Spring, Early Fall and End of Year. So each one is very important to our survival.)

Thank you.

Robert Parry, Editor of Consortiumnews.com

Robert Parry is a longtime investigative reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 to create an outlet for well-reported journalism that was being squeezed out of an increasingly trivialized U.S. news media.
