

Robert Parry's Legacy and the Future of Consortiumnews

Robert Parry, editor and publisher of Consortiumnews.com, died peacefully Saturday evening. In this tribute, his son Nat Parry describes Robert's unwavering commitment to independent journalism.

By Nat Parry

It is with a heavy heart that we inform Consortiumnews readers that Editor Robert Parry has passed away. As regular readers know, Robert (or Bob, as he was known to friends and family) suffered a stroke in December, which – despite his own speculation that it may have been brought on by the stress of covering Washington politics – was the result of undiagnosed pancreatic cancer that he had been unknowingly living with for the past 4-5 years.

He unfortunately suffered two more debilitating strokes in recent weeks and after the last one, was moved to hospice care on Tuesday. He passed away peacefully Saturday evening. He was 68.

Those of us close to him wish to sincerely thank readers for the kind comments and words of support posted on recent articles regarding Bob's health issues. We read aloud many of these comments to him during his final days to let him know how much his work has meant to so many people and how much concern there was for his well-being.

I am sure that these kindnesses meant a lot to him. They also mean a lot to us as family members, as we all know how devoted he was to the mission of independent journalism and this website which has been publishing articles since the earliest days of the internet, launching all the way back in 1995.

With my dad, professional work has always been deeply personal, and his career as a journalist was thoroughly intertwined with his family life. I can recall kitchen table conversations in my early childhood that focused on the U.S.-backed wars in Central America and complaints about how his editors at The Associated Press were too timid to run articles of his that – no matter how well-documented – cast the Reagan administration in a bad light.

One of my earliest memories in fact was of my dad about to leave on assignment in the early 1980s to the war zones of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, and the heartfelt good-bye that he wished to me and my siblings. He warned us that he was going to a very dangerous place and that there was a possibility that he might not come back.

I remember asking him why he had to go, why he couldn't just stay at home with us. He replied that it was important to go to these places and tell the truth about what was happening there. He mentioned that children my age were being killed in these wars and that somebody had to tell their stories. I remember asking, "Kids like me?" He replied, "Yes, kids just like you."

Bob was deeply impacted by the dirty wars of Central America in the 1980s and in many ways these conflicts – and the U.S. involvement in them – came to define the rest of his life and career. With grisly stories emerging from Nicaragua (thanks partly to journalists like him), Congress passed the Boland Amendments from 1982 to 1984, which placed limits on U.S. military assistance to the contras who were attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government through a variety of terrorist tactics.

The Reagan administration immediately began exploring ways to circumvent those legal restrictions, which led to a scheme to send secret arms shipments to the revolutionary and vehemently anti-American government of Iran and divert the profits to the contras. In 1985, Bob wrote the first stories describing this operation, which later became known as the Iran-Contra Affair.

Contra-Cocaine and October Surprise

Parallel to the illegal arms shipments to Iran during those days was a cocaine trafficking operation by the Nicaraguan contras and a willingness by the Reagan administration and the CIA to turn a blind eye to these activities. This, despite the fact that cocaine was flooding into the United States while Ronald Reagan was proclaiming a "war on drugs," and a crack cocaine epidemic was devastating communities across the country.

Bob and his colleague Brian Barger were the first journalists to report on this story in late 1985, which became known as the contra-cocaine scandal, and became the subject of a congressional investigation led by then-Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) in 1986.

Continuing to pursue leads relating to Iran-Contra during a period in the late 80s when most of Washington was moving on from the scandal, Bob discovered that there was more to the story than commonly understood. He learned that the roots of the illegal arm shipments to Iran stretched back further than previously known – all the way back to the 1980 presidential campaign.

That electoral contest between incumbent Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan had come to be largely dominated by the hostage crisis in Iran, with 52 Americans being held at the U.S. embassy in Tehran since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The Iranian hostage crisis, along with the ailing economy, came to

define a perception of an America in decline, with former Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan promising a new start for the country, a restoration of its status as a “shining city on a hill.”

The hostages were released in Tehran moments after Reagan was sworn in as president in Washington on January 20, 1981. Despite suspicions for years that there had been some sort of quid pro quo between the Reagan campaign and the Iranians, it wasn't until Bob uncovered a trove of documents in a House office building basement in 1994 that the evidence became overwhelming that the Reagan campaign had interfered with the Carter administration's efforts to free the hostages prior to the 1980 election. Their release sooner – what Carter hoped would be his “October Surprise” – could have given him the boost needed to win.

Examining these documents and being already well-versed on this story – having previously travelled three continents pursuing the investigation for a PBS *Frontline* documentary – Bob became increasingly convinced that the Reagan campaign had in fact sabotaged Carter's hostage negotiations, possibly committing an act of treason in an effort to make sure that 52 American citizens continued to be held in a harrowing hostage situation until after Reagan secured the election.

Needless to say, this was an inconvenient story at a time – in the mid-1990s – when the national media had long since moved on from the Reagan scandals and were obsessing over new scandals, mostly related to President Bill Clinton's sex life and failed real estate deals. Washington also wasn't particularly interested in challenging the Reagan legacy, which at that time was beginning to solidify into a kind of mythology, with campaigns underway to name buildings and airports after the former president.

At times, Bob had doubts about his career decisions and the stories he was pursuing. As he wrote in *Trick or Treason*, a book outlining his investigation into the October Surprise Mystery, this search for historical truth can be painful and seemingly thankless.

“Many times,” he wrote, “I had regretted accepting *Frontline*'s assignment in 1990. I faulted myself for risking my future in mainstream journalism. After all, that is where the decent-paying jobs are. I had jeopardized my ability to support my four children out of an old-fashioned sense of duty, a regard for an unwritten code that expects reporters to take almost any assignment.”

Nevertheless, Bob continued his efforts to tell the full story behind both the Iran-Contra scandal and the origins of the Reagan-Bush era, ultimately leading to two things: him being pushed out of the mainstream media, and the launching of Consortiumnews.com.

I remember when he started the website, together with my older brother Sam, back in 1995. At the time, in spite of talk we were all hearing about something called “the information superhighway” and “electronic mail,” I had never visited a website and didn’t even know how to get “on line.” My dad called me in Richmond, where I was a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University, and told me I should check out this new “Internet site” he and Sam had just launched.

He explained over the phone how to open a browser and instructed me how to type in the URL, starting, he said, with “http,” then a colon and two forward slashes, then “www,” then “dot,” then this long address with one or two more forward slashes if I recall. (It wasn’t until years later that the website got its own domain and a simpler address.)

I went to the computer lab at the university and asked for some assistance on how to get online, dutifully typed in the URL, and opened this website – the first one I had ever visited. It was interesting, but a bit hard to read on the computer screen, so I printed out some articles to read back in my dorm room.

I quickly became a fan of “The Consortium,” as it was called back then, and continued reading articles on the October Surprise Mystery as Bob and Sam posted them on this new and exciting tool called “the Internet.” Sam had to learn HTML coding from scratch to launch this online news service, billed as “the Internet’s First Investigative ‘Zine.” For his efforts, Sam was honored with the Consortium for Independent Journalism’s first Gary Webb Freedom of the Press Award in 2015.

X-Files and Contra-Crack

At some point along the way, Bob decided that in addition to the website, where he was not only posting original articles but also providing the source documents that he had uncovered in the House office building basement, he would also take a stab at traditional publishing. He compiled the “October Surprise X-Files” into a booklet and self-published it in January 1996.

He was also publishing a newsletter to complement the website, knowing that at that time, there were still plenty of people who didn’t know how to turn a computer on, much less navigate the World Wide Web. I transferred from Virginia Commonwealth University to George Mason University in the DC suburbs and started working part-time with my dad and Sam on the newsletter and website.

We worked together on the content, editing and laying it out with graphics often culled from books at our local library. We built a subscriber base through networking and purchasing mailing lists from progressive magazines. Every two weeks we would get a thousand copies printed from Sir Speedy and would spend

Friday evening collating these newsletters and sending them out to our subscribers.

The launching of the website and newsletter, and later an even-more ambitious project called *I.F. Magazine*, happened to coincide with the publication in 1996 of Gary Webb's "Dark Alliance" series at the *San Jose Mercury-News*. Webb's series reopened the contra-cocaine controversy with a detailed examination of the drug trafficking networks in Nicaragua and Los Angeles that had helped to spread highly addictive crack cocaine across the United States.

The African-American community, in particular, was rightly outraged over this story, which offered confirmation of many long-standing suspicions that the government was complicit in the drug trade devastating their communities. African Americans had been deeply and disproportionately affected by the crack epidemic, both in terms of the direct impact of the drug and the draconian drug laws and mandatory minimum sentences that came to define the government's approach to "the war on drugs."

For a moment in the summer of 1996, it appeared that the renewed interest in the contra-cocaine story might offer an opportunity to revisit the crimes and misdeeds of the Reagan-Bush era, but those hopes were dashed when the "the Big Media" decided to double down on its earlier failures to cover this story properly.

Big Papers Pile On

The *Los Angeles Times* launched the attack on Gary Webb and his reporting at the *San Jose Mercury-News*, followed by equally dismissive stories at the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. The piling on from these newspapers eventually led *Mercury-News* editor Jerry Ceppos to denounce Webb's reporting and offer a mea culpa for publishing the articles.

The onslaught of hostile reporting from the big papers failed to address the basic premises of Webb's series and did not debunk the underlying allegations of contra-cocaine smuggling or the fact that much of this cocaine ended up on American streets in the form of crack. Instead, it raised doubts by poking holes in certain details and casting the story as a "conspiracy theory." Some of the reporting attempted to debunk claims that Webb never actually made – such as the idea that the contra-cocaine trafficking was part of a government plot to intentionally decimate the African-American community.

Gary Webb and Bob were in close contact during those days. Bob offered him professional and personal support, having spent his time also on the receiving end of attacks by journalistic colleagues and editors who rejected certain

stories – no matter how factual – as fanciful conspiracy theories. Articles at The Consortium website and newsletter, as well as *I.F. Magazine*, offered details on the historical context for the “Dark Alliance” series and pushed back against the mainstream media’s onslaught of hostile and disingenuous reporting.

Bob also published the book *Lost History* which provided extensive details on the background for the “Dark Alliance” series, explaining that far from a baseless “conspiracy theory,” the facts and evidence strongly supported the conclusion that the Reagan-Bush administrations had colluded with drug traffickers to fund their illegal war against Nicaragua.

But sadly, the damage to Gary Webb was done. With his professional and personal life in tatters because of his courageous reporting on the contra-cocaine story, he committed suicide in 2004 at the age of 49. Speaking about this suicide later on *Democracy Now*, Bob noted how painful it is to be ridiculed and unfairly criticized by colleagues, as his friend had experienced.

“There’s a special pain when your colleagues in your profession turn on you, especially when you’ve done something that they should admire and should understand,” he said. “To do all that work and then have the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* attack you and try to destroy your life, there’s a special pain in that.”

In consultation with his family, Bob and the Board of Directors for the Consortium for Independent Journalism launched the Gary Webb Freedom of the Press Award in 2015.

The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush

The presidency of George W. Bush was surreal for many of us, and no one more so than my dad.

In covering Washington politics for decades, Bob had traced many stories to “Dubya’s” father, George H.W. Bush, who had been implicated in a variety of questionable activities, including the October Surprise Mystery and Iran-Contra. He had also launched a war against Iraq in 1991 that seemed to be motivated, at least in part, to help kick “the Vietnam Syndrome,” i.e. the reluctance that the American people had felt since the Vietnam War to support military action abroad.

As Bob noted in his 1992 book *Fooling America*, after U.S. forces routed the Iraqi military in 1991, President Bush’s first public comment about the victory expressed his delight that it would finally put to rest the American reflex against committing troops to far-off conflicts. “By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all,” he exulted.

The fact that Bush-41's son could run for president largely on name recognition confirmed to Bob the failure of the mainstream media to cover important stories properly and the need to continue building an independent media infrastructure. This conviction solidified through Campaign 2000 and the election's ultimate outcome, when Bush assumed the White House as the first popular-vote loser in more than a century.

Despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court had halted the counting of votes in Florida, thus preventing an accurate determination of the rightful winner, most of the national media moved on from the story after Bush was sworn in on Jan. 20, 2001. Consortiumnews.com continued to examine the documentary record, however, and ultimately concluded that Al Gore would have been declared the winner of that election if all the legally cast ballots were counted.

At Consortiumnews, there was an unwritten editorial policy that the title "President" should never precede George W. Bush's name, based on our view that he was not legitimately elected. But beyond those editorial decisions, we also understood the gravity of the fact that had Election 2000 been allowed to play out with all votes counted, many of the disasters of the Bush years – notably the 9/11 tragedy and the Iraq War, as well as decisions to withdraw from international agreements on arms control and climate change – might have been averted.

As all of us who lived through the post-9/11 era will recall, it was a challenging time all around, especially if you were someone critical of George W. Bush. The atmosphere in that period did not allow for much dissent. Those who stood up against the juggernaut for war – such as Phil Donahue at MSNBC, Chris Hedges at the *New York Times*, or even the Dixie Chicks – had their careers damaged and found themselves on the receiving end of death threats and hate mail.

While Bob's magazine and newsletter projects had been discontinued, the website was still publishing articles, providing a home for dissenting voices that questioned the case for invading Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003. Around this time, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern and some of his colleagues founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity and a long-running relationship with Consortiumnews was established. Several former intelligence veterans began contributing to the website, motivated by the same independent spirit of truth-telling that compelled Bob to invest so much in this project.

At a time when almost the entire mainstream media was going along with the Bush administration's dubious case for war, this and a few other like-minded websites pushed back with well-researched articles calling into question the rationale. Although at times it might have felt as though we were just voices in the

wilderness, a major groundswell of opposition to war emerged in the country, with historic marches of hundreds of thousands taking place to reject Bush's push for war.

Of course, these antiwar voices were ultimately vindicated by the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the fact that the war and occupation proved to be a far costlier and deadlier enterprise than we had been told that it would be. Earlier assurances that it would be a "cakewalk" proved as false as the WMD claims, but as had been so often the case in Washington, there was little to no accountability from the mainstream media, the think tanks or government officials for being so spectacularly wrong.

In an effort to document the true history of that era, Bob, Sam and I co-wrote the book *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, which was published in late 2007. The book traced the work of Consortiumnews, juxtaposing it against the backdrop of mainstream media coverage during the Bush era, in an effort to not only correct the record, but also demonstrate that not all of us got things so wrong.

We felt it was important to remind readers – as well as future historians – that some of us knew and reported in real time the mistakes that were being made on everything from withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol to invading Iraq to implementing a policy of torture to bungling the response to Hurricane Katrina.

Obama Era

By the Obama presidency, Consortiumnews.com had become a home to a growing number of writers who brought new perspectives to the website's content. While for years, the writing staff had been limited primarily to Bob, Sam and me, suddenly, Consortiumnews was receiving contributions from journalists, activists and former intelligence analysts who offered a wide range of expertise – on international law, economics, human rights, foreign policy, national security, and even religion and philosophy.

One recurring theme of articles at the website during the Obama era was the enduring effect of unchallenged narratives, how they shaped national politics and dictated government policy. Bob observed that even a supposedly left-of-center president like Obama seemed beholden to the false narratives and national mythologies dating back to the Reagan era. He pointed out that this could be at least partially attributed to the failure to establish a strong foundation for independent journalism.

In a 2010 piece called "Obama's Fear of the Reagan Narrative," Bob noted that Obama had defended his deal with Republicans on tax cuts for the rich because

there was such a strong lingering effect of Reagan's messaging from 30 years earlier. "He felt handcuffed by the Right's ability to rally Americans on behalf of Reagan's 'government-is-the-problem' message," Bob wrote.

He traced Obama's complaints about his powerlessness in the face of this dynamic to the reluctance of American progressives to invest sufficiently in media and think tanks, as conservatives had been doing for decades in waging their "the war of ideas." As he had been arguing since the early 1990s, Bob insisted that the limits that had been placed on Obama – whether real or perceived – continued to demonstrate the power of propaganda and the need for greater investment in alternative media.

He also observed that much of the nuttiness surrounding the so-called Tea Party movement resulted from fundamental misunderstandings of American history and constitutional principles. "Democrats and progressives should be under no illusion about the new flood of know-nothingism that is about to inundate the United States in the guise of a return to 'first principles' and a deep respect for the U.S. Constitution," Bob warned.

He pointed out that despite the Tea Partiers' claimed reverence for the Constitution, they actually had very little understanding of the document, as revealed by their ahistorical claims that federal taxes are unconstitutional. In fact, as Bob observed, the Constitution represented "a major power grab by the federal government, when compared to the loosely drawn Articles of Confederation, which lacked federal taxing authority and other national powers."

Motivated by a desire to correct falsified historical narratives spanning more than two centuries, Bob published his sixth and final book, *America's Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama*, in 2012.

Along with revenues from book sales, growing donations from readers enabled Bob to not only pay writers but also to hire an assistant, Chelsea Gilmour, who began working for Consortiumnews in 2014. In addition to providing invaluable administrative support, Chelsea also performed duties including research, writing and fact-checking.

Political Realignment and the New McCarthyism

Although at the beginning of the Obama era – and indeed since the 1980s – the name Robert Parry had been closely associated with exposing wrongdoing by Republicans, and hence had a strong following among Democratic Party loyalists, by the end of Obama's presidency there seemed to be a realignment taking place among some of Consortiumnews.com's readership, which reflected more generally

the shifting politics of the country.

In particular, the U.S. media's approach to Russia and related issues, such as the violent ouster in 2014 of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, became "virtually 100 percent propaganda," Bob said.

He noted that the full story was never told when it came to issues such as the Sergei Magnitsky case, which led to the first round of U.S. sanctions against Russia, nor the inconvenient facts related to the Euromaidan protests that led to Yanukovich's ouster – including the reality of strong neo-Nazi influence in those protests – nor the subsequent conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine.

Bob's stories on Ukraine were widely cited and disseminated, and he became an important voice in presenting a fuller picture of the conflict than was possible by reading and watching only mainstream news outlets. Bob was featured prominently in Oliver Stone's 2016 documentary "Ukraine on Fire," where he explained how U.S.-funded political NGOs and media companies have worked with the CIA and foreign policy establishment since the 1980s to promote the U.S. geopolitical agenda.

Bob regretted that, increasingly, "the American people and the West in general are carefully shielded from hearing the 'other side of the story.'" Indeed, he said that to even suggest that there might be another side to the story is enough to get someone branded as an apologist for Vladimir Putin or a "Kremlin stooge."

This culminated in late 2016 in the blacklisting of Consortiumnews.com on a dubious website called "PropOrNot," which was claiming to serve as a watchdog against undue "Russian influence" in the United States. The PropOrNot blacklist, including Consortiumnews and about 200 other websites deemed "Russian propaganda," was elevated by the *Washington Post* as a credible source, despite the fact that the neo-McCarthyites who published the list hid behind a cloak of anonymity.

"The *Post's* article by Craig Timberg," Bob wrote on Nov. 27, 2016, "described PropOrNot simply as 'a nonpartisan collection of researchers with foreign policy, military and technology backgrounds [who] planned to release its own findings Friday showing the startling reach and effectiveness of Russian propaganda campaigns.'"

As Bob explained in an article called "Washington Post's Fake News Guilt," the paper granted PropOrNot anonymity "to smear journalists who don't march in lockstep with official pronouncements from the State Department or some other

impeccable fount of never-to-be-questioned truth.”

The *Post* even provided an unattributed quote from the head of the shadowy website. “The way that this propaganda apparatus supported [Donald] Trump was equivalent to some massive amount of a media buy,” the anonymous smear merchant said. The *Post* claimed that the PropOrNot “executive director” had spoken on the condition of anonymity “to avoid being targeted by Russia’s legions of skilled hackers.”

To be clear, neither Consortiumnews nor Robert Parry ever “supported Trump,” as the above anonymous quote claims. Something interesting, however, did seem to be happening in terms of Consortiumnews’ readership in the early days of the Trump presidency, as could be gleaned from some of the comments left on articles and social media activity.

It did appear for some time at least that a good number of Trump supporters were reading Consortiumnews, which could probably attributed to the fact that the website was one of the few outlets pushing back against both the “New Cold War” with Russia and the related story of “Russiagate,” which Bob didn’t even like referring to as a “scandal.” (As an editor, he preferred to use the word “controversy” on the website, because as far as he was concerned, the allegations against Trump and his supposed “collusion” with Russia did not rise to the level of actual scandals such as Watergate or Iran-Contra.)

In his view, the perhaps understandable hatred of Trump felt by many Americans – both inside and outside the Beltway – had led to an abandonment of old-fashioned rules of journalism and standards of fairness, which should be applied even to someone like Donald Trump.

“On a personal note, I faced harsh criticism even from friends of many years for refusing to enlist in the anti-Trump ‘Resistance,’” Bob wrote in his final article for Consortiumnews.

“The argument was that Trump was such a unique threat to America and the world that I should join in finding any justification for his ouster,” he said. “Some people saw my insistence on the same journalistic standards that I had always employed somehow a betrayal.”

He marveled that even senior editors in the mainstream media treated the unproven Russiagate allegations as flat fact.

“No skepticism was tolerated and mentioning the obvious bias among the never-Trumpers inside the FBI, Justice Department and intelligence community was decried as an attack on the integrity of the U.S. government’s institutions,” Bob wrote. “Anti-Trump ‘progressives’ were posturing as the true patriots

because of their now unquestioning acceptance of the evidence-free proclamations of the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies.”

An Untimely End and the Future of Consortiumnews

My dad’s untimely passing has come as a shock to us all, especially since up until a month ago, there was no indication whatsoever that he was sick in any way. He took good care of himself, never smoked, got regular check-ups, exercised, and ate well. The unexpected health issues starting with a mild stroke Christmas Eve and culminating with his admission into hospice care several days ago offer a stark reminder that nothing should be taken for granted.

And as many Consortiumnews readers have eloquently pointed out in comments left on [recent articles](#) regarding Bob’s health, it also reminds us that his brand of journalism is needed today more than ever.

“We need free will thinkers like you who value the truth based on the evidence and look past the group think in Washington to report on the real reasons for our government’s and our media’s actions which attempt to deceive us all,” wrote, for example, “FreeThinker.”

“Common sense and integrity are the hallmarks of Robert Parry’s journalism. May you get better soon for you are needed more now than ever before,” wrote “T.J.”

“We need a new generation of reporters, journalists, writers, and someone always being tenacious to follow up on the story,” added “Tina.”

As someone who has been involved with this website since its inception – as a writer, an editor and a reader – I concur with these sentiments. Readers should rest assured that despite my dad’s death, every effort will be made to ensure that the website will continue going strong.

Indeed, I think that everyone involved with this project wants to uphold the same commitment to truth-telling without fear or favor that inspired Bob and his heroes like George Seldes, I.F. Stone, and Thomas Paine.

That commitment can be seen in my dad’s pursuit of stories such as those mentioned above, but also so many others – including his investigations into the financial relationship of the influential *Washington Times* with the Unification Church cult of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the truth behind the Nixon campaign’s alleged efforts to sabotage President Lyndon Johnson’s Paris peace talks with Vietnamese leaders in 1968, the reality of the chemical attack in Syria in 2013, and even detailed examinations of the evidence behind the so-called “Deflategate” controversy that he felt unfairly branded his favorite football

team, the New England Patriots, as cheaters.

Reviewing these journalistic achievements, it becomes clear that there are few stories that have slipped under Consortiumnews.com's radar, and that the historical record is far more complete thanks to this website and Bob's old-fashioned approach to journalism.

But besides this deeply held commitment to independent journalism, it should also be recalled that, ultimately, Bob was motivated by a concern over the future of life on Earth. As someone who grew up at the height of the Cold War, he understood the dangers of allowing tensions and hysteria to spiral out of control, especially in a world such as ours with enough nuclear weapons to wipe out all life on the planet many times over.

As the United States continues down the path of a New Cold War, my dad would be pleased to know that he has such committed contributors who will enable the site to remain the indispensable home for independent journalism that it has become, and continue to push back on false narratives that threaten our very survival.

Thank you all for your support.

In lieu of flowers, Bob's family asks you to please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Consortium for Independent Journalism.

Unpacking the Shadowy Outfit Behind 2017's Biggest Fake News Story

In late 2016, about 200 websites – including Consortiumnews.com – were identified as “Russian propaganda outlets” by the dubious website PropOrNot, hiding behind a cloak of anonymity. Now, journalist George Eliason peels back some of that anonymity in this article originally posted at Washington's Blog.

Editor's note: In November 2016, Consortiumnews.com was listed with about 200 other websites at the shadowy “PropOrNot” website, which was claiming to serve as a watchdog against undue “Russian influence” in the United States. The PropOrNot blacklist was elevated by the *Washington Post* as a credible source, despite the fact that the neo-McCarthyites who compiled the list hid behind a cloak of anonymity. As an article at Consortiumnews explained at the time, the *Post* granted PropOrNot anonymity “to smear journalists who don't march in lockstep with official pronouncements from the State Department or some other impeccable fount of never-to-be-questioned truth.”

Now, George Eliason, an American journalist living in Ukraine, has published an article at Washington's Blog – one of the other 200 blacklisted websites – examining the cast of characters who may be behind the PropOrNot endeavor. As explained in a disclaimer at [the original article](#) at Washington's Blog: "A leading cybersecurity expert has publicly said that Mr. Eliason's research as presented in this article does not violate the law. Washington's Blog does not express an opinion about whether or not the claims set forth in this article are accurate or not. Make up your own mind."

By George Eliason

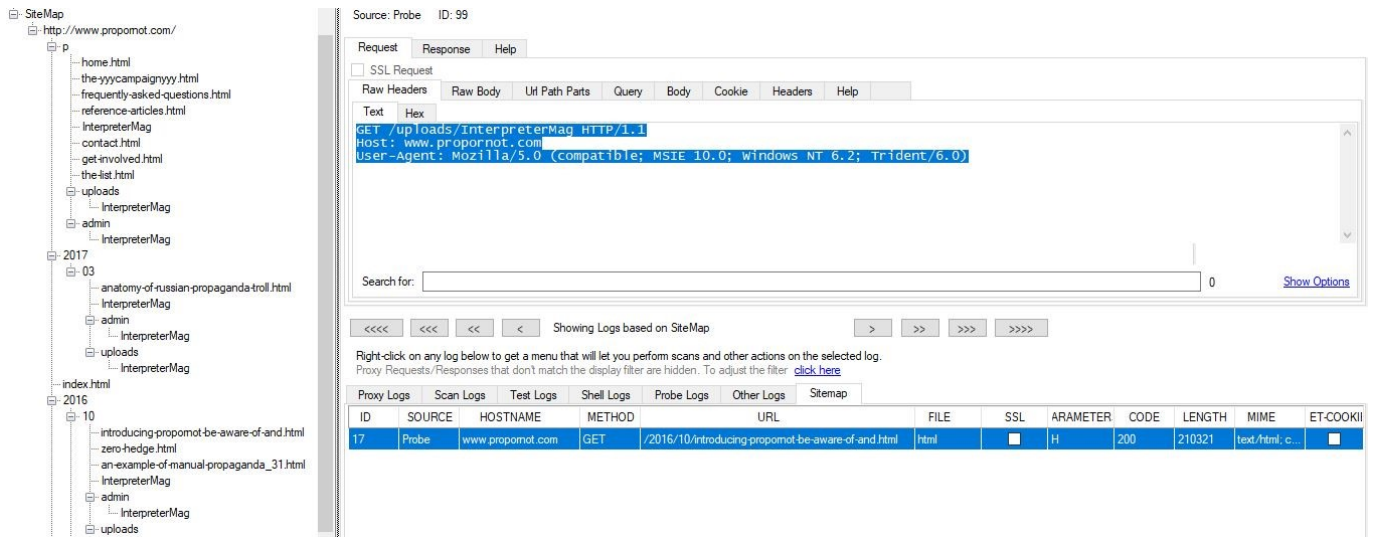
A little over a year ago, the deep state graced the world with [PropOrNot](#). Thanks to them, 2017 became the year of fake news. Every news website and opinion column now had the potential to be linked to the Steele dossier and Trump collusion with Russia. Every journalist was either "with us or against us." Anyone who challenged the Russiagate narrative became Russia's trolls.

Fortunately for the free world, the anonymous group known as PropOrNot that tried to "out" every website as a potential Russian colluder, in the end only implicated themselves. Turnabout is fair play and that's always the fun part, isn't it? With that in mind, I know the dogs are going to howl this evening over this one.

The damage PropOrNot did to scores of news and opinions websites in late 2016-2017 provides the basis of a massive civil suit. I mean huge, as in the potential is there for a tobacco company-sized class-action sized lawsuit. I can say that because I know a lot about a number of entities that are involved and the enormous amount of money behind them.

How serious is this? [In 2016, a \\$10,000 reward was put out for the identities of PropOrNot](#) players. No one has claimed it yet, and now, I guess no one will. There are times in your life that taking a stand has a cost. To make sure the story gets out and is taken seriously, this is one of those times.

In this article, you'll meet some of the people staffing PropOrNot. You'll meet the people and publications that provide their expenses and cover the logistics. You'll meet a few of the deep state players. We'll deal with them very soon. They need to see this as the warning shot over the bow and start playing nice with regular people. After that, you'll meet the NGOs that are funding and orchestrating all of it. How am I doing so far?



The image above is the clincher or game winner that supplies the necessary proof up front and the direct path to Prop0rNot. This was a passive scan of Propornot.com showing the administrative dashboard belongs to the InterpreterMag.com as shown on the left of the image. On the right, it shows that uploads to Propornot.com come from InterpreterMag.com and is a product of that publication.

Now we have the first layer of Prop0rNot and our first four contestants. We have a slew of new media organizations that are influenced by, or feeding Prop0rNot. Remember, fake news got off the ground and got its wings because of the attention this website received from the Washington Post in Dec. 2016.

At the Interpreter Mag level, here are the people:

- Michael Weiss is the Editor-in-Chief at the InterpreterMag.com. According to his Linkd profile, he is also a National Security Analyst for CNN since July 2017 as well as an Investigative Reporter for International Affairs for CNN since April 2017. He has been a contributor there since 2015. He has been a Senior Editor at The Daily Beast since June 2015.
- Catherine A. Fitzpatrick is a Russian translator and analyst for the Interpreter. She has worked as an editor for EurasiaNet.org and the former Cold War project funded by the CIA, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).
- Pierre Vaux is an analyst and translator for the Interpreter. He's also an intern. He is a contributor to the Daily Beast, Foreign Policy, RFE/RL and Left Foot Forward and works at Dataminr Inc.
- James Miller's bio at the InterpreterMag.com includes Managing Editor of The Interpreter where he reports on Russia, Ukraine, and Syria. James runs the "Under The Black Flag" column at RFE/RL which provides news, opinion, and analysis about the impact of the Islamic State extremist group in Syria, Iraq, and beyond. He is a contributor at Reuters, The Daily Beast,

Foreign Policy, and other publications. He is an expert on verifying citizen journalism and has been covering developments in the Middle East, specifically Syria and Iran, since 2009. Miller also works for the U.S. Embassy in Kiev “diplo-page” the Kiev Post.

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The Interpreter is a product of the Atlantic Council. [The Digital Forensics Research Lab](#) has been carrying the weight in Ukrainian-Russian affairs for the Atlantic Council. Fellows working with the Atlantic Council in this area include:

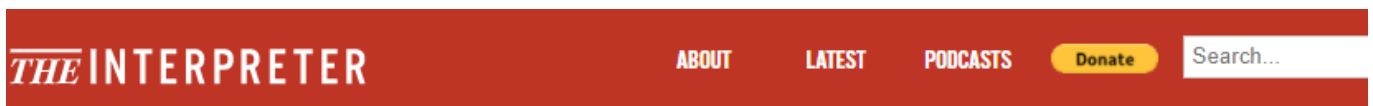
- Bellingcat – Aric Toler and Eliot Higgins- [This linked article shows how an underwear salesman became one of the most important faces of the deep state. Don't laugh, the image is really appropriate. Higgins' insecurity runs so deep because of his failures that Higgins tries to get publications censured that question his author-i-tie.](#)
- Anne Applebaum – who has [argued](#) that Facebook should take responsibility for spreading fake news and help “undo the terrible damage done by Facebook and other forms of social media to democratic debate and civilized discussion all over the world.”
- StopFake – Irena Chalupa – Chalupa is the sister to the same [Alexandra Chalupa](#) that brought the term Russian hacking to worldwide attention. [Irena Chalupa is a nonresident fellow](#) with the Atlantic Council's Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center. She is also a senior correspondent at RFE/RL, where she has worked for more than twenty years. Chalupa previously served as an editor for the Atlantic Council, where she covered Ukraine and Eastern Europe. Irena Chalupa is also the news anchor for Ukraine's propaganda channel [Stopfake.org](#) She is a [Ukrainian Diaspora leader](#). The Chalupas are the first family of Ukrainian propaganda. She works with and for Ukrainian Intelligence through the Atlantic Council, Stopfake.org, and her sisters Andrea (EuromaidanPR) and Alexandra.
- Dimitry Alperovich – [CEO of CrowdStrike and the person who consulted a Ouija board and guessed Russia may have hacked something, somewhere, sometime.](#)

The strand that ties this crew together is they all work for Ukrainian Intelligence. If you hit the links, the ties are documented very clearly. We'll get to that point again shortly, but let's go further:

PropOrNot -> Atlantic Council -> Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)

Who are the BBG? The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is an independent agency of the United States government. According to its website, its mission is to “inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.” Its projects include Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio y Television Marti, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcast Networks.

The BBG’s bipartisan board was eliminated and replaced with a single appointed chief executive officer as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, which was passed in December 2016.



On January 1, 2016, the Interpreter became a special project of RFE/RL and under the oversight of the BBG. The Secretary of State had a seat on the board of the BBG until December 2016. Why the change?

During the 2016 election, the BBG developed a major conflict of interest. At least two BBG board members worked actively for the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign. These government officials were working against the president-elect after the election. It looks like it didn’t go unnoticed. In the following linked article, it shows that they should be investigated for their part in an attempted coup.

From a Nov 7, 2016, article– “Karen Kornbluh is helping refine and to get Hillary Clinton’s message out.” All of them are names to watch if Clinton wins – and key jobs at the FCC and other federal agencies are up for grabs.”

According to her bio: Karen founded the New America Foundation’s Work and Family Program and is a senior fellow for Digital Policy at the Council on Foreign

Relations. Karen has written extensively about technology policy, women, and family policy for The Atlantic, The New York Times and The Washington Post. New York Times columnist David Brooks cited her Democracy article "Families Valued," focused on "juggler families" as one of the best magazine articles of 2006.

Michael Kempner is the founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of MWW Group, a staunch Hillary Clinton supporter, and may get a greater role if she is elected. Kempner is a member of the Public Relations Hall of Fame. Michael Kempner hired Anthony Weiner after the sexting scandal broke in 2011.

Jeff Shell, chairman of the BBG and Universal Filmed Entertainment is supporting a secondary role by being an honor roll donor to the Atlantic Council. While the BBG is supposed to be neutral it has continuously helped increase tensions in Eastern Europe. While giving to the Atlantic Council may not be illegal while in his position, currently, the Atlantic Council's main effort is to ignite a war with Russia. This may set up a major conflict of interest.

As journalist Robert Parry wrote in October 2016, the propaganda campaign in favor of military confrontation with Russia was driven by "a consensus among the major think tanks of Official Washington, where there is near universal support for Hillary Clinton, not because they all particularly like her, but because she has signaled a return to neocon/liberal-hawk strategies."

The people who were lining up to take senior positions in a Clinton White House believed that President Obama had been too timid in stressing the dangers of overreach and the need for restraint, especially in the Middle East, and it was time for a more hawkish approach, as embodied by Clinton.

Parry goes on to say that at the forefront of this propaganda campaign was the Atlantic Council, a think tank associated with NATO. Their main goal was "a major confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia," Parry warned.

So, to make sense of all this, most of the people listed would have held cabinet positions in a Hillary Clinton presidency. If the Interpreter is a project of RFE/RL then the decision to go ahead with PropOrNot would have to go across their desk. That would include, possibly, then Secretary of State, John Kerry.

The unasked question of why would a U.S. Government Agency do this needs to be addressed. All the people listed above were actively working for Clinton to get her elected and throw Donald Trump's campaign off the rails.

After the election, they were going to take care of Clinton's "deplorables" by dissecting alternative media. I wrote about this before the election and I warned several major new sites what they could expect. I was right on the money. After she lost, it was already in motion. The deplorable media didn't fall into

a particular political pattern other than they did not promote Hillary Clinton.

The purpose of PropOrNot has been to trick people into demanding that freedom of speech be rolled back. This was/is to be done by destroying fact-based media. If you read further, the entire plan is laid out starting from 2015 when it started coming together.

These people want reality shaped on what the perceived majority (louder) group believes to be true, regardless of what the facts are. Perception based reality is only a Facebook like away from killing one person or elevating another to hero status regardless of what they have done.

11/28/2017

Boston's 'Free Speech' Rally Proved That No One Is Listening

BROUGHT TO YOU BY 



James Miller

That little statement about the free speech rally says it all. It's something that would hardly be noticed unless you were looking for it because it is part of the metadata.

Now you can say it's only a sentence and who cares? Nobody communicates through metadata do they? Wasn't that what PropOrNot was all about? Yes, they do communicate through metadata. That's why I look at it.

The screenshot shows the IronWASP interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Interactive Testing Tools', 'Dev Tools', and 'About'. Below this is a sub-menu with 'Console', 'Automated Scanning', 'Manual Testing', 'Scripting', 'Proxy', 'Logs', 'Results', 'JavaScript Tracing', and 'Dev'. The main content area is titled 'Form contents submitted to External Domains'. It includes a 'Finding ID: 1', 'Discovery Mode: Passive Traffic Analysis', and 'Passive Plugin Name: HTML Analysis'. A 'Summary' section states: 'Form contents in the page are submitted to subscribe.wordpress.com which is an external domain that might not be trustworthy'. A 'NOTE' section says: 'There might be more instances of this issue in toinformistoinfluence.com but they have not been reported to avoid creating a lot of noise.' Below the note are instructions on how to identify instances of this issue on toinformistoinfluence.com. At the bottom, a detailed view of an HTTP response is shown, including the status '1335 ms', 'Raw Headers', and the following text: 'HTTP/1.1 200 OK', 'Server: nginx', 'Date: Sat, 29 Jul 2017 08:31:11 GMT', 'Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8', 'Connection: keep-alive', 'Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400', 'Vary: Accept-Encoding', 'Vary: Cookie', 'X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit automattic.com/jobs and apply to join the fun, mention this header.', 'Link: <http://wp.me/1wMhe>; rel=shortlink', and 'Last-Modified: Sat, 29 Jul 2017 08:31:11 GMT'. A search bar and 'Show Options' link are also visible.

Do you see it? No? Look again. There in the metadata, at the bottom of the image is an ad for a job. Go for it and remember to mention the header. It could just as easily be hacking instructions, or a do not disturb sign. That's why it pays to really research carefully.

The Boston 'Free Speech' Rally was billed by the social networks and MSM as a fascist rally. It was actually a Free Speech Rally. What they learned is that with just a little nudge, they can make you demand nationalist repression. Nice going Boston!

Hey, is this starting to sound a little conspiratorial? If it is, we need Russkie hackers with Guy Fawkes masks to make this work. They have to admit to changing international politics through hacking in 2016, belong to a foreign country, code in Russian, and use spear phishing techniques to lure people in. Let's not forget that they also have to work for some form of Intelligence.

Most importantly, they have to work with and influence all of the people above. They will definitely impact U.S. foreign policy toward Russia. Let's raise the stakes even more. The hackers have to answer to whoever is funding a lot of the illegal and immoral activities.



PropOrNot ID Service

@propornot



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Героям слава!!



Inside The Ukrainian 'Hactivist' Network Cyberbattling The Kremlin

Who are the data thieves hacking their way inside Russia's digital corridors of power in an effort to win the war in Ukraine?

rferl.org

They are not even savvy enough to stay clear of outing each other. This is the Pravy Sektor hacker RUH8. The common thread for these hackers is clear if you read the linked material on the profiles that make up these organizations. They work for Bellingcat, Informnapalm, the Atlantic Council, Ukrainian Intel, and the Diaspora.

In a follow-up article, I have reason to ask if they were given access to United States Government Top-Secret Secure Servers. I'm not kidding.

In a Euromaidan Press article dated Nov. 2, 2016, the hackers state enthusiastically "Ukrainian hackers have a rather high level of work. So the help of the USA... I don't know, why would we need it? We have all the talent and special means for this. And I don't think that the USA or any NATO country would make such sharp movements in international politics."

And we have a winner. In 2016 the sharp movement in international politics was caused by...survey says...hacking!!!!

According to Donna Brazille, the Democratic Party servers were hacked multiple

times and the hacking didn't stop until December 2016. At this juncture, we should be able to agree that Seth Rich leaked the information to Wikileaks. But, now we are talking about other hacks. In the above-linked article, these hacker specifically say their favorite route is spear phishing email accounts.

In the article, you'll also see they work directly for Ukrainian Intel. Bellingcat works directly for Ukrainian Intel and works with them and the Atlantic Council. Stopfake.org is a product of Irena Chalupa who works for RFE/RL, the Atlantic Council and the Ukrainian government. Stopfake.org works directly with them and is a product of the Ukrainian government. CrowdStrike has an ongoing relationship with Ukrainian Intel and these particular hackers. Is it possible that CrowdStrike conjured up Fancy Bear, the "hacker(s)" responsible for divulging internal Democratic Party emails that supposedly tipped the 2016 election in Trump's favor? ("Fancy Bear," by the way, is technically a set of tools, not a person.)

If so, this would mean that approval was given at the highest levels – presumably former Secretary of State John Kerry – for Ukrainian intelligence hackers to have access to servers inside a U.S. Government Agency because of PropOrNot and the Atlantic Council's reliance on the hackers.

How are the Ukrainian hackers tied into PropOrNot at any level? James Miller isn't shy about using their work. PropOrNot relies on the work of the Atlantic Council, Aric Toler, Aaron Weisburd, Clint Watts, and Joel Harding. The Ukrainian hackers work directly with InformNapalm and are the go-to resource for most of the people involved and all of the people just named.

As James Miller wrote at the Interpreter, "Below we have assessed the details of the reports from InformNapalm, and have expanded on their investigation."

Who does the Atlantic Council work for? It's the same people who staff RFE/RL and works closely with the Ukrainian World Congress, as explained here:

"On 29 January 2016 in Washington, U.S.A., Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) President Eugene Czolij and Atlantic Council President and CEO Frederick Kempe officially signed a Memorandum of Agreement to renew the cooperation between the UWC and the Atlantic Council, which began in September 2014.

"In accordance with this Memorandum, the UWC will continue its cooperation with the Atlantic Council on implementing the "Ukraine in Europe Initiative", which aims to galvanize international support for an independent, sovereign and territorially integral Ukraine, including Crimea. This initiative is also intended to support reforms in Ukraine and its EuroAtlantic integration, and to counter Russian disinformation."

The Ukrainian World Congress is represented in the U.S. Congress by the Ukrainian Caucus headed up by ISIS supporter and Nazi cheerleader Marcy Kaptur. Her Ukrainian Caucus represents people with political positions that scared Adolf Hitler in WWII.

The obvious takeaway is that a lawsuit is a bare minimum that needs to happen. People need to be investigated for crimes against the state. When we take a closer look at who had potential access to top-secret servers, which will become painfully clear.

Through their efforts to quash free speech and paint anyone who questions government propaganda as Kremlin stooges, these people are trying to tear the fabric of society into pieces. At the very least, they have earned a good tarring and feathering. When you look at the financial end of this a lawsuit in the billions would barely touch it.

Just one company the Ukrainian Diaspora started for this is valued over 100 million dollars. This will need to be a class action suit with a cease and desist to the BBG.

In early 2015, almost two years before most people took the idea of censorship seriously, I documented its inception. As often happens with many of the biggest stories of our times, I stumbled onto it by accident.

In early March 2015, Ukrainian Information Policy designer Joel Harding laid out what to expect going forward in the following statements: "In military IIO [Inform and Influence Operations] center on the ability to influence foreign audiences, US, and global audiences, and adversely affect enemy decision making through an integrated approach. Even current event news is released in this fashion. Each portal is given messages that follow the same themes because it is an across the board mainstream effort that fills the information space entirely when it is working correctly."

The purpose of "Inform and Influence Operations" is not to provide a perspective, opinion, or lay out a policy. It is defined as the ability to make audiences "think and act" in a manner favorable to the mission objectives. This is done through applying perception management techniques which target the audience's emotions, motives, and reasoning.

These techniques are not geared for debate. It is to overwhelm and change the target psyche.

Using these techniques information sources can be manipulated and those that write, speak, or think counter to the objective are relegated as propaganda, ill-informed, or irrelevant.

While the above sounds gloriously overoptimistic, Harding, along with his little band of Kremlin Troll hunters personally started developing the idea of organizations capable of blackballing journalists and publications in a way that could not be construed as censorship.

From another March 2015 article – A “Disinformation Charter” for Media and Bloggers: “Top-down censorship should be avoided. But rival media, from Al-Jazeera to the BBC, Fox and beyond, need to get together to create a charter of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Vigorous debate and disagreement are, of course, to be encouraged – but media organizations that practice conscious deception should be excluded from the community. A similar code can be accepted by bloggers and other online influencers.”

This “Disinformation Charter” for responsible behavior (Ministry of Truth?) he describes is to fight “conscious deception” can only be weighed against how he describes Propaganda. “The word is frequently used to describe any news emerging one’s opponent,” according to Harding.

Journalists who need to be excluded are those “our side” label as propagandists or active measure agents.”

Harding’s connections in media are huge. Through his friend Matthew Armstrong, Harding had access to and the ear of the board of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, staffed by a who’s who of network and radio broadcast, print media and shortwave CEOs and heavy hitters. They are the ones behind RFE/RL.

On the other end of this in 2015, Joel Harding was assembling a group of miscreants to attack the social networks of different journalist and publications. The crude logic behind a direct assault was that by developing, training, and overseeing vast troll networks they could speak over their opposition (people that their employers wanted to be silenced) and subdue dissident online conversation and control the information.

Where this wasn’t feasible, they set up hack and harass attacks at various publications to get them to stop publishing hard-hitting journalists. This still hasn’t been entirely effective because it caused publishers to dig in and harden their internet properties instead.

The softer more indirect approach Harding pushed in March 2015 quickly developed into the unified media strategy he wanted for the U.S. and Europe. Control the information and don’t allow contradicting information or news into the media stream. When it does get in, call it propaganda.

Enter PropOrNot.
