

Washington Post effectively Retracts 'Fake News' story Fearing class action Litigation

by Tyler Durden via jane - Zero Hedge Thursday, Dec 8 2016, 8:32pm

international / prose / post

In the latest example of why the "mainstream media" is facing an historic crisis of confidence among its readership; the huge and unprecedented blowback following **Craig Timberg's** November 24 Washington Post story, "Russian propaganda effort helped spread 'fake news' during election, experts say." Last Wednesday saw a lengthy editor's note appear on top of the original article in which the editor not only distances the WaPo from the "experts" quoted in the original article, whose "work" served as the basis for the entire article (and which became the most read WaPo story the day it was published) but also admits the Post could not "vouch for the validity of PropOrNot's finding regarding any individual media outlet", in effect admitting the entire story may have been, drumroll "fake news" itself and conceding the Bezos-owned publication may have engaged in defamation by smearing numerous websites - Zero Hedge included - with patently false and unsubstantiated allegations clearly designed to damage.

It was the closest the Washington Post would come to formally retracting the story, which has now been thoroughly discredited not only by outside commentators, but by its own editor.

The appended note in question:

Editor's Note: The Washington Post on Nov. 24 published a story on the work of four sets of researchers who have examined what they say are Russian propaganda efforts to undermine American democracy and interests. One of them was PropOrNot, a group that insists on public anonymity, which issued a report identifying more than 200 websites that, in its view, wittingly or unwittingly published or echoed Russian propaganda. A number of those sites have objected to being included on PropOrNot's list, and some of the sites, as well as others not on the list, have publicly challenged the group's methodology and conclusions. The Post, which did not name any of the sites, does not itself vouch for the validity of PropOrNot's findings regarding any individual media outlet, nor did the article purport to do so. Since publication of The Post's story, PropOrNot has removed some sites from its list.

As The Washingtonian notes, the implicit concession follows intense and rising criticism of the article over the past two weeks. It was "rife with obviously reckless and unproven allegations," Intercept reporters Glenn Greenwald and Ben Norton wrote, noting that PropOrNot, one of the groups whose research was cited in Timberg's piece, "anonymous cowards." One of the sites PropOrNot cited as Russian-influenced was the Drudge Report.

The piece's description of some sharers of bogus news as "useful idiots" could "theoretically include anyone on any social-media platform who shares news based on a click-bait headline," Mathew Ingram wrote for Fortune.

But the biggest issue was PropOrNot itself. As Adrian Chen wrote for the New Yorker, its methods were themselves suspect, hinting at counter-Russian propaganda - ostensibly with Ukrainian origins

- and verification of its work was nearly impossible. Chen wrote "the prospect of legitimate dissenting voices being labelled fake news or Russian propaganda by mysterious groups of ex-government employees, with the help of a national newspaper, is even scarier."

Criticism culminated this week when the "Naked capitalism" blog threatened to sue the Washington Post, demanding a retraction.

Now, at least, the "national newspaper" has taken some responsibility, however the key question remains: by admitting it never vetted its primary source, whose biased and conflicted "work" smeared hundreds of websites, this one included, just how is the Washington Post any different from the "fake news" it has been deriding on a daily basis ever since its endorsed presidential candidate lost the elections?

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[The Washington Post may soon confront legal reality for its pathetic and feeble attempt to discredit numerous credible alternative news sites. If a class action becomes realised the WaPo stands to lose more than funds, notwithstanding its credibility as a mainstream news purveyor is already in the gutter. Indeed, the fool that put his name to the offending 'story' is now a leper in the industry and has effectively ended his career, notwithstanding that litigation may indeed sober the entire mainstream propaganda industry, which has been functioning in a fools paradise for some years, which folly has resulted in readers abandoning the mainstream press in droves . The mainstream has failed to realise that the public majority consider it to be the major source of 'Fake News' and crude propaganda, as history clearly records.

We shall see how the entire situation pans out as the alternative media is not without its highly specialised journalists, analysts, legal and other experts. Nevertheless, there is no hope for the Washington Post, a failed enterprise owned by an industry outsider -- stick to what you know, Bezos, as it is now obvious you know NOTHING about the media. If you imagine otherwise then place your rag on the market and see what prices are offered because it's all downhill for the WaPo from here.]

<http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-12-07/washington-post-apends-russian-propaganda-story-adm-its-it-may-be-fake>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2438.html>