

# de.news-front.info

A pro-Kremlin website covering politics in Germany and globally. It has repeatedly published false and misleading claims, including about the COVID-19 virus, and frequently promotes Russian disinformation.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

**Score: 7.5/100**

## Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by Mediagroup Newsfront, LLC, a privately-held and Crimea-based news agency also known as NewsFront. Konstantin Knyrik told NewsGuard in a phone interview that he and Mikhail Sinelin are the company's co-founders and co-owners.

Knyrik serves on the city council in Bakhchysarai, Crimea. He is also chairman of the Crimean branch of Russia's far-right Rodina party, which was founded by a former advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Sinelin serves on the board of directors of the Russian government agency Export Insurance Agency of Russia (EXIAR). The site does not disclose the political roles of the two co-founders.

According to the site's YouTube page, the news agency is "a new project" of an entity called The Southeastern Front ("Die südöstliche Front"), founded in March 2014. It is unclear if The Southeastern Front funds the site or whether it is the site's parent company.

NewsGuard could not find any information about the Southeastern Front.

The site is also available in Russian, Georgian, English, Ukrainian, Serbian, Hungarian, French, and Spanish.

De.News-Front.info runs advertisements and solicits donations.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

## Content

On the About Us (Über Uns) page, the site describes itself as "voluntary fighters of the information war, fighting bravely against cynical lies, suspicion, manipulation and disinformation," and against "the kind of weapons of mass destruction with which the West conducts a new type of robbery and colonial war." It also discloses its affinity for Russia, stating that "Russia resembles the phoenix that has risen from the ark of humiliation and betrayal."

In its coverage of German and European politics, the site often criticizes established media organizations, immigration, NATO, and Islam. The site offers

dedicated sections for coverage of Russia and Ukraine, including the Russian-controlled Ukrainian area of Crimea and Novorossiia. Articles on the site generally are premised on the claim that those areas are legitimately part of Russia.

Typical articles have run under headlines including "Refugee waves could trigger European flight" ("Flüchtlingswellen könnten Flucht der Europäer auslösen"); "'Security risk islam': ex-policeman warns of 'gangster-jihad'" ("Sicherheitsrisiko Islam": Ex-Polizist warnt vor "Gangster-Dschihad"); and "Germany and Russia strengthen their economic relations" ("Deutschland und Russland stärken ihre Wirtschaftsbeziehungen").

A Video section provides news videos from the site's Russian-language edition.

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#### Credibility

Although articles on De.News-Front.info often rely on reputable news outlets, including Der Spiegel and the BBC, the site frequently draws content from Russian propaganda sites such as RT and Sputnik News, as well as content from far-right outlets such as Compact Magazin and Contra Magazin — websites that NewsGuard found frequently publishes false and misleading information. The site also often relies on the Russian news agency ANNA News.

De.News-Front.info itself has published misleading news, including about the COVID-19 virus, and advanced Russian propaganda.

For example, a March 2020 article titled "Because of COVID-19: Iranian doctors demand destruction of all US bio labs" ("Wegen COVID-19: Iranische Ärzte fordern Zerstörung aller US-Biolabore"), claimed that "the global outbreak of coronavirus was caused by unidentified laboratories that spread the epidemic across countries as part of a 'biological war.'" To back this claim, the article cited what it described as a letter by "101 Iranian doctors," which, according to the site, claimed that "there is ample evidence citing geneticists and biologists and WikiLeaks documents, which reinforces speculation about COVID-19's manipulation in biological laboratories and a biological attack by the U.S. against rival countries."

In fact, the letter referenced by De.News-Front.info only cites a tweet by a Chinese official who speculated that it "might be [the] US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan." Moreover, NewsGuard was unable to confirm the existence of such a letter. The letter appears to have first been reported by PressTV.com — a website NewsGuard found to be unreliable, which did not link to the letter itself.

There is no reliable evidence to back the claim that the new strain of coronavirus came from a lab, or was designed to be used as a weapon in a "biological war." A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus "is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus." An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is "96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus."

An October 2019 article titled "Russian Defense Ministry raises doubts as to whether US troops actually killed ISIS leader al-Baghdadi" ("Russisches Verteidigungsministerium erhebt Zweifel daran, ob US-Truppen IS-Führer Al-Baghdadi tatsächlich getötet haben"), advanced the Kremlin's unsupported claim that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had not been killed during a U.S. military raid in northwestern Syria in October 2019. The article stated that "there is no credible data to prove that a successful American assault on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has taken place," adding, "The US coalition hasn't even carried out airstrikes in Idlib [northwestern Syria] lately."

The U.S. Central Command that led the U.S. raid against the Islamic leader confirmed al-Baghdadi's death. A U.S. White House statement said that although his body was mutilated after he detonated a suicide vest, "test results gave certain and positive identification."

In a May 2019 article, titled "In Salisbury 'poisoned' Skripal contacted relatives" ("In Salisbury 'vergifteter' Skripal nahm Kontakt zu Verwandten auf"), NewsFront stated that Russia's military agents were not responsible for the March 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK. "We remind you that the scandalous Skripal case, allegedly linked to the use of a certain toxic substance in the British Salisbury, has been used repeatedly by

London for anti-Russian demarches," the article stated. "Britain blamed the Russian security services, although no evidence was presented."

In September 2018, the UK charged two Russians with attempted murder in Skripal's poisoning. Then British Prime Minister Theresa May said that the two men were Russian military intelligence officers, a finding backed by other western governments, including the U.S.

In numerous articles, NewsFront has denied Russia's involvement in the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, which was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile in Eastern Ukraine in July 2014, killing all 298 persons on board.

A June 2019 article titled "Questions without answers: The crash of MH17 became a game for hundreds of human lives" ("Fragen ohne Antworten: Der Absturz von Mh17 wurde zu einem Spiel für hunderte von Menschenleben"), suggested that the airplane had been shot down by the U.S., claiming that it was "no secret to anyone that the crash site was in the operational zone of an American military satellite" and that "Determining the rocket's trajectory and even the launcher's exact position would not be difficult for modern US technology." A September 2019 article claimed that the investigation "amount[ed] to unfounded accusations against Russia."

A Joint Investigation Team from several countries, as well as investigations by independent researchers, concluded that the missile came from a Russian brigade and was transported into Eastern Ukraine by pro-Russian fighters.

De.News-Front.info has also advanced the Kremlin's claim that the Russia-backed Syrian government did not use chemical weapons against its own citizens in Douma in April 2018. A February 2019 article claimed that the attacks had been staged, claiming that "representatives of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides conducted an investigation of the region, but found no signs of chemical weapons use there."

Claims that the attacks were staged have been contradicted by first-person accounts, photographs, and videos documenting the atrocity, as well as reports

from the United Nations, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the French government.

Because De.News-Front.info has repeatedly published inaccurate or misleading claims, including Russian disinformation, NewsGuard has determined that the site frequently publishes false content and deceptive headlines, and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

The site purports to separate news from opinion, by labeling its opinion articles as "Commentary" ("Kommentar"). However, news articles are often opinionated and advance a pro-Kremlin agenda.

For example, a November 2019 article titled "Bulgaria: Sofia demands an apology from Moscow" ("Bulgarien: Sofia verlangt von Moskau eine Entschuldigung") stated that "Sofia's policy towards Russia [has] not been friendly recently," adding, "What else can they expect in return? They must learn to behave as the Kremlin has shown them."

Another November 2019 article, titled "Internet censorship in Russia? How mainstream media again twist the facts" ("Internet-Zensur in Russland? Wie Mainstream-Medien wieder die Tatsachen verdrehen"), stated that media reports about Russia's internet censorship were "once again an exaggeration," with the aim "to get widespread attention for the smear-campaign against Russia."

An October 2019 article, titled "Berlin's offer to Moscow and Ankara shows : You can no longer rely on the West" ("Berlins Offerte an Moskau und Ankara zeigt : Auf den Westen ist kein Verlass mehr"), stated that "It was unwise to remain loyal to the West, which ultimately caused more and more Germans to raise doubts about Germany's sovereignty."

On the About Us (Über Uns) page, the site discloses its Russian perspective, stating, "A quarter of a century ago, the West managed to throw us to the ground ... At that time we lost our great country, which was divided into fifteen independent states ... Today Russia resembles the phoenix that has risen from the ark of humiliation and betrayal."

Because De.News-Front.info purports to separate news from opinion and nonetheless publishes opinion in its news articles, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Although the site occasionally runs corrections, because none of the demonstrably false articles cited above were corrected, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not have effective practices for correcting mistakes.

The person who identified himself as De.News-Front.info's co-owner, Konstantin Knyrik, asked NewsGuard in a phone interview to send questions via email. However, NewsGuard did not receive a response to two emails inquiring about the articles cited above, the site's handling of opinion, and its approach to corrections.

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#### Transparency

The About Us (Über Uns) page discloses the site's ownership by the news agency NewsFront. The Contact page identifies the company's top manager, Konstantin Knyrik, along with a general email address.

However, the site does not state that Knyrik is a co-founder and co-owner of the site, and does not mention Mikhail Sinelin, who Knyrik told NewsGuard is a co-owner, or disclose that Sinelin is on the board of the Export Insurance Agency of Russia and previously served as the deputy chairman on the board of the state-run investment company VEB, at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin was the chairman of the same board. The site also does not disclose that Knyrik is the chairman of the Crimean branch of Russia's far-right Rodina party.

All of these factors have led NewsGuard to determine that De.News-Front.info does not meet the standard for clearly disclosing ownership, including notable ideological or political positions held by its owners.

Moreover, the site does not make it clear that Knyrik is also the editor-in-chief, as he has confirmed in interviews. The site does not identify any of its top editors.

Articles do not typically name the writer, and the site does not provide biographical or contact information about its content creators. (According to Knyrik, in a

2017 interview with Die Zeit, the site relies on 10 staff members and more than 100 outside contributors.)

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

De.News-Front.info's owner Konstantin Knyrik asked NewsGuard in a phone interview to send questions via email. NewsGuard did not receive a response to two emails, inquiring about the site's lack of disclosure regarding its ownership, editorial leaders, and content creators.

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## History

According to the site's copyright notice and a Whois domain search, the site was launched in November 2014.

In February 2017, Die Zeit quoted an unnamed former NewsFront employee who claimed that most of the site's funding came from the FSB, Russia's main domestic intelligence service. Knyrik, the head of NewsFront, denied that claim, according to Die Zeit.

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on March 25, 2020.*

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**Edited by:** [Eric Efron](#), [Florian Meißner](#)

**Send feedback to NewsGuard:**[Click Here](#)

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#### Transparency

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