

watergate.tv

A right-wing, Eurosceptic, and anti-Merkel website that covers German and international politics. The site regularly publishes false or misleading information.



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

Score: 15/100

Ownership and Financing

The website is owned by privately held Alternative Media Publishing, which is registered at a Cologne address. Along with Alternative Media Publishing, Watergate.tv lists German editor Volker Hahn as the person legally responsible for the website. Hahn is also named as a staff member.

Alternative Media Publishing also owns the right-wing newspaper Capitol Post, which describes itself as publishing news “that is usually censored!,” news-aggregation website Krisenfrei.de; and news sites Politaia.org and Neopresse.com.

Watergate.tv solicits donations and derives revenue from subscriptions. The site’s online shop sells reports and books, such as “The Suicide of Europe.” The site does not run advertising.

The site’s name appears to be a reference to the Watergate presidential political scandal in the US in the 1970s, which was driven in part by aggressive press coverage. “And our credo is media civil courage,” the site states. “We don’t look away, we don’t hold still, ... and we stand for better journalism.”

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ 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, Watergate.tv describes itself as an “investigative editorial network for the free, independent, and neutral press,” and a “reliable counterpoint to the existing media landscape.”

Watergate.tv mainly covers German and international politics, along with business, science, society, and health. Its political coverage largely focuses on Germany’s far-right political party AfD (Alternative for Germany), often quoting party leaders. In a dedicated section titled Media Criticism, the site extensively covers and critiques left-wing and establishment media outlets.

Typical headlines include “Does Merkel have her fingers in the pie? Brexit may be postponed again” (“Hat Merkel ihre Finger im Spiel? Brexit wird

womöglich erneut verschoben”); “Brussels wants to approve new, highly toxic Bayer pesticide” (“Brüssel will neues, hochgiftiges Bayer-Pestizid zulassen”); and “Caution: Germany is economically almost at its end...” (“Achtung: Deutschland ist wirtschaftlich fast am Ende...”).

The site previously had a video section and YouTube channel, but they have not been active since 2017.

Credibility

Watergate.tv articles are typically based on reporting by other media, including reputable outlets such as Welt and Daily Telegraph. The site at times publishes articles based on coverage from sites that NewsGuard has found to publish false content, such as Sputnik News and JournalistenWatch.

Watergate.tv itself frequently publishes false and misleading information, especially on matters relating to immigration, the European Union, and Chancellor Angela Merkel. The site also has promoted conspiracy theories about the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the outbreak of the Wuhan coronavirus in early 2020.

For example, a January 2020 article claimed that “The corona virus is not a 'natural' virus but, like many other viruses (HIV, Ebola etc.), originated from a laboratory in which the virus was bred — there are numerous observers who interpret different studies as if this were a biological weapon.” The article also stated that “Apparently the corona virus was produced in a Chinese laboratory in Wuhan.” The article did not cite any sources for this claim.

Although there is a laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology that works with dangerous pathogens, there is no evidence that the new strain of coronavirus was developed in such a lab. A February 2020 study published in the journal Nature found that the virus is “96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.” There is no evidence that the HIV or Ebola viruses were created in a lab either.

An April 2019 article, titled “Ex-architect of Notre Dame: That was no accident” (“Ex-Architekt von Notre Dame: Das war kein Unfall”) suggested that the Notre Dame fire was an act of anti-Christian arson, stating, “Who commissioned the Notre Dame fire? Who has an interest in igniting this church during Easter week and why?” The article continued: “It will be very difficult to

answer these questions and find evidence. For just as in 9/11, the masterminds will do everything they can to ensure that the truth never comes to light.”

There is no evidence that the Notre Dame fire was intentionally set. Officials have not pinpointed the cause of the blaze, but suspect an electric malfunction or a worker’s burning cigarette.

A January 2019 article, titled “UNCOVERED: Lawyers Committee calls for new investigation - 9/11 World Trade Center was blown up” (“ENTHÜLLT: Anwaltskomitee fordert neue Untersuchung – 9/11-World Trade Center wurde gesprengt”) suggested that the World Trade Center towers in New York City were taken down by explosives, citing unspecified “evidence that explosives were used to collapse the towers of the World Trade Center.”

The U.S. 9/11 Commission and multiple other investigations concluded that the towers were brought down by two passenger planes that had been hijacked by terrorists and slammed into the buildings. No credible evidence has emerged suggesting that the towers had been wired with explosives.

An August 2019 article, titled “Merkel on holiday in South Tyrol - for 80,000 euros” (“Merkel urlaubt in Südtirol – für 80.000 Euro”) reported that Merkel’s vacation in South Tyrol cost taxpayers “at least 80,000 euros - just for the flight costs.” The article did not cite sources for this claim, but noted that the German Air Force’s Global 5000 jet, which Merkel has used for transportation in the past, costs approximately 30,000 euro per hour to operate.

In fact, Merkel did not use a Global 5000 jet for her August vacation; those planes have been suspended since April 2019 due to an accident, as reported by German news station N-TV. There is no evidence that Merkel’s flights costs as much as 80,000 euros.

A May 2019 article, titled “Cambridge scientist: 'Mrs Merkel's doctoral thesis is bull****’” (“Cambridge-Wissenschaftler: 'Frau Merkels Doktorarbeit ist Bull****’”) reported that Merkel’s doctoral thesis was analyzed by unnamed physicists who concluded that it was plagiarized. “Merkel merely copied from 145 sources,” the article stated.

Journalism site Correctiv examined this claim and found it to be false. Correctiv cited several named physicists who analyzed the thesis and did not find any plagiarism. One of them, Prof. Dr. Ursula Gresser, stated that she "found no indications of plagiarism or plagiarism in the dissertation" and that "It was properly quoted...."

Because Watergate.tv has repeatedly published false or misleading claims in articles and headlines, 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 has a dedicated opinion section. However, NewsGuard found that the site frequently publishes opinionated statements in its news articles, advancing an undisclosed, pro-AfD and anti-Merkel agenda.

For example, a September 2019 news article, titled "Merkel government introduces creeping gold ban" ("Merkel-Regierung führt schleichendes Goldverbot ein"), reported on the government's tightening of regulations covering anonymous gold purchases. "The Merkel government is coming up with more and more measures to introduce the total surveillance state and to harass and deprive the citizens financially more and more," the article stated.

Another September 2019 news article, titled "Trumps Greenland Story - What's really behind it" ("Trumps Grönland-Story – Was wirklich dahinter steckt") stated: "Mainstream journalists can't imagine that Trump's supposedly 'stupid or ridiculous ideas' and tweets are based on strategy, because they simply can't understand Trump's strategies, which often involve confusion and deception."

A third September 2019 article, headlined "Are coalition rejections before an election undemocratic?" ("Sind Koalitionsabsagen vor einer Wahl undemokratisch?") reported on Saxony and Brandenburg state elections and defended the AfD against attacks by other parties. The article stated that the claim that AfD is "a right-wing populist Nazi party lacks any foundation," adding, "the behaviour of the established parties is undemocratic."

Because Watergate.tv does not disclose its ideological perspective and regularly publishes opinionated articles outside the Opinion section, NewsGuard has

determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Watergate.tv does not articulate a corrections policy. NewsGuard found only two corrections published in the last three years, and none of the false stories cited above have been corrected. This does not meet NewsGuard's standard for regularly issuing corrections.

The site did not respond to two NewsGuard emails inquiring about the site's reporting practices, including its publishing of false information, false headlines, mixing of news and opinion, and approach to corrections.

Transparency

The Imprint (Impressum) page discloses the site's ownership by Alternative Media Publishing and provides a general email address. The site does not identify its editorial leaders.

The About Us page lists seven writers, along with their biographical information. However, articles do not name the writer — which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators.

Watergate.tv does not run advertisements.

The site did not respond to two NewsGuard emails inquiring about the site's lack of disclosure about its editorial leadership and its content creators.

History

Watergate.tv was launched in July 2016.

According to web archive screenshots from July 2016, Watergate.tv originally belonged to the financial publishing service provider Yes Investmedia GmbH, located in Bonn. Alternative Media Publishing first appeared as the site's owner in the Imprint page in September 2018.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on April 27, 2020.

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

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