

observateurcontinental.fr

A Russian-affiliated website that has spread Russian propaganda and conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic. The site does not disclose its ownership.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 7.5/100

Ownership and Financing

ObservateurContinental.fr does not identify its owners. Domain registry records show that the site has listed as its technical director a Moscow, Russia-based company called Inforos Co., Ltd.

A 2018 investigation by The Washington Post revealed that Inforos, which describes itself as a news agency, is a front organization operated by Unit 54777, a Russian intelligence military unit involved in cyber-hacking and psychological-warfare. According to the newspaper, InfoRos is one of several front organizations that “are financed through government grants as public diplomacy organizations but are covertly run by Unit 54777 and aimed at Russian expatriates.”

Unit 54777 is part of Russia’s Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), a military intelligence agency. The GRU has been accused of conducting covert spy operations around the world, including infiltrating the Democratic National Committee’s email systems during the 2016 presidential campaign, and poisoning former GRU agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England, in 2018.

Inforos owns the website Infoshos.ru and InfoSCO magazine, which cover news about member states of the intergovernmental Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The site does not carry advertising.

- ✗ 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

ObservateurContinental.fr describes itself on the Who We Are page as an "independent, not-for-profit news portal" that “publishes the latest news and information, as well as analyses of all major world events.” (“Un portail internet d’information indépendant et à but non

lucratif... Observateur Continental publie les dernières nouvelles et informations ainsi que des analyses sur tous les événements importants dans le monde.”)

ObservateurContinental, which means “Continental Observer” in French, provides news and analysis on international politics and military developments. Content often promotes negative views of Western institutions and positive coverage of Russia’s leadership in international affairs. The Who We Are page states that the site is focused on Eurasian issues, economic integration, information security, and news about certain intergovernmental agencies, including the Eurasian Economic Union.

Typical headlines have included “The deterioration of relations between Washington and other countries under the Trump administration” (“La détérioration des relations de Washington avec d'autres pays sous l'administration Trump”); “Will Europe help refugees after COVID-19” (“L'Europe aidera-t-elle les réfugiés après le Covid-19”) and “BRICS: United against today’s challenges” (“Les BRICS: unis face aux défis actuels”).

Credibility

ObservateurContinental.fr has frequently published false and misleading information, including multiple stories advancing military disinformation campaigns pushed by the Russia government. The website has also republished articles from sites that NewsGuard has found to spread Russian propaganda, including French site ReseauInternational.net, Iranian outlet PressTV.com, and Canadian site GlobalResearch.ca.

For example, ObservateurContinental.fr published a story that first appeared on PressTV.com in April 2020, in English (and that was later published on French website ReseauInternational.net), that claimed that the U.S. military may have brought the COVID-19 virus to Wuhan, China. The story, headlined “Did the US torpedo the entire global economy to stop China’s rise?” (“Les États-Unis ont-ils torpillé l’ensemble de l’économie mondiale pour arrêter la montée en puissance de la Chine?”), stated that “if US intelligence knew that there was a potentially catastrophic pandemic developing in Wuhan, China, in November, it

means US intelligence knows what's happening in Wuhan, China, better than the Chinese do. And the only reason that that would be the case would be if the US had planted the virus there.” (“Donc, si les services de renseignement américains savaient qu’une pandémie potentiellement catastrophique se développait à Wuhan, en Chine, en novembre, cela signifie que les services de renseignement américains savent ce qui se passe à Wuhan, en Chine, mieux que les Chinois. Et la seule raison pour laquelle ce serait le cas serait que les États-Unis y aient planté le virus.”)

ObservateurContinental.fr also published an undated article, titled “Francis Boyle: COVID-19, a perfect biological weapon” (“Francis Boyle: ‘Le COVID-19, une arme biologique parfaite”)), which claimed that the COVID-19 virus “is a biological weapon that came straight out of American laboratories,” citing an interview with American lawyer Francis Boyle.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus originated in the U.S. or was engineered in a lab as a bioweapon. 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.” In an April 2020 statement, the U.S. intelligence community said it “concur[s] with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.”

ObservateurContinental.fr has also published multiple articles that claimed, contrary to an international finding, that the Malaysian Airlines passenger plane that crashed in eastern Ukraine in July 2014 was not taken down by a Russian missile. One such article, headlined “Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 tragedy: A Ukrainian-Western plot?,” touted the results of an investigation by Dutch blogger Max van der Werff that “refute allegations of Russian involvement,” the article claimed. (“Le blogueur néerlandais Max van der Werff a visité à

plusieurs reprises le site du crash du Boeing. Les résultats de ses enquêtes réfutent les allégations de l'implication de la Russie.”)

The story also suggested that Western secret services and some Ukrainians plotted to take down the plane and blame Russia. “Was it a provocation planned in advance in coordination with Western and Ukrainian secret services to accuse Russia and the Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] of terrorism? Or was it a heinous crime carried out on the spot by putschists in Kiev and without prior preparation, and then to blame the entire thing on Moscow and the DNR?” (“Etait-ce une provocation préparée à l’avance en coordination des services secrets occidentaux et ukrainiens pour faire porter l’accusation de terrorisme à la Russie et aux républiques populaires du Donbass ? Ou était-ce un crime odieux réalisé par les putschistes de Kiev sur le coup et sans préparation au préalable, pour ensuite mettre le tout sur le dos de Moscou et de la DNR ?”)

Russian officials have repeatedly denied responsibility for the Malaysian Airlines crash. However, an international joint investigation, as well as investigations by independent researchers, found evidence that the missile came from a Russian brigade and was transported into Eastern Ukraine by pro-Russian fighters.

Because ObservateurContinental.fr has frequently published debunked and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and other false claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site does not disclose a particular ideological perspective or political agenda. Nevertheless, as the articles cited above indicate, it frequently publishes content advancing a pro-Russia agenda and narrative. Opinion content is not labeled.

For example, an undated and unlabeled article titled “Syria: the US and Europe continue their accusations against Russia” (“Syrie: les USA et l’Europe poursuivent leurs accusations contre la Russie”)

criticized humanitarian groups involved in the Syrian civil war. “Instead of launching ridiculous and endless accusations towards Damascus, Moscow or Tehran, they should rather request their country governments to stop tormenting the Syrian people, as it has been the case for many years” the article stated. (“Au lieu de lancer des accusations ridicules et sans fin en direction de Damas, Moscou ou Téhéran, elles feraient bien mieux de demander aux gouvernements des pays de leur appartenance de cesser de martyriser le peuple syrien, comme ce fut le cas depuis de longues années.”)

Another undated and unlabeled article accused Prague of having become “a center of attacks on Russia.” According to the article, “From now on, it will be relatively easy for the coalition of Western intelligence units, starting with the British-American duo, to put the blame on Russian services for every attack, real or fictional, in cyberspace or elsewhere.” (“Désormais, il sera assez facile pour la coalition des services de renseignement occidentaux, et en premier lieu pour le duo américano-britannique, de mettre sur le dos des services russes toute attaque, réelle ou fictive, dans le cyberespace ou ailleurs”).

Because ObservateurContinental.fr does not disclose a political perspective, yet presents news with a pro-Russian orientation, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

ObservateurContinental.fr does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

ObservateurContinental.fr did not respond to two emails seeking comment on the stories cited above, the site’s approach to corrections, and its handling of opinion.

Transparency

ObservateurContinental.fr does not disclose its ownership or who is in charge of its content.

Many articles do not include author names, and the site does not provide any contact or biographical information for its content creators

The site does not run advertising.

ObservateurContinental.fr did not respond to two emails inquiring about the site's lack of disclosure regarding its ownership, editorial leadership, and content creators.

History The site was created in April 2019.

Written by: [Sophia Tewa](#)

Edited by: [Eric Efron](#), [Chine Labbe](#), [Yves Clarisse](#)

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

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

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