

21stcenturywire.com

A website covering international and U.S. politics that has promoted Russian propaganda and false health claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.



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

Score: 10/100

Ownership and Financing

21stCenturyWire.com does not disclose its ownership. However, a donations tab on the site lists the recipient as “21Wire Media,” a business name that was registered by North End Communications LLC in 2014, according to Missouri records.

Tim Henningsen, the owner of North End Communications LLC, told NewsGuard in a July 2020 email that his company does not own 21stCenturyWire.com and has no role in its editorial operations. He identified the owner of the site as his brother, Patrick Henningsen, who is identified on the website as its founder and executive editor.

“We provide pro bono consulting on digital media strategies as needed,” Tim Henningsen said. “We set up the 21Wire Media entity under our consulting company for this purpose. We setup the PayPal to go directly to Patrick and his team there. We do not have any involvement in the donations and they go directly to 21stCenturyWire.com.”

Three NewsGuard emails to an editor’s address at the site, which Tim Henningsen said was Patrick Henningsen’s address, did not receive a response.

The site generates revenue through advertisements and subscriptions to its separate 21Wire.tv website, which offers extra video content. It also accepts donations from readers.

-  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

21stCenturyWire.com’s About page states that “The purpose of our website is to educate, promote learning on geopolitical and social issues, as well as provide much-needed independent commentary, news reporting, including criticisms and critiques of larger corporate and foundation-funded media outlets and

their coverage. We also aim to deliver a consistent stream of independent research on subjects and views that are generally not covered in the corporate-owned and foundation-funded media spheres.”

The site’s content primarily consists of original opinion and analysis relating to international and U.S. politics, along with content aggregated from other sources with the site’s added commentary. Typical articles have run under headlines such as “The Surveillance State: How to Disappear,” “‘We Are Not Guinea Pigs’ – South African Anti-Vaccine Movement Opposing Big Pharma,” and “Why U.S. Wars in the Middle East Are Far from Over.”

Podcast and video content are housed in the site’s TV & Radio section, including the weekly “Sunday Wire Live” hosted by Executive Editor Patrick Henningsen. The section also links to an archive of clips of Henningsen’s appearances as a political analyst on RT International, a Russian-owned news and propaganda operation.

Credibility

21stCenturyWire.com has repeatedly promoted false claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a July 2020 article headlined “Is the Texas COVID ‘Second Wave’ Fake News?,” republished from the website of the Ron Paul Institute, made multiple false claims to back its argument that COVID-19 deaths and cases in Texas were being exaggerated. According to the article, “Deaths from coronavirus – even the deaths ‘with’ coronavirus rather than deaths ‘from’ coronavirus – are down more than 90 percent since the peak in April. The decline in deaths continues.”

The article did not provide a source for this claim. According to multiple authorities, COVID-19 deaths were rising, not declining, in early July 2020, when the article was published. According to Worldometers.info, a site that tracks the pandemic, Texas reported an average of 47 COVID-19 deaths per day between June 30 and July 7. In April, that seven-day rolling average never rose above 32 deaths per day.

The same article said that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott may have based an executive order requiring face masks to be worn in public “on inaccurate information about a ‘rise’ in Covid cases due to the Texas State Department of Health Services changing the definition of what constitutes ‘Covid case.’” The article’s source for this claim was a May hearing of the Collins County Commissioners Court, where, according to the story, “it was revealed that while previously the determination of a Covid ‘case’ was a confirmed test result, the definition was suddenly changed to count ‘probable’ cases as ‘cases.’ At the same time, the threshold for determining ‘probable’ was lowered to a ridiculous level.”

In fact, while the Texas Department of State Health Services did release a document in May defining what constitutes a “probable” case of COVID-19, the department’s COVID-19 dashboard states, “Probable cases are not included in the total case numbers.”

In May 2020, the site published a YouTube video that featured an interview with Dolores Cahill, a professor at University College Dublin’s School of Medicine and chairperson of the Irish Freedom Party, which advocates for Ireland leaving the European Union. The video, which was first published on a YouTube channel called Computing Forever, included Cahill’s claim that face masks will result in low oxygen levels and weaken a person’s immune system. “What a mask does, it’s entirely the wrong thing. It actually reduces the oxygen supply to you, so actually everybody has latent viruses within their body, and because you’re under oxygen stress, it allows viruses that were latent—because you’re under stress it decreases your immune system,” Cahill said.

Health experts say face masks do not reduce oxygen supply. Although Cahill does not mention a specific kind of mask, according to a May 2020 article by health fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org, even heavier duty surgical and N95 masks used by health care workers are porous enough to allow gas molecules such as oxygen to pass through, while limiting exposure to the respiratory droplets that could spread the COVID-19 virus. Cloth masks recommended for use by the

general public have a looser fit than masks used in health care settings, HealthFeedback.org reported, making them even less likely to result in low oxygen levels.

In the same video, Cahill denied that the COVID-19 virus could be transmitted through respiratory droplets. “There is no need for social distancing,” Cahill said. “There are only three organisms that are transmitted in that way, and it’s TB and smallpox and Ebola, so this one is not. This one is transmitted if a droplet is on a door handle.”

While it is plausible that the virus can be transmitted through contaminated surfaces, respiratory droplets have been identified as the main method of transmission by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

21stCenturyWire.com has repeatedly promoted Russian claims meant to discredit reports of chemical attacks carried out by the regime of Syria President Bashar al-Assad on Syrian civilians. For example, a March 2019 article titled, “SYRIA: Report Claims French, Belgian Intelligence Plotting ‘Chemical False Flag’ in Idlib,” asserted that the Syrian relief organization known as the White Helmets was going to stage a fake chemical attack in the Idlib province of northwest Syria, based on a report from RT International.

“According to Major General Viktor Kupchishin, head of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation in Syria, intelligence has been received which indicates that France and Belgium intelligence services have been plotting to stage a ‘false flag’ chemical attack in Idlib in order to somehow frame Russia and strengthen the case for further western military intervention and aid to terrorist forces currently occupying Idlib,” the article stated.

There is no evidence to back the claim that the White Helmets have staged fake chemical attacks in Syria, or that they plan to do so. According to the European Union’s fact-checking unit EU vs. Disinfo, such claims

are part of an ongoing Kremlin campaign to portray the White Helmets as terrorists. Claims denying that Syrian government forces conducted chemical attacks against civilians, or that these attacks were staged, contradict a large body of evidence, including international investigations, press reports, first-person accounts, and video footage.

A November 2019 article, titled “Revealed: How the OPCW Manipulated Douma ‘Chemical Attack’ Report,” challenged the findings of a report by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which found evidence that a chlorine attack took place in Douma, Syria, in April 2018. Citing an email from a OPCW inspector that had been published by WikiLeaks and reported by RT, the article claimed that “the OPCW has been caught suppressing evidence and manipulating its findings in its investigation into alleged ‘chemical weapons’ in Douma, Syria which western governments had claimed took in April 2018.” It went on to assert that the Douma attack was “an orchestrated hoax, and the OPCW executives actively worked to cover it up.”

The document that the article refers to was an internal email sent by an OPCW employee in June 2018 and publicly released by WikiLeaks in November 2019. It does not support the claim that the report was falsified. Rather, the email described internal concerns about the likely source of the chemicals. The final OPCW report noted those concerns but concluded that “witnesses’ testimonies, environmental and biomedical samples analysis results, toxicological and ballistic analyses from experts, additional digital information from witnesses—provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place.”

Claims that Syria did not use chemical weapons on its citizens in Douma have also been contradicted by first-person accounts, photos, and videos documenting the victims, as well as reports from the United Nations and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

21stCenturyWire.com has also repeatedly published articles denying that Russia was responsible for the crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, which killed 298

people in eastern Ukraine in July 2014. For example, a June 2020 article titled “New Short Film: ‘MH17: BUK Media Hunt,’” republished a YouTube documentary that claimed that eyewitnesses saw the plane being shot down by Ukrainian fighter jets. “More new evidence which counters western mass media propaganda campaign regarding the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17,” the article stated.

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

Because 21stCenturyWire.com has published multiple false and misleading 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 website does not post a corrections policy and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

21stCenturyWire.com claims not to have a specific political perspective or agenda, stating on its About page: “Rather than aligning our slate with any particular party or ideology, instead we strive to deliver content that addresses specific issues and trends, challenges the establishment’s orthodoxy on a range of issues, and most importantly – looks squarely at power, its architecture, as well as exposing the seeds of institutional corruption.”

The site does not have a dedicated section for opinion. However, articles that are labeled as news frequently contain opinion, which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for handling the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

For example, a July 2020 article, tagged as “U.S. News,” said of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden: “Biden simply cannot speak ‘off the cuff’ for more than a few minutes. It’s not that he doesn’t want to, it’s more likely that he’s both mentally

and physically unable to do so. Is this really the Democrat Party's best person to put forward as President of the United States of America?"

A May 2020 article, also tagged as "U.S. News," criticized Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's stay-at-home order during the COVID-19 pandemic. "It's now become apparent that both the Mayor and the state's governor, Gavin Newsom, are using their own draconian lockdown rules to keep residents from gathering enough signatures for a state recall challenge against them," the article stated. "As a result of these authoritarian trends, angry state residents have taken to social media to voice their opposition and anger as the state politicians' power grab."

An April 2020 article tagged "International News" stated, "Amid Covid-19 hysteria, 'real journalists' across the Western corporate media are shamelessly and eagerly fanning the flames of hysteria, panicking the public and ensuring both the government and corporate special interests that influence their policy remain firmly in control."

Asked about the website's false claims in articles cited above, lack of corrections, and lack of separation between news and opinion, Tim Henningsen, owner of North End Communications LLC, which set up the 21Wire Media entity for the site to receive donations, told NewsGuard in a July 2020 email that he is not involved with the site's editorial operations. He said questions about the site's content should be referred to his brother, 21stCenturyWire.com executive editor Patrick Henningsen. Three emails from NewsGuard to Patrick Henningsen seeking comment on the website's content did not receive a response.

Transparency

The About page identifies the editorial staff, including executive editor Patrick Henningsen, but does not identify the site's owners.

Tim Henningsen said that Patrick Henningsen is identified as the site's owner on its domain registration. NewsGuard found that Patrick Henningsen is not

named on the site's domain registration, and even if he was, that would not meet NewsGuard's standard for a user-friendly disclosure of ownership.

The About page provides links to the editorial staff's biographies and Twitter accounts, as well as two general email addresses for the site. Articles are generally attributed to their authors.

Some articles feature embedded videos with titles such as "Congress Is About To 'Sucker Punch' American Retirees" and "Alzheimer's-Like Memory Loss Has Been Linked To This Common Pill. Are You Taking It?" These videos, which are credited to an advertising firm called LockerDome, are labeled "Promoted Content," which does not disclose the commercial nature of the content.

Tim Henningsen called LockerDome "a monetization partner of 21stCenturyWire.com" and disagreed with NewsGuard's determination that the website was not labeling the paid content. LockerDome operates "much like Disqus where content providers pay them to be promoted on other sites in their network and then share revenue downstream to publishers," Henningsen said. "Thus, promoted content is the distinction."

History

According to the site's About page, 21stCenturyWire.com was founded in 2009.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on July 17, 2020, with comments from a representative for the site.

Written by: [John Gregory](#)

Edited by: [Eric Efron](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#)

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

Sources

Ownership and Financing

North End Communications registration:
<https://bsd.sos.mo.gov/e-commerce/company/search/1386958>

21Wire Media registration: <https://bsd.sos.mo.gov/e-commerce/company/search/2675829>

PayPal link: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?token=xMCuOGKb93nAfcvERboPtmf1jfjyHrKkPQS0iNkGicox_nHyrchif2lcRXQbojhMtmctW&fromUL=true&country.x=US&locale.x=en_US
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Content

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News/opinion #3:

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Transparency

<https://21stcenturywire.com/about/>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20200717142920/https://21stcenturywire.com/>
<https://21stcenturywire.com/category/patrick-henningsen/>
<https://21stcenturywire.com/category/can-erimtan/>
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History

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