

oann.com

The website for conservative cable news channel One America News Network, whose stories regularly distort facts to advance an undisclosed conservative agenda.



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

Score: 25/100

Ownership and Financing

One America News Network is owned by the family-run, San Diego-based broadcasting company Herring Networks, Inc. The company also runs the cable channel AWE, formerly known as WealthTV. The site says the One America News Network is “available in 35 million homes.”

The website derives revenue from advertising.

Content

OANN.com publishes originally reported stories primarily covering U.S. politics, with an emphasis on abortion, immigration, U.S. President Donald Trump, the economy, and the Democratic Party leadership. Foreign coverage has included Brexit developments, the unrest in Venezuela, and Mexico’s pledge to reduce the flow of migrants entering the U.S. The Video section includes a link to the OAN Youtube page. OANN.com also runs stories from Reuters.

OANN.com hosts content from shows on its cable channel, including the weekday shows “The Daily Ledger” and “The Tipping Point.” The site also publishes interviews with conservative political figures, such as California U.S. Rep. Devin Nunes and former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, who appeared on the network as a regular commentator for several months in 2017.

Typical articles have run under headlines such as “President Trump Handling Emergency Well During First Term,” “One America News Concludes Bombshell Interviews With Former Ukrainian Officials Including Lutsenko And Biden Dictated Fired General Prosecutor Shokin,” and “Russian Parliament Passes Amendment To Allow Putin To Run For Reelection In 2024.” OANN.com appears to delete most videos and stories approximately three weeks after publication, although the videos generally remain on the network’s YouTube channel.

In early April 2020, OAN was banned from the White House Correspondents Association’s briefing rotation — a list of 12 rotating journalists who are approved to attend White House press briefings — a step taken to maintain social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic, Politico reported. According

- ✗ 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.](#)

to Politico, the association’s action was prompted when Chanel Rion, an OAN reporter, attended briefings on days that she was not approved to be present, standing in the back of the room.

Rion said that she was attending the briefings “as a guest of Stephanie Grisham,” the White House press secretary, The Los Angeles Times reported.

Rion has generated controversy before. In March 2020, when President Trump was being criticized by Democrats and others for using the term “Chinese virus” to describe COVID-19 — a name that critics say has racist connotations — Rion asked President Trump whether he considers “the term ‘Chinese food’ to be racist because it is food that originated from China.” She went on to say that “major left-wing media, even in this room,” had “teamed up with Chinese communist party narratives” and sided with “foreign state propaganda” in order to harm the president.

Rion also asked President Trump if the criticism of his COVID-19 response was equivalent to siding with Islamic radicals and drug cartels, President Trump interrupted her to say, “OAN. Very good. Thank you very much. You treat me very nicely.”

Credibility

OAN has repeatedly published false or misleading information, including flawed statistics and debunked or unfounded conspiracy theories.

For example, a May 2019 article, headlined “Trump Admin. To Relocate 225K Illegal Aliens Around Country,” cited an incorrect statistic about undocumented immigrants. In an embedded video, an OAN host stated, without providing a source, that “over 90 percent of illegal aliens never return for their court dates [for asylum or deportation cases], and simply disappear into the country.”

Fact-checking website PolitiFact found this claim to be false, citing data from the U.S. Department of Justice indicating that during the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, 2017, 28 percent of undocumented immigrants were not present for their court hearings. During a five-year period ending in September 2017, the data showed, 23 percent of undocumented immigrants did not show up for their court dates. A NewsGuard review of the federal data confirmed these findings.

A March 2019 article, headlined “WATCH: Illegal Aliens Responsible for More Crime Than American Citizens,” stated that “criminal aliens are not only costing American taxpayers — they’re also costing American lives.” The article includes an embedded video in which the correspondent stated that “statistics from the Government Accountability Office and the

Department of Justice reveal these aliens are much more violent and commit crimes at a much higher rate than native-born Americans.”

GAO and Department of Justice reports reviewed by NewsGuard refute this assertion, indicating that undocumented immigrants do not commit a disproportionate number of crimes. The New York Times, The Washington Post, and NPR have also reported that undocumented immigrants are less likely than citizens to commit crimes, citing sources including census data, figures from the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics, statistics released by the Texas Department of Public Safety, and numerous articles published in academic journals. A March 2019 Cato Institute report, citing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, also showed that illegal immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans. “Recent peer-reviewed empirical studies have found no link between violent crime and illegal immigration, and a negative relationship between the number of illegal immigrants and most types of nonviolent crime,” the report from the libertarian think tank concluded.

The same OAN video stated: “According to the FBI, from 2005-2008, there were over 67,000 total murders committed in the US. Illegal aliens were responsible for 25,000 of those murders, meaning that in that timeframe, illegals committed nearly half the murders in the United States.”

The 25,000 figure appears to be drawn from a 2011 GAO report on non-U.S. citizens who have committed crimes. However, the 25,064 arrests of non-US citizens for homicide included in that report covered an almost 55-year period, from August 1955 through April 2010, not the 2005 to 2008 timeframe stated in the OAN video. According to a June 2018 report from the Cato Institute, if all of the 25,064 non-U.S. citizens arrested for homicide in that 55-year period were convicted, they would have accounted for 2.7 percent of all murders in the U.S. during that time period — so it is baseless to claim that “illegals committed nearly half the murders in the United States.”

In May 2020, OANN ran a segment titled “Reports: Deep State, China use COVID-19 for Population Control,” promoting the unsubstantiated theory that COVID-19 is part of a plan by the “deep state,” China, George Soros, and Bill Gates to enforce population control. To back this assertion, the site claimed that the patent for the antiviral drug remdesivir is controlled by “mainland China, Bill Gates, and the WHO, while the Clintons may have a stake in it as well. The entire cover-up is allegedly backed by globalist billionaire George Soros.” According to the

video: “China reportedly holds part of the remdesivir patent through the U.N. agency Unitaid, whose main donor since 2006 is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

According to a May 2020 fact-checking article from USA Today, neither China nor any international organization — including the Gates Foundations, Unitaid, Soros’ Open Societies Foundation, and the WHO — own the patent for the drug. According to the USA Today article, “While there are efforts to pool patents for potential treatments..., Gilead Sciences, which owns the U.S. patent for promising COVID-19 treatment remdesivir, solely maintains the intellectual property rights to the drug.”

The site has also promoted a conspiracy theory about the death of Seth Rich, a Democratic Party staffer who was shot on the street in Washington in July 2016. Rich’s death spawned a conspiracy theory that he was the source of internal Democratic National Committee emails that were published by WikiLeaks and was murdered because of that.

In a series of articles in 2017, OAN touted its effort to bring viewers “the real story behind the murder of DNC staffer Seth Rich,” adding that “the facts” about Rich’s death “don’t add up.” A video posted on the site in July 2017 began with a claim that “this report presents facts not covered by the mainstream media,” suggesting that the political establishment was conspiring to cover up Rich’s killing. “Numerous reports and firsthand accounts have suggested that Seth Rich was disenchanted with the Democratic Party, and was working to expose corruption that went to the highest levels of the DNC,” the video stated. It did not specify its sources for these claims. In a May 2017 video, OAN offered a \$100,000 reward “for any information that leads to the arrest of a suspect in the case.”

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies have refuted the claim that Rich’s death was somehow connected to WikiLeaks’ publishing of damaging information about Hillary Clinton. Washington police said the murder occurred during an attempted robbery. The claim was also discredited in Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s report on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, which stated that WikiLeaks had “implied falsely” that Rich “had been the source of the stolen DNC emails,” when the real source was a group of Russian hackers.

OAN has published numerous articles and videos relating to Alabama Judge Roy Moore’s unsuccessful 2017 U.S. Senate run that included false claims. For example, after nine women came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct against Moore, OAN posted a video in November 2017 that attempted

to discredit the allegations by saying that Moore had made a “potentially powerful enemy” by once ruling against a man named Richard Hagedorn in a court case. According to the video, Hagedorn’s brother is “a longtime editor at the Washington Post,” which first reported the allegations against Moore. This “coincidence,” the OAN anchor claimed, “throws the entire case into question.”

David Hagedorn, Richard Hagedorn’s brother, is a food columnist at The Post, according to his LinkedIn profile, not a “longtime editor.” Moreover, the OAN video provided no evidence that Hagedorn was involved in The Post’s reporting or otherwise connected to the allegations.

In December 2017, an article on OANN.com declared before the polls in Alabama had closed that Moore had won the race, based on what the network called its own “unofficial polling.” Moore lost the race to Democrat Doug Jones by two percentage points. The article was removed from the site soon after publication.

OAN also has published disinformation consistent with narratives promoted by the Russian government. For example, in May 2019, the website posted a video alleging that the “terrorist-linked” White Helmets, a volunteer humanitarian group, was “admitting to staging fake chemical attacks in Syria.” The group, which provides aid to Syrian civilians caught up in the country’s civil war, has denied the accusations. Media organizations including The Daily Beast and The Washington Post have reported that the allegations of White Helmets terrorist links and staged chemical attacks are part of a propaganda effort spread by the Syrian government and its Russian allies.

OAN also employs a reporter who simultaneously writes for the Russian state-owned news agency Sputnik, according to a July 2019 report in The Daily Beast. Kristian Rouz has covered U.S. politics for OAN since August 2017, the report stated, while also working for Sputnik. A Google search shows Sputnik has posted some 300 stories by Rouz, mostly regarding business news, since 2015. OAN segments featuring Rouz do not disclose his work for Sputnik.

OAN videos featuring Rouz have spread false stories also pushed by Russian state media. In a March 2018 OAN video, Rouz claims that “white genocide” is occurring in South Africa. Multiple human rights organizations have stated that reports about the genocide of white farmers in South Africa are untrue. Fact-finding group Africa Check spoke with Benjamin Goldsmith, a researcher at The Atrocity Forecasting Project, a genocide-prevention organization based at Australian National

University. Goldsmith said that South Africa is “not at high risk of the onset of genocidal violence, and has not been at high risk in recent years, either.” Twitter accounts linked to Russia have helped to amplify the white-genocide conspiracy theory, according to Australia’s Sydney Morning Herald.

In addition, a September 2018 OAN video featuring Rouz states that Russia was not responsible for the March 2018 poisoning in Britain of ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal. In September 2018, the United Kingdom charged two Russian men with attempted murder. Then-Prime Minister Theresa May said in a statement that “the two individuals ... are officers from the Russian military intelligence service.” The OAN video calls May’s statement “inaccurate,” and cites claims made by “independent Russian media” that the country’s intelligence service is not responsible for the attack.

Because of OAN’s record of frequently publishing false or misleading claims, NewsGuard has concluded that the site repeatedly publishes false content and does not gather and present information responsibly.

OAN does not disclose its conservative agenda. A video on the site’s Press Kit page describes the network as delivering “straight news, no speculation, no opinion, just the facts.” The site does not have a separate section for opinion articles.

Nevertheless, OAN consistently runs coverage that casts Republicans and President Trump in a positive light and Democrats in a negative one. A review by NewsGuard of the site’s homepage on May 24, 2019, found that out of 13 articles related to American politics, seven stories echoed Republican talking points, such as an article headlined “President Trump: Once Democrats Finish Fake Investigations, We Can Start Real Work.” None were supportive of Democrats or Democratic policies.

Moreover, news coverage on the site is often infused with opinion. For example, a story from May 2019 about the introduction of an “adversity score” for the SAT test — a number that takes into consideration a student’s socioeconomic background — refers to the measure as “academic socialism.”

Because OANN.com does not disclose an ideological agenda yet frequently publishes unlabeled opinion that advances its perspective, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

OANN.com does not list a corrections policy, and NewsGuard could not find corrections on the site. Because the site deletes most content after a few weeks, inaccurate content eventually

disappears from the site without being corrected. Most of the articles cited above are no longer live on the site but can be found on YouTube.

Headlines on the site, while often opinionated, generally do not include false information.

NewsGuard did not receive a response to three emails and a phone call directed to Krista Pendelton, Herring Networks' affiliate relations coordinator, seeking comment on OANN.com's editorial practices, including its publishing of false information, approach to corrections, and mixing of news and opinion.

In June 2020, the site did not respond to two additional emails seeking comment on the site's coverage of COVID-19.

Transparency

The website discloses its ownership by Herring Networks on its About page.

OANN.com features an OAN Personalities page that provides biographies of its anchors, but the site does not provide information about the people responsible for writing articles, nor does it identify editorial leaders. Most stories are attributed to "OAN Newsroom." The site's Contact Us page provides a general contact form.

Advertising is distinguishable from editorial content.

NewsGuard did not receive a response to three emails and a phone message seeking comment on OANN.com's lack of information about its editorial leadership and content creators.

History

In 2004, millionaire tech entrepreneur Robert Herring founded Herring Networks, Inc. and launched WealthTV, a cable channel mostly covering luxury travel and, occasionally, political news. In 2005, while on air, Herring offered the husband of Terri Schiavo (the subject of a famous right-to-die case) \$1 million to stop him from removing his wife's feeding tube.

In 2013, Charles Herring, Robert Herring's son and the president of OAN, told the Wall Street Journal that his family's company would be investing hundreds of millions of dollars to launch OAN.

In 2018, the network hired Jack Posobiec as a political correspondent. Posobiec is a conspiracy theorist known for promoting hoaxes such as Pizzagate and for espousing white supremacist beliefs.

Correction: A previous version of this Nutrition Label misstated the country where reporter Kristian Rouz was born. An attorney for OAN states that Rouz was born in Ukraine. NewsGuard

regrets the error.

Disclosure: After the original version of this Nutrition Label was published, NewsGuard analyst John Gregory's uncle, John Spiropoulos, worked at OAN as an on-air host.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on June 2, 2020, to include examples of the site's COVID-19 coverage. Earlier, on April 2, 2020, this label was updated to include details about the White House Correspondents Association's move to ban an OAN reporter from the White House briefing room.

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Correction

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