

JIM BANKS
THIRD DISTRICT, INDIANA



COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR
COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1403

May 11, 2022

Gen. Paul M. Nakasone
Commander
U.S. Cyber Command
Ft. George G. Meade, MD 20755

Dear General Nakasone:

I'm writing to you today regarding a \$749,387 federal grant the U.S. Air Force's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) contracting office awarded to a company called NewsGuard Technologies Inc. in September 2021. According to USASpending.gov, the taxpayer dollars were spent on NewsGuard Technologies' "Misinformation Fingerprints" program.

U.S. Cyber Command has used Misinformation Fingerprints to "monitor content containing state-sponsored mis- and disinformation and to identify the main sources publishing known false narratives."

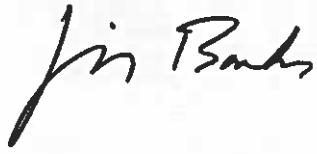
NewsGuard describes its Misinformation Fingerprints program as: "a catalogue of known hoaxes... The dataset for each narrative includes a description of each hoax and why it is false, examples of stories, social media posts, videos, and other content containing the hoax, and related keywords and hashtags." Basically, the Misinformation Fingerprints program allows A.I. and machine learning software to monitor and suppress stories and media outlets that NewsGuard has decided are false and unreliable.

The problem is that NewsGuard has an extreme partisan bias. NewsGuard's co-CEO, Steve Brill, claimed there's "a high likelihood that this [Hunter Biden laptop] story is a hoax, maybe even a hoax perpetrated by the Russians." NPR and the New York Times both received a 100/100 credibility rating from NewsGuard, after dismissing the New York Post's verified reporting on Hunter Biden's laptop. According to reporting from the Washington Free Beacon, NewsGuard's staff overwhelmingly supports the Democrat Party: "Twenty NewsGuard executives and advisers have contributed to Democratic candidates since 2015, with only six giving to Republicans."

The Department of Defense's financial support for the partisan suppression of political speech is an unacceptable and un-American abuse of taxpayer dollars. Restoring political neutrality to the Department of Defense will remain a priority for me during the 118th Congress.

To ensure the House Armed Services Committee's ability to fulfill its oversight duties, please maintain all internal documents related to U.S. Cyber Command's use of Misinformation Fingerprints and all communications between U.S. Cyber Command staff and NewsGuard Technologies Inc. employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Banks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

JIM BANKS

Ranking Member, House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Innovative Technologies, and Information Systems