



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 28, 2010

Feds Publish Misinformation in Attack on ‘Misinformation’

The federal government has decided to unconstitutionally waste more taxpayer money by demonizing and supposedly debunking “conspiracy theories” on the State Department’s propaganda-peddling website [America.gov](#), prompting ridicule and criticism across the world.

Under the banner “[Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation](#),” the website lists a variety of “popular conspiracy theories” with icons for readers to click on and “learn about.” According to the site, “Conspiracy theories exist in the realm of myth, where imaginations run wild, fears trump facts, and evidence is ignored. As a superpower, the United States is often cast as a villain in these dramas.”



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Among the theories the site purports to debunk are questions surrounding the September 11th attacks. Much of the “[debunking](#)” comes from the words of former U.S.-government asset Osama bin Laden. Ironically, just this week the *Washington Post* [reported](#) that CIA officers admitted to creating fake Osama video tapes for propaganda purposes.

Adding to the government’s credibility problem, the [BBC managed](#) to track down some of the alleged suicide hijackers. They turned out to be alive and well, protesting their innocence and living in places like Morocco. Though it has not been proven that the U.S. government played an active role in the 9/11 attacks, the government’s attempts to debunk the debunkers fall flat.

The State Department also attempts to minimize what it refers to as “economic conspiracy theories,” claiming the idea that “powerful individuals are motivated overwhelmingly by their desire for wealth” is false. It also labels a “fantasy” the notion that the U.S. employs “economic hit men” to entrap countries with huge amounts of debt. One popular financial analysis site [ZeroHedge.com](#) rebuts the government’s claim and recommends readers check out the book [Confessions of an Economic Hitman](#) for “the truth on this matter.” In the book, which the State Department repeatedly attacks on its site, the author claims he was charged with doing precisely what the website denies — entrapping countries with debt. And regardless of the accuracy of that book, virtually everyone knowledgeable about country-to-country aid accepts as fact that international loans under the guise of “foreign aid” always come with strings attached, often called “conditionalities,” and usually enrich the elite and politically well-connected at the expense of everyone else.

In the same section, [America.gov](#) claims the idea held by people who “fear international influences” that the “United States is sacrificing its sovereignty to an imaginary ‘North American Union’” is also false. But a [careful review of the facts](#) reveals that a merger is proceeding along the same lines as the development of Europe’s super state — a “free trade” agreement, cooperation on “[security and](#)



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[prosperity](#)," and much more.

On the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the site claims "all evidence indicates that Oswald acted alone." Except that is patently untrue, and almost everybody knows it. The U.S. House of Representatives' Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in its [report](#) that: "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy." But the State Department said "all evidence indicates that Oswald acted alone." Clearly that is not case.

The very next point turns out to be blatantly false as well: "Today, some conspiracy theorists falsely claim President Obama was not born in the United States, making him ineligible to be president. However, there is no doubt that he was born in Hawaii." Anybody who doubts that there is doubt about where Obama was born should simply consult [this Angus-Reid poll](#), which shows that in October of 2009, 30 percent of Americans did not believe Obama was born in the U.S. Whether he was or not is irrelevant, since there is clearly a high level of doubt. Simply claiming (falsely) that "there is no doubt" does nothing to debunk "conspiracy theories."

The website also features some videos. The [first one](#) includes author of *Religion and The Racist Right* and political science professor Michael Barkun, who warns that conspiracy theories "can be socially dangerous." Ironically, Barkun also discusses a "free market of ideas," which one would think should be free of government confiscating wealth from citizens and creating websites to promote a point of view.

But it doesn't work that way. Following some of the links on the site's "conspiracy theories" section reveals that the State Department actually operates its very own "[Counter Misinformation Team](#)." Unfortunately, the department's "[Bureau of Public Affairs](#)" did not respond to questions by press time about the cost of creating and operating its various propaganda outfits or the "conspiracy theories and misinformation" section of the website.

But while purporting to battle inaccurate information, exploring America.gov shows that the department is busy spreading its own misinformation. Ads placed throughout the Internet under the banner "[Adapting to a Changing Climate](#)" guide readers to State Department articles on America.gov like "[The Need for Action on Climate Change Is Urgent](#)." The page is shared with a picture of a lonely polar bear (trumping facts and logic with fear-based hysteria) and propaganda videos citing the [discredited, misinformation-peddling](#) United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. To understand the enormous amount of lies and exaggerations published by the panel, read about [Amazongate](#), [Africagate](#), [Glaciergate](#), [Chinagate](#), [Netherlandsgate](#), or countless other scandals that have emerged in recent months. Now that is true misinformation, but the State Department's "Team" has evidently not taken the time to explain those inconvenient facts.

The America.gov site also features videos like "Youth Empowerment Through Hip-Hop," "Diversity: Dearborn, Arab Capital of America" and all sorts of other videos touting "democracy" and other topics. The cost of these operations must have been enormous. Their value, however, is questionable.

As bad as that is, the Obama administration's Information and Regulatory "Czar" Cass Sunstein reveals a sinister view of unapproved thinking even more chilling than the State Department's. "Those who subscribe to conspiracy theories may create serious risks, including risks of violence, and the existence of such theories raises significant challenges for policy and law," he wrote in a 2008 [research paper](#). Sunstein proposed using secret government agents for "cognitive infiltration" of groups that do not subscribe to the government's various conspiracy theories. He even suggested banning or taxing



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conspiracy theorizing, which he defines as "an attempt to explain an event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who have also managed to conceal their role." Perhaps a tax on conspiracy theories could go toward funding more pro-government-regulation propaganda contests — like [this one](#) held by the Environmental Protection Agency.

While many conspiracy theories are obviously inaccurate, some are not (as noted on ZeroHedge, see [Gulf of Tonkin](#) and [CIA drug trafficking](#)). Therefore, it is important to question the government's version of truth by examining each theory and evaluating it on its merits before forming a definitive conclusion. Truth can stand on its own in the marketplace of ideas; it does not require taxpayer subsidies to support it. And Americans are smart enough to decide for themselves.

What is dangerous is not conspiracy theorizing, it's allowing the government to go so far outside the bounds of the Constitution that it now steals the wealth of its citizens to tell them what to think. While it's impossible to tell how much covert propaganda the government is producing (see [Operation Mockingbird](#)), the trend toward more and more resources being spent by government on overt propaganda is ominous and troubling. It should be halted immediately, not just because the government has no constitutional authority to do it, but because it's morally repugnant and worse than counterproductive.

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