

Investigation Number: A1

Date: June 18, 2021

Investigator: *****

Target: <https://www.patriotrising.com>

On Monday, June 13, 2021, I was asked to review whether <https://www.patriotrising.com> produces disinformation. This included determining who is behind the site, whether it has connections to other groups or people, and identifying the motivation behind its creation. Lastly, I was asked to assess how concerned our client should be about the site owners' ability to harm their physical security, brand reputation, or their ability to communicate with its customers. This summary details my findings.

Patriotrising.com describes itself as an "Alternative News Site". It publishes disinformation about gun rights, economics, and current events, and hosts an extensive collection of .pdfs on survivalism for download via FTP. The content is primarily repurposed articles taken from other prepper and disinformation sites and republished under the site's name.

The publisher of the site, Matt Andersen of Avon, Minnesota uses the email patriot@patriotrising.com to manage it. His personal email address is seekndestroy21@gmail.com. He runs another website called armageddonline.org, which is focused on surviving apocalyptic scenarios and has not been updated since 2020.

The site is currently hosted by Oso Grande IP Services, LLC, in Houston, TX, and uses the IP address 192.195.48.121, which it shares with many other sites. Previously, it was hosted by Endurance International Group in 2013, and Unified Layer in 2018. Notably, both companies are known for hosting spam sites. The Name Registrar is handled by www.enom.com and all of its registrant information has been privatized.

While both sites have presences on Facebook and Twitter, patriotrising.com is more active. It posts and likes its own website articles on Facebook under the account PatriotRising. While it is followed by 1,812 other accounts, other people rarely like or engage with it. Similarly, despite posting its articles frequently on Twitter, other users rarely like or retweet them*. Currently known as @RisingPatriot on Twitter, the account joined in 2013, and has over 10.5K tweets but only follows 30 accounts, and has 184 followers.

The purpose of the site is to generate money via affiliate marketing by encouraging people's interest in themes around patriotism and survivalism.

The lack of connections to other sites or engagement in social media suggest the site's reach into other communities is very shallow, nor does the site owner make much effort to extend it. The site owner has enough connections to be able to get other people to let him post their content on his site, but doesn't have the audience to get it out farther. The site's social media behavior on Twitter suggests that some, if not most of this account's behavior is automated. This, along with other evidence provided in the zipped directories documenting my process, suggest that while the target does publish disinformation, and has basic technological skills, the owner has little ability to affect our client nor interest in causing harm.

Site and Personal Details:

Site: patriotrising.com

IP Address: 192.195.48.121

Adsense Id: pub-7074525156245778

Analytics Id: UA-44490445, UA-9156498

Referrer: <https://whois.domaintools.com/patriotrising.com> (queried in 2017 by BuzzFeed)

Name: Matt Andersen

Last Known Address: 107 AVON AVE N APT 201, PO BOX 258, Avon, MN 56310

(Note: May work in St. Cloud, Minnesota, which is 23 minutes away.) Email:

seekndestroy21@gmail.com and patriot@patriotrising.com Telephone: has

not been confirmed. See files.

Selection of subdomains (11) via The Harvester on dnsdumpster.com: andersengems, armageddononline, autodiscover, flatblacktomato, mail, noblecustomhomes, and www sites for each.

Site Details:

The site republishes articles taken from known disinformation sites such as the Rutherford Institute (www.rutherford.org), Infowars, The Epoch Times (TheEpochTimes.com), Natural News (NaturalNews.com) and authors such as Mac Slavo, principal writer of ww.shtfplan.com. On occasion, it also posts thinly rewritten articles from disinformation sources, Fox affiliates, and other more well-known authors of disinformation such as @Ammoland.

Patriotrising.com's Google Page Rank is currently 1,236,337, which suggests it has little inbound traffic. Similarly, 665 referring IPs, and 577 referring subnets show little influence in the market as compared to Google, which has 2,718,911 referring IPs and 504,921 referring subnets. This is consistent with my assessment of it as a small private site by a single individual whose primary motivation is to make money base around an issue that they're interested in.

The sites myfamilysurvivalplan.com, lastminuteprepper.com, and astroecon.com share some code with armageddononline.com and patriotrising.com. These sites also appear to have been created for the purposes of link sharing. The most recent article on any of them was written in 2020. Sharing code however, does not mean they are necessarily linked to patriotrising.com. Determining this would require more time to investigate.

Tools:

A selection of tools used to perform this analysis include:

Command Line Tools:

The Harvester

Sherlock

Maltego
Holehe
Site source code

Web-based Tools:

analyzeID
builtWith DNSlytics
DomainTools
Nerdydata
Pentest-Tools
SpyOnWeb SpyOnMe
viewDNS – (DNS Record Lookup, Domain-IP-Whois, IP Location Finder, Port Scanner, and ReverseIP lookup)
Whoxy

Many of these tools provided duplicate information. They were consulted both to confirm findings and because sometimes they provided extra details.

I have included screenshots of the tools I used to investigate this site in a zip file. Given more time, I would dive in on the connections possible to find using such indicators as the Google Analytics ID (UA-44490445), the Amazon affiliates, and more. They helped support the idea that this is an affiliate marketing site for the purposes of generating clicks.

Process:

Establishing Identity:

The Support Us page on the site provides a link to the owner's Patreon page which show his name and a link to the Patriot Rising site's Facebook account.

Email Address:

The Support Us page contained a link to donate via PayPal. Clicking on that link exposed the email address seekndestroy21@gmail.com which was then confirmed via Holehe, a Github search, and other explorations.

Current Location:

The results confirmed through Holehe also provided a link to a map account. Using the seekndestroy21 account, Mr. Andersen reviewed a restaurant, commenting that a particular food truck's food was provided to his workplace. St. Cloud, MN, the site of the truck, is 23 minutes from Avon, MN.

Github search:

This provided: <https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/2017-08-partisan-sites-and-facebookpages/blob/master/data/domaintools-whois-results.csv>

This corroborated some evidence found in other places, too.

*On April 13, 2020, PatriotRising tweeted that it had been restricted from posting on Facebook due to the detection of unusual activity. In a second tweet it said it was “posting news stories for the website, which has been around for 10 years using fb all that time... BLATANT CENSORSHIP”. The post was liked only once, and by itself.