

Targeted Harassment: The Ukraine Whistleblower | Media Manipulation Casebook

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In the fall of 2019, a whistleblower logged a complaint about President Trump's dealings with Ukraine. A coalition of conservative and right-wing influencers and conspiracists encouraged campaign participants to keyword squat the name of an individual who they alleged was the whistleblower. Mainstream press outlets implemented a media blackout to protect the identity of the whistleblower, which involved never printing the name of anyone alleged to be the person, including the target of the keyword-squatting campaign. After attribution to this individual spread, some social media platforms blocked the use of his name. This asymmetrical media environment shaped the breaking news event and led to misidentification and targeted harassment.

(NOTE: In order to compile this case study accurately without furthering the aims of the manipulation campaign it details, we will refer to the targeted individual as "C" in this text wherever possible. The name will only be used in direct quotes, screenshots, or footnotes, per the URLs and headlines of articles being cited.)

[...]

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