

## FEATURED ARTICLES (/ARCHIVES/FEATURED-ARTICLES/)

### **CNN's New 'Reporter,' Natasha Bertrand, is a Deranged Conspiracy Theorist and Scandal-Plagued CIA Propagandist (/archives/featured-articles/2021/april/28/cnns-new-reporter-natasha-bertrand-is-a-deranged-conspiracy-theorist-and-scandal-plagued-cia-propagandist/)**

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The most important axiom for understanding how the US corporate media functions is that there is never accountability for those who serve as propagandists for the US security state. The opposite is true: the more aggressively and recklessly you spread CIA narratives or pro-war manipulation, the more rewarded you will be in that world.

The classic case is Jeffrey Goldberg, who wrote one of the most deceitful and destructive articles (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/03/25/the-great-terror>) of his generation: a lengthy New Yorker article in May, 2002 — right as the propagandistic groundwork for the invasion of Iraq was being laid — that claimed Saddam Hussein had formed an alliance with Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. In February, 2003, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, NPR host Robert Siegel devoted a long segment (<https://legacy.npr.org/programs/atc/transcripts/2003/feb/030204.siegel.html>) to this claim. When he asked Goldberg about “a man named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” Goldberg replied: “He is one of several men who might personify a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda.”

Needless to say, nothing could generate hatred for someone among the American population — just nine months away from the 9/11 attack — more than associating them with bin Laden. Five months after Goldberg's New Yorker article, the US Congress authorized the use of military force to impose regime change on Iraq; ten months later, the US invaded Iraq; and by September, 2003, close to 70% of Americans believed (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/sep/07/usa.theobserver>) the lie that Saddam had personally participated in the 9/11 attack.

Goldberg's fabrication-driven article generated ample celebratory media attention (<https://legacy.npr.org/programs/atc/transcripts/2003/feb/030204.siegel.html>) and even prestigious journalism awards (<https://www.americanacademy.de/person/jeffrey-goldberg/>). It also led to great financial reward and career advancement. In 2007, The Atlantic's publisher David Bradley lured Goldberg awa (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/05/AR2007080501576.html>)y from The New Yorker by lavishing him with a huge signing bonus and even sent exotic horses to entertain Goldberg's children. Goldberg is now the editor-in-chief of that

magazine and thus one of the most influential figures in media. In other words, the person who wrote what is arguably the most disastrous article of that decade was one most rewarded by the industry — all because he served the aims of the US security state and its war aims. That is how US corporate journalism functions.

Another illustrative mascot for this lucrative career path is NBC's national security correspondent Ken Dilanian. In 2014, his own former paper, The Los Angeles Times, [acknowledged](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/la-times-disowns-reporter_b_5770388) ([https://www.huffpost.com/entry/la-times-disowns-reporter\\_b\\_5770388](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/la-times-disowns-reporter_b_5770388)) his "collaborative" relationship with the CIA. During his stint there, he [mimicked false claims](https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-xpm-2012-jun-25-la-na-drone-oversight-20120625-story.html) (<https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-xpm-2012-jun-25-la-na-drone-oversight-20120625-story.html>) from John Brennan's CIA that no innocent people were killed from a 2012 Obama drone strike, only for [human rights groups](https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/human-rights-groups-accuse-us-war-crimes-msna192456) (<https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/human-rights-groups-accuse-us-war-crimes-msna192456>) and [leaked documents](https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2014-01-31/leaked-pakistani-document-contradicts-us-accounts-of-drone-strikes) (<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2014-01-31/leaked-pakistani-document-contradicts-us-accounts-of-drone-strikes>) to prove many were.

A FOIA request produced documents [published by](https://theintercept.com/2014/09/04/former-l-times-reporter-cleared-stories-cia-publication/) (<https://theintercept.com/2014/09/04/former-l-times-reporter-cleared-stories-cia-publication/>) The Intercept (<https://theintercept.com/2014/09/04/former-l-times-reporter-cleared-stories-cia-publication/>) in 2015 that showed Dilanian submitting his "reporting" to the CIA for approval in violation of The LA Times' own ethical guidelines and then repeating what he was told to say. But again, serving the CIA even with false "reporting" and unethical behavior is a career benefit in corporate media, not an impediment, and Dilanian rapidly fell upward after these embarrassing revelations. He first went to Associated Press and then to NBC News, where he broadcast numerous false Russiagate scams including [purporting to "independently confirm"](https://theintercept.com/2017/12/09/the-u-s-media-yesterday-suffered-its-most-humiliating-debacle-in-ages-now-refuses-all-transparency-over-what-happened/) (<https://theintercept.com/2017/12/09/the-u-s-media-yesterday-suffered-its-most-humiliating-debacle-in-ages-now-refuses-all-transparency-over-what-happened/>) CNN's ultimately retracted bombshell that Donald Trump, Jr. obtained advance access to the 2016 WikiLeaks archive.

On Monday, CNN made clear that this dynamic still drives the corporate media world. The network [proudly announced](https://twitter.com/CNNPR/status/1386666756937289728) (<https://twitter.com/CNNPR/status/1386666756937289728>) that it had hired Natasha Bertrand away from Politico. In doing so, they added to their stable of former CIA operatives, NSA spies, Pentagon Generals and FBI agents a reporter who has done as much as anyone, if not more so, to advance the scripts of those agencies.

Bertrand's career began taking off when, while at Business Insider, she abandoned her obsession with Russia's role in Syria in 2016 in order to [monomaniacally fixate](https://www.businessinsider.com/author/natasha-bertrand) (<https://www.businessinsider.com/author/natasha-bertrand>) on every last conspiracy theory and gossip item that drove the Russiagate fraud during the 2016 campaign and then into the Trump presidency. Each month, Bertrand produced dozens of Russiagate articles for the site that were so unhinged that they made Rachel Maddow look sober, cautious and reliable.

In 2018, it was Jeffrey Goldberg himself — knowing a star CIA propagandist when he sees one — who gave Bertrand her first big break by hiring her away from Business Insider to cover Russiagate

for The Atlantic. Shortly thereafter, she joined the Queen of Russiagate conspiracies (<https://theintercept.com/2017/04/12/msnbcs-rachel-maddow-sees-a-russia-connection-lurking-around-every-corner/>) herself by becoming a national security analyst for MSNBC and NBC News. From there, it was onto Politico and now CNN: the ideal, rapid career climb that is the dream of every liberal security state servant calling themselves a journalist. Her final conspiratorial article for (<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/04/kremlin-dictates-trump-putin-relationship/586975/>)The Atlantic (<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/04/kremlin-dictates-trump-putin-relationship/586975/>) before moving to Politico is the perfect illustration of who and what she is:

CNN's new national security star was no ordinary Russiagate fanatic. There was no conspiracy theory too unhinged or evidence-free for her to promote. As The Washington Post's media reporter Erik Wemple documente (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/28/how-politicos-natasha-bertrand-bootstrapped-dossier-credulity-into-tv-gig/>)d once the Steele Dossier was debunked (<https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/trump-russiagate-steele-dossier/>), there was arguably nobody in media other than Rachel Maddow who promoted and ratified that hoax as aggressively, uncritically and persistently as Bertrand. She defended it (<https://twitter.com/natashabertrand/status/1136260805459152897>) even after the Mueller Report corroborated virtually none (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/24/what-steele-dossier-said-vs-what-mueller-report-said/>) of its key claims.

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