

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Restoring Internet Freedom ) WC Docket No. 17-108

**EffectiveDefense.org Reply Comments  
in Opposition to Restoring Internet Freedom NPRM**

EffectiveDefense.org asks the Commission not to adopt the proposed rules in the “Restoring Internet Freedom” Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”).<sup>1</sup> Beyond our July 17, 2017, filing,<sup>2</sup> we wish here to comment further on the role of the media in inciting conflict. This is relevant to WC Docket No. 17-108, because (as we mentioned in our earlier filing) the “Restoring Internet freedom” NPRM would make it more difficult for new media to arise that is more responsive to the needs and concerns of the 99 percent and would make it more difficult for nations to be stampeded into war on fraudulent grounds.

In brief, we claim that the funding and governance of the mainstream media, especially the commercial broadcasters in the U.S., prevent them from providing adequate coverage of certain issues including the following:

- The West seems to be using the least effective approach to terrorism.
- The specter of Islamic terrorism seems to be primarily a product of misbehaviors by the Saudi and U.S. governments.
- President Eisenhower claimed that everyone with whom he communicated who seemed to know anything about Vietnam, agreed that the Communist Ho Chi Minh would likely have gotten 80 percent of the popular vote if elections had been held during the campaign against French occupation.
- The incarceration rate in the U.S. is five times what it was 40 years ago.

We claim that the U.S. public supports counterproductive policies in these areas, because the mainstream media make money by suppressing honest coverage of the available information in these areas. Net neutrality makes it easier for people everywhere to get and disseminate better information about these and other issues. In the long term, this could reduce the risks of war and of inappropriate criminal justice procedures.

**Effective approaches to terrorism**

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<sup>1</sup> WC Docket No. 17-108.

<sup>2</sup> “EffectiveDefense.org Comment in Opposition to Restoring Internet Freedom NPRM”, July 17, 2017, <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filing/10717083022106>, last visited 2017-08-16.

A 2008 RAND study on “How terrorist groups end” identified 268 terrorist groups that ended between 1968 and 2006.<sup>3</sup> Forty-three percent converted to nonviolent politics, like the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland. Forty percent were ended by police actions. Ten percent won. Seven percent were suppressed by military force.

Terrorists were more likely to win than be defeated militarily in the cases identified by the RAND researchers.

The West is using the *least effective approach to terrorism*.

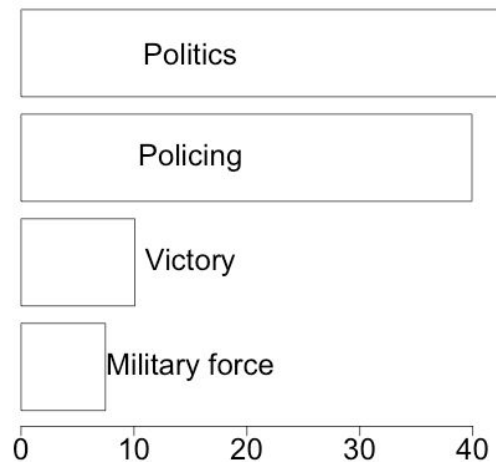
Why?

We find one plausible explanation: Major advertisers, who have good relations with repressive governments around the world, would be offended by honest coverage of this issue. Advertising rates are a function of the audience. There is rarely a credible threat of losing audience from failure to honestly report something like this. Therefore, the media, especially the commercial broadcasters, would likely in many cases lose money disseminating information that could offend major advertisers. They rarely do so.

Net neutrality makes it easier to access more honest information about things like this.

### Saudi Arabia and Islamic terrorism

Members of the Saudi royal family and employees of the Saudi embassy and consulates in the US helped some of the suicide mass murderers of September 11, 2001, get training in the US to do what they did on that fateful day. This was known to the G. W. Bush administration before they invaded Afghanistan but was classified “Top Secret”, thereby claiming that unauthorized disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security.<sup>4</sup> Documentation of this was declassified in July 2016.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Jones, Seth G.; Libicki, Martin C. (2008), How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa’ida, RAND Corporation, ISBN 978-0-8330-4465-5.

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG741-1.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG741-1.pdf), last visited 2017-08-30. See also Wikiversity, “Winning the War on Terror”, [https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Terror](https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning_the_War_on_Terror).

<sup>4</sup> 75 FR 707, “Classified National Security Information”, US Government Publishing Office, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-01-05/html/E9-31418.htm>, last visited 2017-08-16.

<sup>5</sup> The official declassified version is allegedly available from website of the United States House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence at <https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/declasspart4.pdf>. However, that House.gov web site rarely responds. Fortunately, a copy of the original is available on Wikisource as

This declassified text establishes that as early as 1998 and 1999, the FBI was monitoring questionable activities by some of those who were subsequently involved in the September 11, 2001, attacks. This monitoring included documenting payments of thousands of dollars from people like the wife of Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the US, to and through at least one likely Saudi intelligence agent to at least two of the suicide mass murderers of September 11.

Much of this information was known to the G. W. Bush administration before the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, which began October 7, 2001. Three points seem relevant from this:

1. Why was this information classified? Not to keep it from the Saudis, who surely already knew. Evidently, it was classified to keep it from the American public.
2. This information was declassified July 15, 2016. As this is being written over a year later, it still has not received substantive coverage in the mainstream commercial media. Meanwhile, the U.S. is supporting Saudi Arabia in their attempts to close *Al Jazeera*<sup>6</sup> as part of claims that Qatar is supporting terrorism.
3. Other sources indicate that most of the Islamic terrorists were radicalized in Islamic schools and mosques preaching the Wahabi / Salfist branch of Islam, which is the most violent strain of Islam. While they may have received some support from Qatar, they've gotten far more from Saudi Arabia and the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

Who's the enemy?

The absence of a substantive discussion of this in the mainstream media in the U.S. can be explained by the business model of the mainstream commercial media: They likely would lose advertising revenue from offending the major advertisers, who benefit from U.S. support for Saudi Arabia. They don't suffer the losses from terrorism. Indeed, they might be more threatened if peace were to break out.

As with the discussion of how terrorist groups end, net neutrality makes it easier for people to access information like this.

## Eisenhower and Vietnam?

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"Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001/Part 4 (Declassified)", [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Joint\\_Inquiry\\_into\\_Intelligence\\_Community\\_Activities\\_Before\\_and\\_After\\_the\\_Terrorist\\_Attacks\\_of\\_September\\_11,\\_2001/Part\\_4\\_\(Declassified\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Joint_Inquiry_into_Intelligence_Community_Activities_Before_and_After_the_Terrorist_Attacks_of_September_11,_2001/Part_4_(Declassified)), last visited 2017-08-16. See also RT, "Congressmen urge House to declassify secret 28 pages of 9/11 inquiry", published 2016-07-07, edited 2017-09-11. <https://www.rt.com/usa/349797-congressmen-urge-house-to-declassify/>. See also Wikipedia, "The 28 Pages", [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_28\\_Pages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_28_Pages).

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Wintour, "Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia", The Guardian, Friday 23 June 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/close-al-jazeera-saudi-arabia-issues-qatar-with-13-demands-to-end-blockade](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/close-al-jazeera-saudi-arabia-issues-qatar-with-13-demands-to-end-blockade), last visited 2017-08-30. See also the Wikipedia article in *Al Jazeera*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al\\_Jazeera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera).

<sup>7</sup> Wikiversity, "Winning the War on Terror", [https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Terror](https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning_the_War_on_Terror), last visited 2017-08-30.

Less than three years after he left office, former U.S. President Eisenhower, wrote that everyone knowledgeable about Indochina, including Vietnam, with whom he had communicated “agreed that had elections been held at the time of the fighting [leading to the defeat of the French in 1954], possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh”.<sup>8</sup>

If “everyone knowledgeable about Indochina ... agreed” with such an assessment, why did the public in the U.S. not know this?

We find one plausible answer: Media organizations that disseminated such information likely would have offended major advertisers, who felt they benefitted from the standard dogma of the Cold War, in full force at that time. Few businesses prosper by biting the hands that feed them.

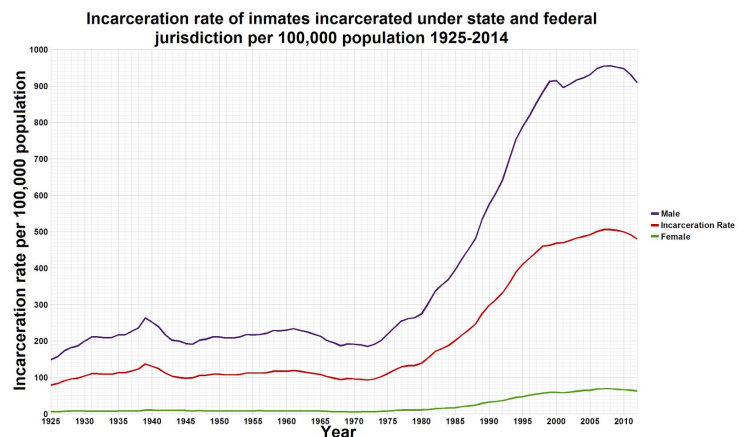
If the anti-war demonstrators of the late 1960s and early 1970s had access to something like today’s Internet with the current net neutrality rules, it would have been easier for them to get information like this and use it to better effect in their efforts to influence U.S. foreign policy.

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### Incarceration rate in the U.S.

The incarceration rate in the U.S. today is five times what it was 40 years ago:<sup>10</sup> After being stable at roughly 0.1 percent of the population for the middle half of the twentieth century, it rose abruptly to 0.5 percent in the last quarter of the century.

One major change has been documented that explains such a change and why it should have happened then:



<sup>8</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower (1963) *The White House Years, 1953-1956: Mandate for Change* (Doubleday, p. 372).

<sup>9</sup> The present author was in the U.S. military 1967-1973. Three months after entry on active duty, it occurred to him that South Vietnam should have a “home team” advantage. Why did they need foreign troops, when the Viet Cong did not? In 1969, he heard about this comment by Eisenhower. However, he didn’t find the actual source until the late 1980s. If he had found Eisenhower’s book in 1967, his personal anti-war activism might have been more effective.

<sup>10</sup> The rate (per 100,000 resident population in each group) of sentenced prisoners under jurisdiction of State and Federal correctional authorities from 1925 through 2014. It does not include jail inmates.

Wikimedia Commons,

“[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U.S.\\_incarceration\\_rates\\_1925\\_onwards.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U.S._incarceration_rates_1925_onwards.png)”, last visited 2017-08-30.

Around 1975 the mainstream commercial broadcasters in the U.S. began focusing more on the police blotter in the nightly news. In addition, over the next quarter century, they fired nearly all their investigative journalists except for a handful working for popular programs like “60 Minutes”.<sup>11</sup>

This had two major advantages:

1. “If it bleeds it leads”: They were able to make this change without losing audience.
2. It reduced the chances of offending a major advertiser.

Investigative journalism is expensive. Anyone can libel and slander poor people with impunity. No serious fact checking is required. Investigative journalist routinely document questionable practices by people with power and the ability to retaliate. In many cases, the questionable practices documented involve at least one major advertiser and often a large group of major advertisers. The only way a media organization can make money disseminating that kind of information is if those stories increase the audience enough to make up for a loss in advertising revenue. The mainstream media in the U.S. today bet on the advertisers, not the audience.

Unlike the previous examples of how to combat terrorism, relations with Saudi Arabia, and the Vietnam War, this does not relate directly to conflict.

However, is it accurate to say that there are greater difference today than 50 years ago between the worldviews of Republican and Democratic voters? If yes, might this be attributed in part to the loss of investigative journalism from mainstream commercial broadcasting, combined with comparable reductions in staffs from newspapers in the U.S. as their advertising revenues have declined?

### **Relevance to the *Title II Order* and the NPRM on “Restoring Internet Freedom”**

Substantive investigative journalism is a “public good”: It’s consumption by one person does not reduce its availability to others.

Moreover, it’s very expensive to produce the first copy. With distribution via today’s Internet, the cost for each copy after the first is negligible.

Continuing the *Title II Order* will not fix the problems mentioned above. However, “Restoring Internet Freedom” as proposed by the NPRM 17-108 will make it more difficult to achieve progress on any of the substantive issues facing humanity today.

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<sup>11</sup> Sacco, Vincent F (2005). *When Crime Waves*. Sage. ISBN 0761927832. and Youngblood, Steven (2017). *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices*. Routledge. pp. 115-131. ISBN 978-1-138-12467-7. See also the section on “Media ownership, funding and profitability” in the Wikiversity article on “Winning the War on Terror”, “[https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Terror](https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Winning_the_War_on_Terror)”, last visited 2017-08-30.