

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BERLIN, GERMANY



The Ambassador

December 21, 2018

Mr. Steffen Klusmann
Chief Editor
Der Spiegel

Dear Mr. Klusmann,

The recent revelations of completely fabricated stories, fictional people and fraudulent details in Spiegel over the last seven years are very troubling to the U.S. Embassy. These fake news stories largely focused on U.S. policies and certain segments of the American people. It is clear that we were targeted by institutional bias and we are troubled by the atmosphere which encouraged this recklessness. While Spiegel's anti-American narratives have expanded over the last years, the anti-American bias at the magazine has exploded since the election of President Trump.

We are concerned these narratives are pushed by Spiegel's senior leadership and that reporters are responding to what the leadership wants.

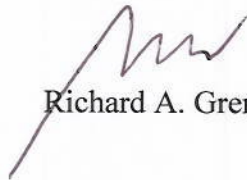
"Telling it like it is," to use your own slogan, should not create an environment where a reporter is able to present fabricated information as fact. Editors, fact-checkers and those in leadership clearly allowed this atmosphere and bias to flourish.

As it stands, we do not have faith in Spiegel's current fact-checking and editing process. As the most pertinent example, the revelations about Spiegel's fake stories were in part exposed by a group in Arizona that complained the Spiegel reporter never called the group for comment.

We have previously voiced our concern directly to Spiegel editors and journalists regarding bias in reporting on U.S. policy and the U.S. Administration. In fact, Spiegel reporters and editors have routinely included information and stories which could have been proven untrue if they had checked the facts with the Embassy first. Unfortunately, it is routine practice for Spiegel reporters to not even call us before writing.

We ask that a thorough investigation be conducted by an outside, independent organization to determine exactly how Spiegel violated journalistic standards and how it can reform internal processes. The fundamental question is how such blatant anti-Americanism could be published without an editor questioning its accuracy and how much untold damage has been done by seven years of unchecked writing.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard A. Grenell', written over the printed name.

Richard A. Grenell