



New York Times Updates Article That Claimed 'Conspiracy Theory' Against Election Software Company After Charges Announced

Description

USA: The New York Times has added an editor's note to an article it published on Oct. 3 claiming that allegations against a Michigan-based election software company were a "conspiracy theory."

One day later, Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascon announced charges against the CEO of Konnech, the company, for allegedly stealing and storing election worker data on servers in China.

"After this article was published, the chief executive of Konnech, Eugene Yu, was arrested in connection with an investigation into the possible theft of personal information about poll workers," the New York Times' note says.

"In communications with The Times for this article, neither Mr. Yu nor a spokesman for Konnech said that the company was the subject of an investigation. They also asserted that all the company's data was stored on servers in the United States; prosecutors in Los Angeles, who brought the charges against Mr. Yu, said that they had found some company data stored on servers in China. The Times is continuing to report on this story," it added.

A New York Times spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Stuart A. Thompson, a New York Times reporter who says he focuses on misinformation and disinformation, penned the Oct. 3 article as well as an article on the charges against Konnech.

In the former, Thompson claimed that an election integrity group, True the Vote, and others had "threadbare evidence, or none at all," against Konnech.

He opined that the allegations "demonstrate how far-right election deniers are also giving more attention to new and more secondary companies and groups."

The only evidence backing Thompson's article were statements from Konnech and Dele Lowman Smith, the chair of the election board in DeKalb County, Georgia.

That board signed a contract with Konnech in September.

“It’s a completely fabricated issue,” Smith told the New York Times. “It’s absolutely bizarre, but it’s part of the tone and tenor of what we’re having to deal with leading up to the elections.”

The board was holding a special meeting on Oct. 10 to discuss the contract in the wake of the charges being filed. Another county, in Virginia, has already halted its use of Konnech software.

Gascon, a Democrat, alleged that Yu, the Konnech CEO, stole personal identifying information of Los Angeles County election workers and stored the data on servers in China. Konnech did not respond to a request for comment.

“Data breaches are an ongoing threat to our digital way of life. When we entrust a company to hold our confidential data, they must be willing and able to protect our personal identifying information from theft. Otherwise, we are all victims,” Gascon said in a statement.

Thompson, the New York Times reporter, wrote a story on Oct. 4 about the charges. He said that Konnech had denied keeping data outside the United States and that the company had “rebutted” claims that it stored data on servers in China. He referred to Catherine Engelbrecht, the founder of True the Vote, as an “election denier.” But he did not use the term “conspiracy theory” in the new article.

True the Vote said in a statement that Yu “was arrested based on alleged evidence of the very activities he and his organization attempted to suppress.

“Konnech was assisted by many reporters who unblinkingly accepted their now discredited claims as fact, and simply repeated them,” it added.

Thompson could not be reached. He has not alerted followers on Twitter to the editor’s note. His last posts are boosting people who shared his original article.

by Zachary Stieber

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