# NZSIS investigation into journalist Mick Hall found lawful amid debate over RNZ editorial standards



The New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) was found to have acted appropriately in its inquiries into a former Radio New Zealand (RNZ) journalist, following allegations of foreign interference. The investigation centred on Mick Hall, who was publicly accused of “pushing a false Russian narrative” while sub-editing a Reuters story that was later published on RNZ in 2023.

Hall had lodged a complaint asserting that the spy agency had unlawfully investigated him. However, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, Brendan Horsely, reviewed the matter and concluded that the NZSIS’s enquiries were “both legal and proper” and that the service was mindful of “the sensitive nature of making enquiries into a journalist.” Furthermore, NZSIS inquiries found “there were no concerns of foreign interference” in relation to Hall’s activities.

In response to the report, Hall accepted that the NZSIS had acted “out of necessity” but criticised RNZ for what he described as “damaging mischaracterisations.” An RNZ spokesperson stated that an independent review had determined Hall “breached editorial standards with inappropriate editing of overseas wire stories, including adding a pro-Russian perspective on the invasion of Ukraine.”

The case highlights broader issues within RNZ’s digital news department, which was established five years prior without being subject to the same editorial oversight as the main news department. Critics have noted that this lack of oversight and funding led to concerns about the quality and impartiality of content produced by digital journalists working remotely, including Hall. One commentator observed that Hall was simply “doing their job” by adding context to foreign newswire content, and was not a covert agent or foreign propagandist.

The scrutiny of Hall also sparked discussions about the wider media landscape in New Zealand, with some noting that mainstream outlets often present perspectives aligned with pro-Israel, pro-American, and pro-China viewpoints. Questions were raised about how senior RNZ staff, reportedly earning around $300,000 annually, failed to detect editorial issues in the digital department, and why investigations focused on Hall rather than higher-level personnel.

The case also drew attention to perceived inconsistencies in how the state responds to different groups. Critics pointed out that civil rights breaches and surveillance appear to be more rapid when targeting individuals and groups on the political left or advocating for Māori rights, while far-right activists allegedly receive less scrutiny.

The Daily Blog noted that independent voices in mainstream media are increasingly important given the uniformity of mainstream perspectives, implying that support for independent journalism remains vital.

The overall situation brings to light complexities around intelligence operations, journalistic freedom, editorial standards, and the interplay between national security and media independence in New Zealand.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/558449/nzsis-inquiries-into-former-rnz-journalist-appropriate-spy-watchdog> - This article confirms that the NZSIS acted appropriately in its investigation of former RNZ journalist Mick Hall, finding his complaint of unlawful investigation unsubstantiated and noting the spy service was mindful of the sensitive nature of inquiries into a journalist. It also reports the conclusion that there were no concerns of foreign interference linked to Hall's activities.
* <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/media-insider/media-insider-nzs-spy-agency-investigated-case-of-rnz-journalist-who-edited-russia-ukraine-stories/ZRD3YV24G5BUHKU5KR3ZHWPQW4/> - This source details that the NZ spy agency investigated Mick Hall over his edits to foreign news stories, highlighting his complaint to the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and illustrating the context of the investigation into alleged foreign interference in 2023.
* <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/11/02/wdil-n02.html> - This interview with Mick Hall elaborates on the allegations against him of inserting a pro-Russian narrative, the political context of his editorial changes, and the criticism of RNZ’s management for their characterization of his edits. It discusses how Hall was targeted as a supposed foreign propagandist and includes details of internal and public scrutiny.
* <https://open.substack.com/pub/mickhall/p/news-bosses-gave-spy-agency-little?comments=true> - Mick Hall’s own account explains his perspective on the investigation, criticizes RNZ's leadership for their handling and mischaracterizations, and acknowledges the necessity of the NZSIS inquiry while advocating for independent journalism and transparency.
* <https://www.noahwire.com/articles/nzsis-and-rnz-journalist-investigation> - This article discusses the broader issues raised by the case, including editorial oversight weaknesses within RNZ’s digital news department, funding and management challenges, and concerns about impartiality and quality in remotely produced news content.