

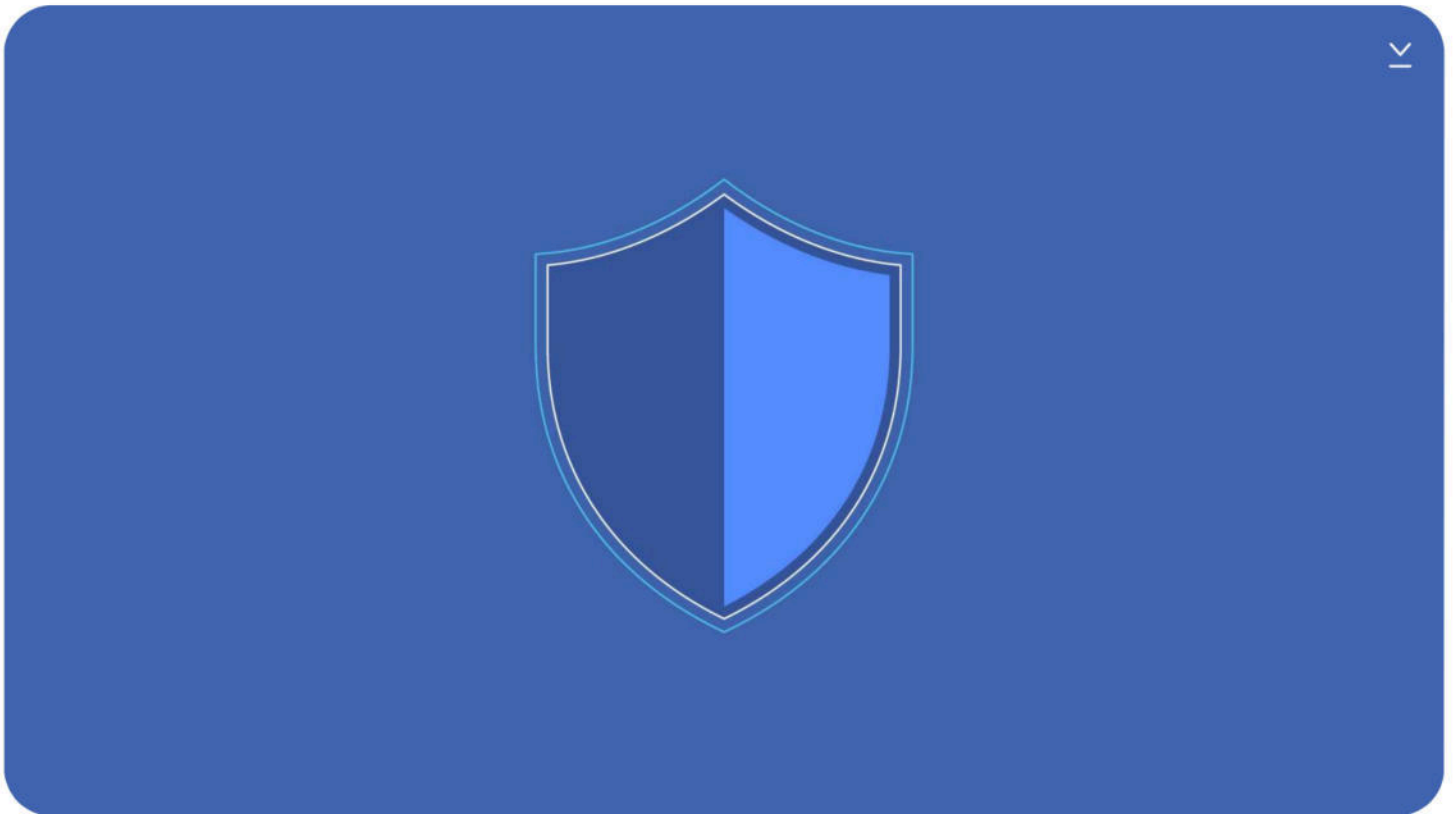
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META

Removing Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior in UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia

August 1, 2019

 **LISTEN TO ARTICLE**



By Nathaniel Gleicher, Head of Cybersecurity Policy

This week, we removed multiple Pages, Groups and accounts that were involved in coordinated inauthentic behavior on Facebook and Instagram. We found two separate operations: one of which originated in United Arab Emirates and Egypt, and another in Saudi Arabia. The two campaigns we removed were unconnected, but both created networks of accounts to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing. We have shared information about our findings with law enforcement, industry partners and policymakers.

We're constantly working to detect and stop this type of activity because we don't want our services to be used to manipulate people. We're taking down these Pages, Groups and accounts based on their behavior, not the content they posted. In each of these cases, the people behind this activity coordinated with one another and used fake accounts to misrepresent themselves, and that was the basis for our action.

We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before, it's an ongoing challenge. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working more closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

What We've Found So Far

We removed 259 Facebook accounts, 102 Facebook Pages, five Facebook Groups, four Facebook Events and 17 Instagram accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior that originated in the UAE and Egypt and focused on a number of countries, primarily in the Middle East and some in North and East Africa, including Libya, Sudan, Comoros, Qatar, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Morocco.

The people behind this network used compromised and fake accounts — the majority of which had already been detected and disabled by our automated systems — to run Pages, disseminate their content, comment in Groups and artificially increase engagement. They also impersonated public figures and managed Pages — some of which changed names and admins — posing as local news organizations in targeted countries and promoting content about UAE. The Page admins and account owners posted about non-country specific topics like fashion, animals, humor and crafts. They also frequently posted about local news,

politics, elections and topics including alleged support of terrorist groups by Qatar and Turkey, Iran's activity in Yemen, the conflict in Libya, successes of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, and independence for Somaliland. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found links to two marketing firms — New Waves in Egypt, and Newave in the UAE.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 259 Facebook accounts (200 of which had been previously disabled by our automated systems), 102 Facebook Pages, 5 Facebook Groups, 4 Facebook Events, and 17 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* More than 13.7 million accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 9,000 accounts joined at least one of these Groups, and around 65,000 accounts followed at least one of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$167,000 spent on Facebook ads paid for primarily in US dollars and Emirati dirhams.
- *Events:* 4 events were hosted by these Facebook Pages. The first was scheduled for June 4, 2018, and the most recent was scheduled for June 19, 2019. Two hundred seventy people expressed interest in at least one of these events. We cannot confirm whether any of these events actually occurred.

We identified these accounts through ongoing investigations into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages:



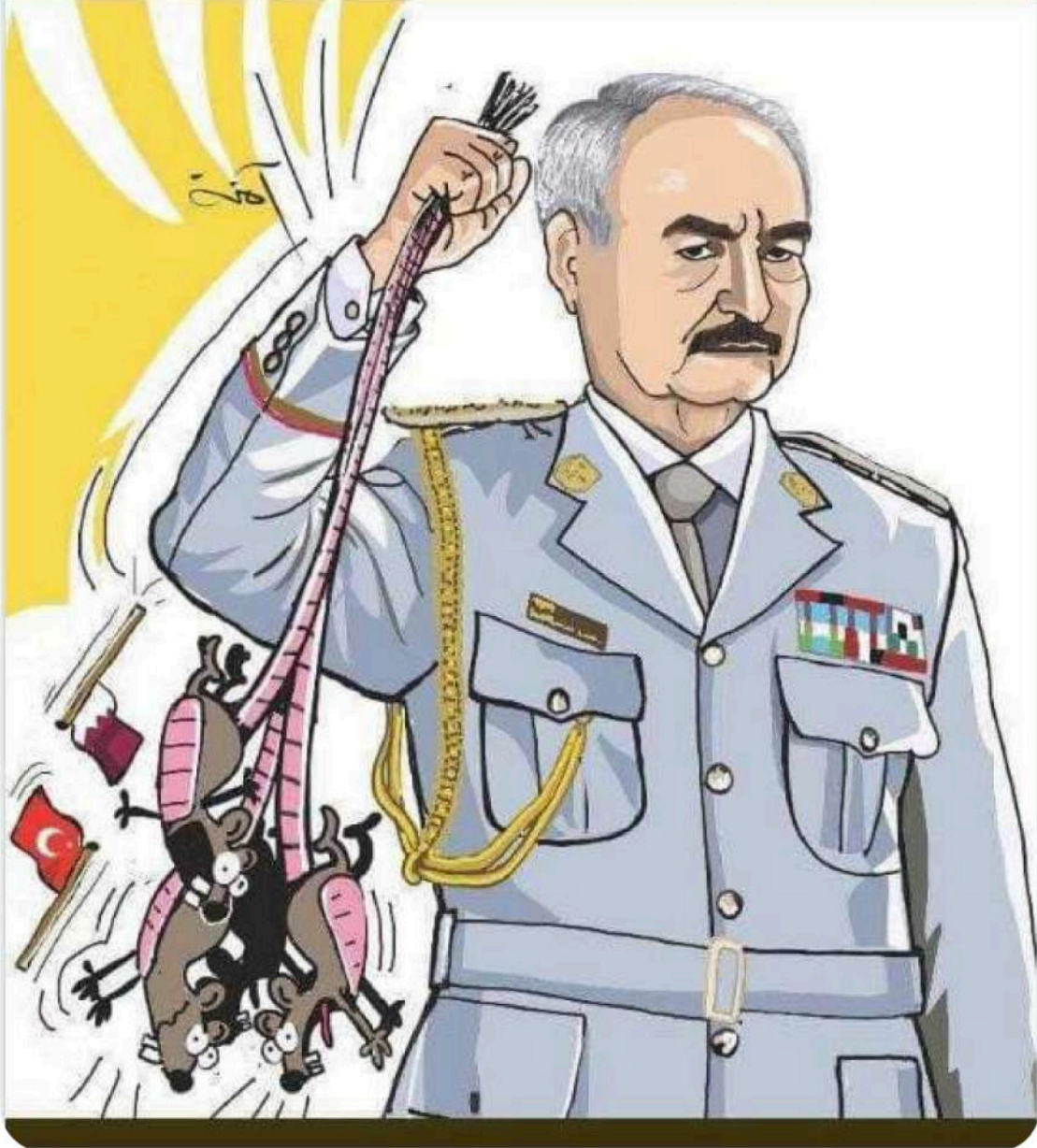
انا ابن ليبيا انت منو

July 8 at 5:42 PM · 🌐

🔍

المشير خليفة #حفتر
#الجيش_الوطني_الليبي يسيطر علي 99% من ليبيا
والان حان وقت الصفر للتطهير النهائي وابداء كل ارهاب من #طرابلس
#ليبيا_تتطهر

See Translation



Page name: "I am a Son of Libya, who are you?"

Post: "Field Marshal Khalifa #Haftar #The_Libyan_National_Army controls 99% of Libya and now the time has come to finally cleanse and eliminate all terrorism from #Tripoli #Libya_Cleansed"



السودان اليوم

May 28

Like Page

ملا

كاريكاتير عن ثورة الشعب السوداني علي الإخوان المسلمين في وعملاء إيران في السودان الذين يسعون
إلى الفتنة والخراب
وأشاعة الفوضى والخراب والقيم الإرهابية والتطرف
#اعتصام_القيادة_العامه
#السودان_بلا_إخوان
#الجيش_الشعب

See Translation



Page name: "Sudan Today" Caption: "A cartoon of the Sudanese popular revolution against the Muslim Brotherhood and agents of Iran in Sudan who seek chaos, destruction, rioting, terrorist values, and extremism. #General_Command_Sit-in

#Sudan_Without_the_Muslim_Brotherhood #The_People's_Army" Cartoon translation:

Sudanese men on the left hold signs reading "No to Iran" and "No to the Ikhwaan [Muslim Brotherhood]." The men on the right are wearing shirts reading "Iran" and "Ikhwaan [Muslim Brotherhood]."



فضيحة جديدة تطول #تنظيم_الحمدين !!
بعد سعى النظام القطري لشراء حصص من الصحف الأجنبية
لضمان الدفاع عنه خلال أزمته مع الرباعي العربي الداعي لمكافحة #الإرهاب الممول من
#الدوحة

في الوقت الذي طالبت فيه المعارضة القطرية

تنظيم الحمدين بتوفير هذه الأموال لأن خطوتهم فاشلة. ... See More

See Translation

كيف تشتري قطر عناوين لها في الصحف العالمية



MIKE HUCKABEE

أشاد بقطر وما تتمتع به من حضارة
بعد تلقيه مبلغ 0 ألف دولار
ورحلة إلى الدوحة

شغل سابقاً منصب رئيس مؤسسة قطر
وهي مؤسسة تمكنت من منح عشرات
الملايين من الدولارات في المدارس
والجامعات الأمريكية



ROB SOBHANI



TIM CONSTANTINE

استخدم كل من أعمدة في التايمز
وبرنامجه الإذاعي لتحسين قطر

تلقت مؤسسات الفكر والرأي البارزة
معهد بروكينغز عشرات الملايين
من الدوحة أتاح هذا الكرم للمعهد
مركزاً فخماً في الدوحة



Page name: "Omani and Proud"

Headline in image attached to post: "How Qatar Buys Headlines in the World Media"

Post content: "New scandal reaches #AlHamdeen_Organization [referring to the Qatari ruling family] ... after the Qatari regime sought to buy shares in foreign newspapers to guarantee its defense during the crisis with the Arab quartet [the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt] calling to fight #terrorism funded by #Doha. At the same time, the Qatari opposition demanded the Al Hamdeen Organization [referring to the Qatari ruling family] provide this funding,

because their plan is unsuccessful.”

Mike Huckabee: Commended Qatar and its civilization after receiving \$50K and a trip to Doha

Rob Sobhani: Formally occupied the position of the president of the Qatar Foundation, a foundation that granted tens of millions of dollars to American schools and universities

Tim Constantine: Used both his column in the Times and his radio program to protect Qatar

Brookings: The notable think tank, the Brookings Institute, received tens of millions from Doha allowing the institute a luxurious center in Doha

We also removed 217 Facebook accounts, 144 Facebook Pages, five Facebook Groups and 31 Instagram accounts that were involved in coordinated inauthentic behavior originating from Saudi Arabia that focused primarily on the Middle East and Northern Africa, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan.

The individuals behind this activity posed as locals in countries targeted by this campaign — often using fake accounts — and created fictitious personas to run Pages and Groups, disseminate their content, increase engagement and drive people to an off-platform domain. They managed Pages that masqueraded as local news organizations. The Page admins and account owners typically posted in Arabic about regional news and political issues, including topics like the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, his economic and social reform plan “Vision 2030,” and successes of the Saudi Armed Forces, particularly during the conflict in Yemen. They also frequently shared criticism of neighboring countries including Iran, Qatar and Turkey, and called into question the credibility of Al-Jazeera news network and Amnesty International. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our review found links to individuals associated with the government of Saudi Arabia.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 217 Facebook accounts, 144 Facebook Pages, 5 Facebook Groups and 31 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 1.4 million accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 26,000 accounts joined at least one of these Groups, and around 145,000 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around \$108,000 spent on Facebook and Instagram ads paid for in Saudi riyal and US dollars.

We identified these accounts through ongoing investigations into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Our investigation benefited from public reporting by Bellingcat, an open source research organization.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages:



Mohammed bin Salman's Life shared a post.

4 hrs · 🌐



Mohammed bin Salman's Life

November 6, 2018 · 🌐

👍 Like Page

People around the world might wonder:
Why do #Saudis love their leaders the way they love their family !?
Simply; because their leaders share the same feelings with them.
May God bless our beloved prince Mohammed Bin Salman 🇸🇦

-
سمو الأمير محمد بن سلمان يقبل رأس أحد الجنود المصابين: #صورة

-
#MBS

#MohammedBinSalman

#القصيم_ترحب_بالمك

Arabic portion of caption: “#photo His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Salman kisses the head of a wounded soldier“



حدث الشرق الأوسط - Trend MiddleEast

July 16 at 6:19 AM · 🌐

👍 Like Page



أقر الاتحاد الأوروبي، الاثنين، سلسلة من العقوبات السياسية والمالية بحق تركيا رداً على مواصلة أعمال التنقيب غير الشرعية التي تقوم بها في المياه الإقليمية القبرصية رغم التحذيرات بوقفها، حسب ما أفادت به مصادر أوروبية.

#تركيا

#قبرص



Caption: “On Monday, the European Union approved a series of political and financial sanctions against Turkey for continuing illegal drilling in Cypriot territorial waters despite warnings to halt it, European sources said. #Turkey #Cyprus”



saudi_ssf • Follow

نيويورك تايمز : تسجيل صوتي للسفير القطري يكشف تورط الدوحة بتفجيرات مقديشو لصالحها.

ياترى كم تفجير أخر في الدول العربية إفتعلته قطر لتحقيق مصالحها الخاصة؟

6d



603 likes

6 DAYS AGO

Log in to like or comment.

Caption: "New York Times: A voice recording of the Qatari ambassador reveals Doha's involvement in bombings in Mogadishu for its own benefit. How many other bombings in Arab countries has Qatar conducted to achieve its own interests?"

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