

AUGUST 2020

DETAILED REPORT

August 2020 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report





We're constantly working to find and stop coordinated campaigns that seek to manipulate public debate across our apps. You can find information about our previous enforcement actions [here](#).

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Over the past three years, we've shared our findings about coordinated inauthentic behavior we detect and remove from our platforms. As part of our regular CIB reports, we're sharing information about all networks we take down over the course of a month to make it easier for people to see progress we're making in one place.

WHAT IS CIB?

We view CIB as coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the operation. There are two tiers of these activities that we work to stop: 1) coordinated inauthentic behavior in the context of domestic, non-government campaigns and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor.

COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR (CIB)

When we find domestic, non-government campaigns that include groups of accounts and Pages seeking to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing while relying on fake accounts, we remove both inauthentic and authentic accounts, Pages and Groups directly involved in this activity.

FOREIGN OR GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE (FGI)

If we find any instances of CIB conducted on behalf of a government entity or by a foreign actor, we apply the broadest enforcement measures including the removal of every on-platform property connected to the operation itself and the people and organizations behind it.

CONTINUOUS ENFORCEMENT

We monitor for efforts to re-establish a presence on Facebook by networks we previously removed. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to networks we took down in the past.

SUMMARY OF AUGUST 2020 FINDINGS

In August, we removed three networks of accounts, Pages and Groups. Two of them — from Russia and the US — targeted people outside of their country, and another from Pakistan focused on both domestic audiences in Pakistan and also in India. We have shared information about our findings with law enforcement, policymakers and industry partners.

Since 2017, we have removed over 100 networks worldwide for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior, including ahead of major democratic elections. The first network we took down was linked to the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA), and so was the 100th we removed in August. In total, our team has found and removed about a dozen deceptive campaigns connected to individuals associated with the IRA. Over the last three years, we have detected these efforts earlier and earlier in their operation, often stopping them before they were able to build their audience. With each takedown, threat actors lose their infrastructure across many platforms, forcing them to adjust their techniques, and further reducing their ability to reconstitute and gain traction.

As part of our work to find, study and remove influence operations from Facebook, we've seen them target multiple technology platforms and seek to use traditional media to amplify their narratives. We've seen a number of campaigns, including the two we removed in August, create Pages purporting to be news entities to appear more credible. The IRA-linked campaign we removed in August was largely unsuccessful on Facebook, but it tricked unwitting freelance journalists into writing stories on its behalf. We're notifying people who we believe have been contacted by this network.

We expect to see more attempts like this from threat actors globally and we'll remain vigilant and work with other technology companies, law enforcement, and independent researchers to find and remove influence operations.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed:** 507
- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed:** 131
- **Total number of Pages removed:** 146
- **Total number of Groups removed:** 78

(Updated on September 18, 2020 at 4:00PM PT to reflect the latest enforcement numbers.)

NETWORKS REMOVED IN AUGUST 2020:

1. **Russia:** We removed a small network of 8 Facebook accounts and two Pages linked to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA). This activity focused primarily on the US, UK, Algeria and Egypt, in addition to other English-speaking countries and countries in the Middle East and North Africa. We began this investigation based on information about this network's off-platform activity from the FBI. Our internal investigation revealed the full scope of this network on Facebook.
2. **US:** We removed 46 Facebook accounts, 41 Pages and 24 Instagram accounts linked to US-based strategic communications firm CLS Strategies. This network focused primarily on Venezuela and also on Mexico and Bolivia. We found this activity as part of our proactive investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.
3. **Pakistan:** We removed 453 Facebook accounts, 103 Pages, 78 Groups and 107 Instagram accounts operated from Pakistan and focused on Pakistan and India. We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.

We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before, it's an ongoing effort. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better

technology, hiring more people and working closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

01

We removed a small network of 8 Facebook accounts and two Pages for violating our policy against [foreign interference](#), which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign entity. This activity originated in Russia and focused primarily on the US, UK, Algeria and Egypt, in addition to other English-speaking countries and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

The people behind this activity relied on fake accounts — some of which had already been detected and disabled by our automated systems — to create elaborate fictitious personas, manage Pages, post in Groups and drive people to their off-platform site masquerading as an independent news outlet based primarily in Romania. These personas operated across a number of internet services and used fake names and profile photos generated likely using machine learning techniques like generative adversarial networks (GAN), and posed as news editors from various countries, including the US. They recruited unwitting freelance journalists to write on particular topics in English and Arabic. The individuals behind this campaign sought to obtain political advertising authorization to run ads in the US, including through unwitting users.

This network was in the early stages of building its audience, primarily on the left of the political spectrum, and saw nearly no engagement on Facebook before we removed it. The people behind this network posted about global news and current events relevant to the countries and left-leaning communities they targeted, including social and racial justice in the US and UK, NATO and EU politics, alleged Western war crimes and corruption, environmental issues, the founder of Wikileaks, tensions between Israel and Palestine, the coronavirus pandemic, criticism of fracking, French influence in Africa, the Biden-Harris campaign, QAnon, President Trump and his policies, and the US military policies in Africa.

We began this investigation based on information about this network's off-platform activity from the FBI. Our internal investigation revealed the full scope of this network on Facebook. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identity and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA).

- *Presence on Facebook:* 8 Facebook accounts and 2 Pages.
- *Followers:* About 14,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages. The English-language Page had a little over 200 followers.
- *Advertising:* Around \$480 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for primarily in US dollars.

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

Peacedata
August 18 at 10:26 AM · 🌐

UK Government Creates a Myth of a Migrant Crisis to Distract From Its Failures
<https://peacedata.net/uk-government-creates-a-myth-of-a-migrant-crisis-to-distract-from-its-failures/>



PEACEDATA.NET
UK Government Creates a Myth of a Migrant Crisis to Distract From Its Failures - Peacedata

Peacedata عربي
August 17 at 5:34 AM · 🌐

خرجت فرنسا من معظم مستعمراتها في إفريقيا سنوات الخمسينات والستينات من القرن الماضي، كان ذلك خروجاً رسمياً، إلا أن أرض الواقع كان عكس ذلك فنغوذ باريس وسلطتها على أغلب تلك الدول بقيت فالمهمة لم تنتهي بعد.



PEACEDATA.NET
الذهب وراء الوجود الفرنسي في مالي - Peacedata

Translation:

Page Title: "The gold behind the French presence in Mali"

Caption: "France left most of its colonies in Africa in the fifties and sixties. This was its official departure, but the reality has been the opposite. Paris's influence and sway over most of those countries remains because its mission is still ongoing."



July 24

The Boogaloo Bois - racists, fascists, pro gun violence advocates. Here's how a meme has recently transformed into a violent far right movement.



PEACEDATA.NET

Boogaloo Movement: USA Far Right is Growing Thanks to Donald Trump - Peacedata

02

We removed 46 Facebook accounts, 41 Pages and 24 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [foreign interference](#), which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign entity. This network originated in the US and focused primarily on Venezuela and also on Mexico and Bolivia.

This network used fake accounts — some of which had already been detected and disabled by our automated systems — to amplify its content, evade enforcement, drive people to off-platform domains, mislead people about who’s behind this activity, and manage Pages posing as independent news entities, civic organizations and political fan Pages. Some of these accounts posed as locals in countries they targeted. Some of these Pages impersonated political parties, including using typo-squatting to trick people into thinking they’re authentic. This activity appeared to be centered around civic events and elections in the countries they targeted. The people behind this activity posted about news and current events including politics and political figures, elections and political crises in Venezuela, Mexico and Bolivia. They also posted content in support of the political opposition in Venezuela and the interim government in Bolivia, and criticism of Morena, a political party in Mexico.

We found this activity as part of our proactive investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Our investigation into this network found links to US-based strategic communications firm CLS Strategies.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 46 Facebook accounts, 41 Pages and 24 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 509,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and about 43,000 people followed one of more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around \$3.6 million in spending for ads on Facebook paid for primarily in US dollars.

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



Translation:

Caption: Bolivia doesn't want a mobster or a Coward.

Video: In Bolivia we do not accept drug lords who promote bad deals



Translation:

Caption: The #TSJ last week named the new heads of the #CNE, violating the Constitution of the Republic, which indicates in detail how the #AN is the institution designated for this work. A clear example of how #Maduro controls the powers in #Venezuela. What are you capable of doing so that the laws are respected in Venezuela?

Image Text: "Separation of Powers"



Translation:

Caption: After years of looting, the health sector is destitute. Is FANBs going to continue protecting this lie at the expense of the people? Image: The Public Health in Venezuela

03

We removed 453 Facebook accounts, 103 Pages, 78 Groups and 107 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#). This activity originated in Pakistan and focused on Pakistan and India.

The people behind this network relied on fake accounts — some claiming to be based in India — to post content and manage a handful of Indian military fan Pages and Groups. The vast majority of the accounts, Pages and Groups engaged in coordinated reporting of content and people that were critical of Pakistan’s government or supportive of India, and some engaged in spam. They also used a browser extension to automate reporting. They posted primarily in English and Hindi about regional news and current events including memes and content about social and political issues in Pakistan and India, such as India’s policies toward China, the Indian military, criticism of the Indian government and its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 453 Facebook accounts, 103 Pages, 78 Groups and 107 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 70,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 1.1 million accounts joined one or more of these Groups and less than 11,000 accounts followed one of more of these Instagram accounts.

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



Translation:

Caption: Long live Khalistan





Translation:

Group name: Indian Army My Darling

Caption: #Bad_News

China, Pakistan and Korea launched cyber attacks on India. Hackers stole important defense secrets, Pakistani hackers stole important defense secrets and gave them to China, which led to India's defeat in Ladakh and Gulvan Valley.

#India_Today