



# The Censorship-Industrial Complex, Part 2

U.S. and foreign government support for domestic censorship  
and disinformation, 2016 - 2022

Testimony by Michael Shellenberger to The House Select  
Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal  
Government

November 30, 2023

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Plaskett, and members of the Subcommittee thank you for inviting my testimony.

Nine months ago, I testified and provided evidence to this subcommittee about the existence of a Censorship Industrial Complex, a network of government agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, government contractors, and Big Tech media platforms that conspired to censor ordinary Americans and elected officials alike for holding disfavored views.

I regret to inform the Subcommittee that the scope, power, and law-breaking of the Censorship Industrial Complex are even worse than we had realized back in March.

Two days ago, my colleagues and I published the first batch of internal files from "The Cyber Threat Intelligence League," which show US and UK military contractors working in 2019 and 2020 to both censor and turn sophisticated psychological operations and disinformation tactics, developed abroad, against the American people.

Many insist that all we identified in the Twitter Files, the Facebook Files, and the CTIL Files were legal activities by social media platforms to take down content that violated their terms of service. Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and other Big Tech companies are privately owned and free to censor content. And government officials are free to point out wrong information, they argue.

But the First Amendment prohibits the government from abridging freedom of speech, the Supreme Court has ruled that the government "may not induce, encourage or promote private persons to accomplish what it is constitutionally forbidden to accomplish," and there is now a large body of evidence proving that the government did precisely that.

What's more, the whistleblower who delivered the CTIL Files to us says that its leader, a "former" British intelligence analyst, was "in the room" at the Obama White House in 2017 when she received the instructions to create a counter-disinformation project to stop a "repeat of 2016."

The US Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Information Security Agency (CISA) has been the center of gravity for much of the censorship, with the National Science Foundation financing the development of censorship and disinformation tools and other federal government agencies playing a supportive role.

Emails from CISA's NGO and social media partners show that [CISA created the Election Integrity Partnership \(EIP\)](#) in 2020, which involved the Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO) and other US government contractors. EIP and its successor, the Virality Project (VP), urged Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms to censor social media posts by ordinary citizens and elected officials alike.

In 2020, the Department of Homeland Security's CISA violated the First Amendment and interfered in the election, while in 2021, CISA and the White House violated the First Amendment and undermined America's response to the Covid pandemic by demanding that Facebook and Twitter censor content that Facebook said was "often-true," including about vaccine side effects.

But the abuses of power my colleagues and I have documented go well beyond censorship. They also include what appears to be an effort by government officials and contractors, [including the FBI](#), to frame certain individuals as posing a threat of domestic terrorism for their political beliefs.

All of this is profoundly unAmerica. One's commitment to free speech means nothing if it does not extend to your political enemies.

In his essential new book, [Liar in a Crowded Theater: Freedom of Speech in a World of Misinformation](#), Jeff Kosseff, a law professor at the United States Naval Academy shows that the widespread view that the government can censor false speech and/or speech that "causes harm" is mostly wrong. The Supreme Court has allowed very few constraints on speech. For example, the test of incitement to violence remains its immediacy.

In the face of human fallibility, and the complexity of reality, America's founders and others worldwide long ago decided that it was best to let people speak their minds almost all the time, particularly about controversial social and political issues.

I encourage Congress to defund and dismantle the governmental organizations involved in censorship. That includes phasing out funding for the National Science Foundation's Track F, "Trust & Authenticity in Communication Systems," and its "Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace (SaTC)" track. I would also encourage Congress to abolish CISA in DHS. Short of taking those steps, I would encourage significant guard rails and oversight to prevent such censorship from happening again.

Finally, I would encourage Congress to consider making Section 230 liability protections contingent upon social media platforms, known in the law as "interactive computer services," to allow adult users to moderate their own

legal content, through filters they choose, and whose algorithms are transparent to users.

I would also encourage Congress to prohibit government officials from asking the platforms from removing content, which the Supreme Court may or may not rule unconstitutional next year when it decides on the Missouri v. Biden case. Should the Court somehow decide that government requests for censorship are constitutional, then I urge Congress to require such requests be reported publicly and instantaneously so that such censorship demands occur in plain sight.

Having summarized the problem and potential solutions, I would like to now dedicate the rest of my testimony to the new information revealed in the CTIL Files.

## An Earlier Start Date for Censorship Industrial Complex



Now, a large trove of new documents, including strategy documents, training videos, presentations, and internal messages, reveal that, in 2019, US and UK military and intelligence contractors led by a former UK defense researcher, Sara-Jayne "SJ" Terp, developed the sweeping censorship framework. These contractors co-led CTIL, which partnered with CISA in the spring of 2020.

Internal CTIL Slack messages show Terp, her colleagues, and officials from DHS and Facebook all working closely together in the censorship process.

The CTIL framework and the public-private model are the seeds of what both the US and UK would put into place in 2020 and 2021, including masking censorship within cybersecurity institutions and counter-disinformation agendas; a heavy focus on stopping disfavored narratives, not just wrong facts; and pressuring social media platforms to take down information or take other actions to prevent content from going viral.

In the spring of 2020, CTIL began tracking and reporting disfavored content on social media, such as anti-lockdown narratives like “all jobs are essential,” “we won’t stay home,” and “open America now.” CTIL created a law enforcement channel for reporting content as part of these efforts. The organization also did research on individuals posting anti-lockdown hashtags like #freeCA and kept a spreadsheet with details from their Twitter bios. The group also discussed requesting “takedowns” and reporting website domains to registrars.

CTIL’s approach to “disinformation” went far beyond censorship. The documents show that the group engaged in offensive operations to influence public opinion, discussing ways to promote “counter-messaging,” co-opt hashtags, dilute disfavored messaging, create sock puppet accounts, and infiltrate private invite-only groups.

In one suggested list of survey questions, CTIL proposed asking members or potential members, “Have you worked with influence operations (e.g. disinformation, hate speech, other digital harms etc) previously?” The survey then asked whether these influence operations included “active measures” and “psyops.”

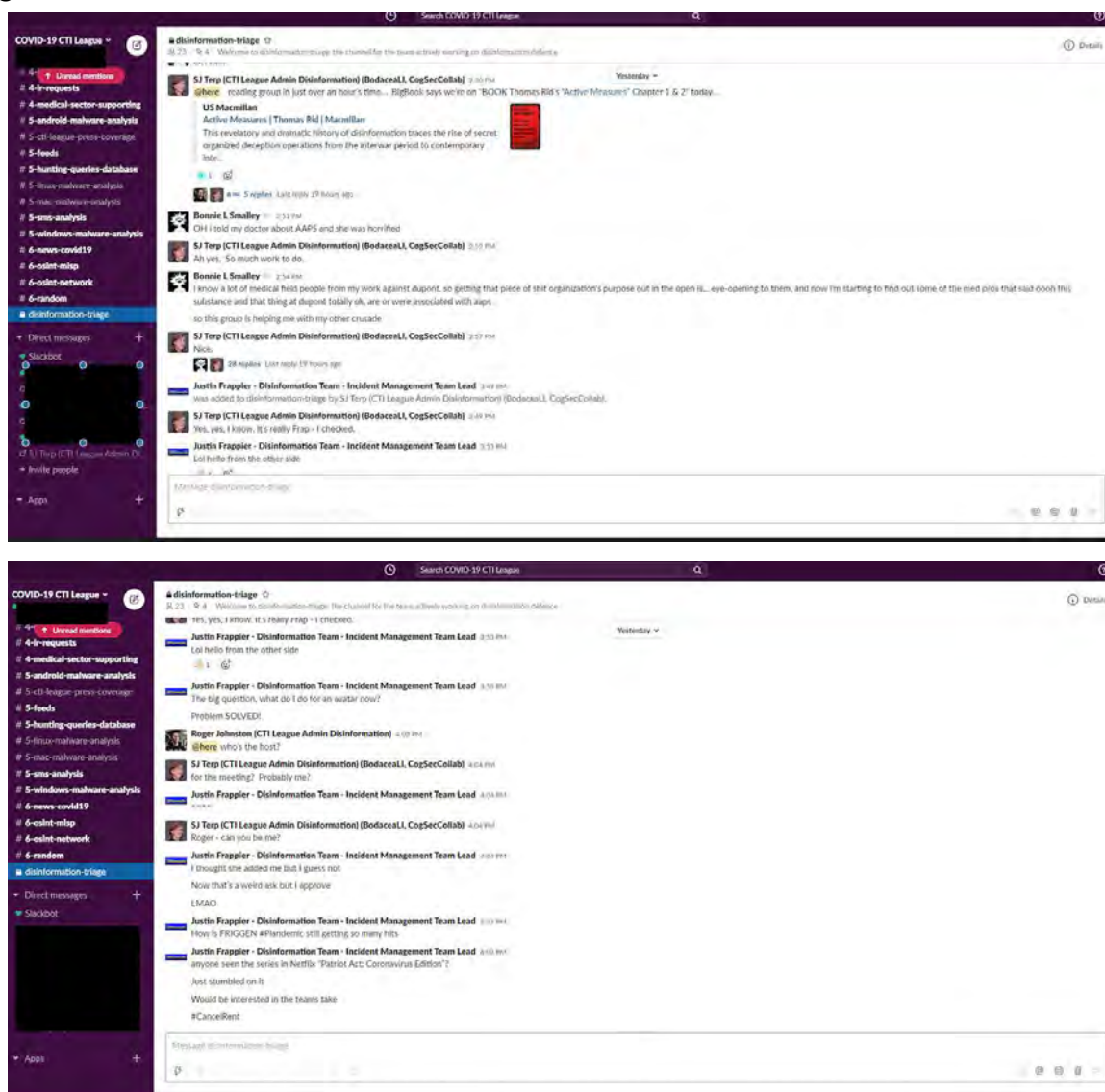
These documents came to us via a highly credible whistleblower. We were able to independently verify their legitimacy through extensive cross-checking of information to publicly available sources. The whistleblower said they were recruited to participate in CTIL through monthly cybersecurity meetings hosted by DHS.

The FBI declined to comment. CISA did not respond to our request for comment. And Terp and the other key CTIL leaders also did not respond to our requests for comment.

But one person involved, Bonnie Smalley, replied over Linked in, saying, “all i can comment on is that i joined cti league which is unaffiliated with any

govt orgs because i wanted to combat the inject bleach nonsense online during covid.... i can assure you that we had nothing to do with the govt though."

Yet the documents suggest that government employees were engaged members of CTIL. One individual who worked for DHS, Justin Frappier, was extremely active in CTIL, participating in regular meetings and leading trainings.



CTIL's ultimate goal, said the whistleblower, "was to become part of the federal government. In our weekly meetings, they made it clear that they were building these organizations within the federal government, and if you built the first iteration, we could secure a job for you."

Terp's plan, which she shared in presentations to information security and cybersecurity groups in 2019, was to create "Misinfosec communities" that would include government.

Both public records and the whistleblower's documents suggest that she achieved this. In April 2020, Chris Krebs, then-Director of CISA, announced on [Twitter](#) and in [multiple articles](#), that CISA was partnering with CTIL. "It's really an information exchange," [said](#) Krebs.

The documents also show that Terp and her colleagues, through a group called MisinfoSec Working Group, which included DiResta, created a censorship, influence, and anti-disinformation strategy called Adversarial Misinformation and Influence Tactics and Techniques (AMITT). They wrote AMITT by adapting a cybersecurity framework developed by MITRE, a major defense and intelligence contractor that has an annual budget of \$1 to \$2 billion in government funding.

Terp later used AMITT to develop the DISARM framework, which the World Health Organization then employed in ["countering anti-vaccination campaigns across Europe."](#)

A key component of Terp's work through CTIL, MisinfoSec, and AMITT was to insert the concept of "cognitive security" into the fields of cybersecurity and information security.

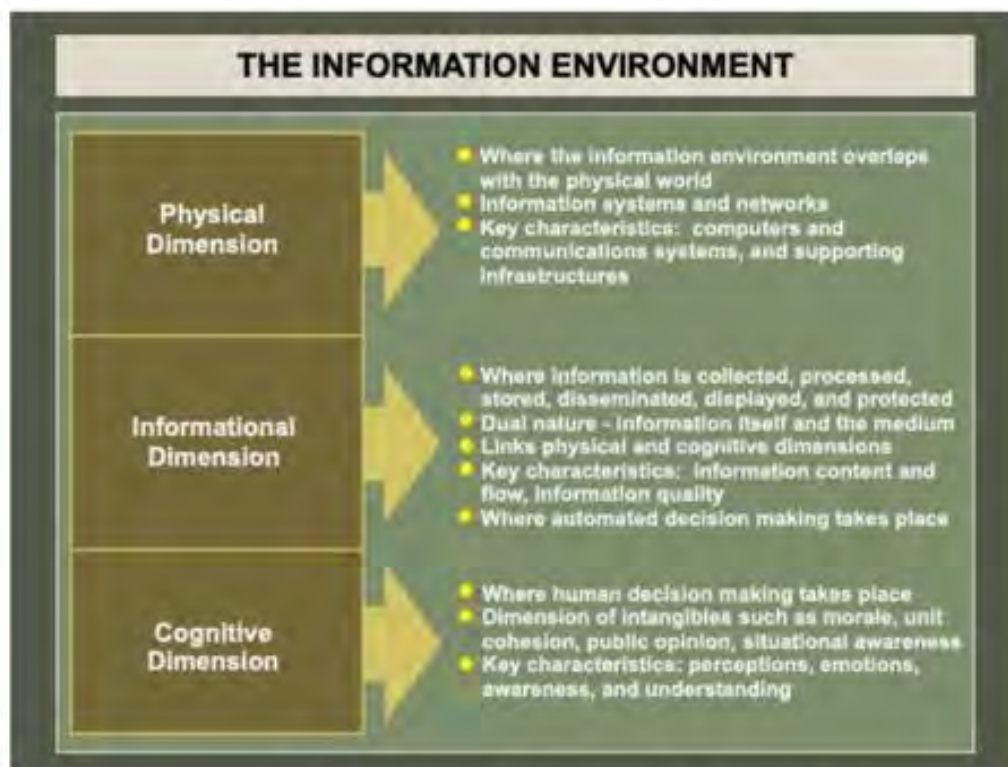


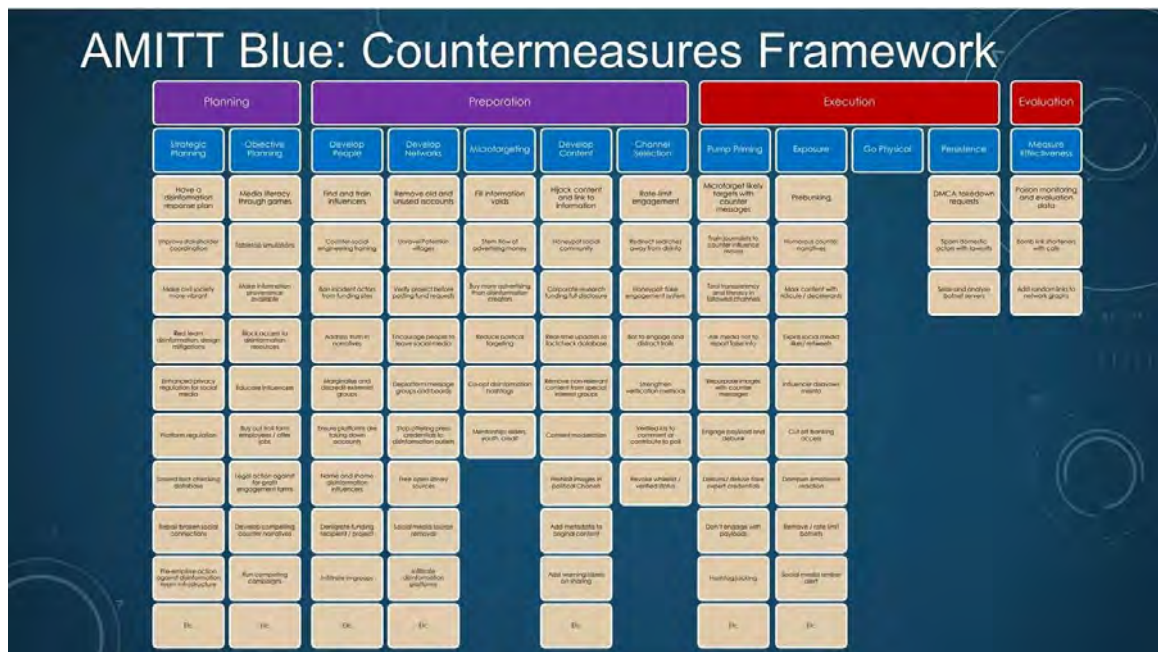
Figure 2: Dimensions of The Information Environment

The sum total of the documents is a clear picture of a highly coordinated and sophisticated effort by the US and UK governments to build a domestic censorship effort and influence operations similar to the ones they have used in foreign countries. At one point, Terp openly referenced her work “in the background” on social media issues related to the Arab Spring. Another time, the whistleblower said, she expressed her own apparent surprise that she would ever use such tactics, developed for foreign nationals, against American citizens.

According to the whistleblower, roughly 12-20 active people involved in CTIL worked at the FBI or CISA. “For a while, they had their agency seals — FBI, CISA, whatever — next to your name,” on the Slack messaging service, said the whistleblower. Terp “had a CISA badge that went away at some point,” the whistleblower said.

The ambitions of the 2020 pioneers of the Censorship Industrial Complex went far beyond simply urging Twitter to slap a warning label on Tweets, or to put individuals on blacklists. The AMITT framework calls for discrediting individuals as a necessary prerequisite of demanding censorship against them. It calls for training influencers to spread messages. And it calls

for trying to get banks to cut off financial services to individuals who organize rallies or events.



The timeline of CISA's work with CTIL leading up to its work with EIP and VP strongly suggests that the model for public-private censorship operations may have originated from a framework originally created by military contractors. What's more, the techniques and materials outlined by CTIL closely resemble materials later created by CISA's Countering Foreign Intelligence Task Force and Mis-, Dis-, and Malinformation team.

Over the next several days and weeks, we intend to present these documents to Congressional investigators, and will make public all of the documents we can while also protecting the identity of the whistleblower and other individuals who are not senior leaders or public figures.

But for now, we need to take a closer look at what happened in 2018 and 2019, leading up to the creation of CTIL, as well as this group's key role in the formation and growth of the Censorship Industrial Complex.

## "Volunteer" and "Former" Government Agents

WG Timeline			
Dec 2018	WG established & mission statement	Jul 2019	AMITT repo goes live
Jan 2019		Aug 2019	BlackHat presentation
Feb 2019	Wrote WWW paper	Sep 2019	STIX SEPs go in
Mar 2019	Created incidents list	Oct 2019	Populating counters list
Apr 2019	Created techniques list	Nov 2019	Blue Team Workshop
May 2019	Red Team Workshop	Dec 2019	Refine counters
Jun 2019	Refined AMITT		

[Bloomberg](#), [Washington Post](#) and [others](#) published credulous stories in the spring of 2020 claiming that the CTI League was simply a group of volunteer cybersecurity experts. Its founders were: a "former" Israeli intelligence official, Ohad Zaidenberg; a Microsoft "security manager," Nate Warfield; and the head of sec ops for DEF CON, a hackers convention, Marc Rogers. The articles claimed that those highly skilled cybercrime professionals had decided to help billion-dollar hospitals, on their own time and without pay, for strictly altruistic motives.

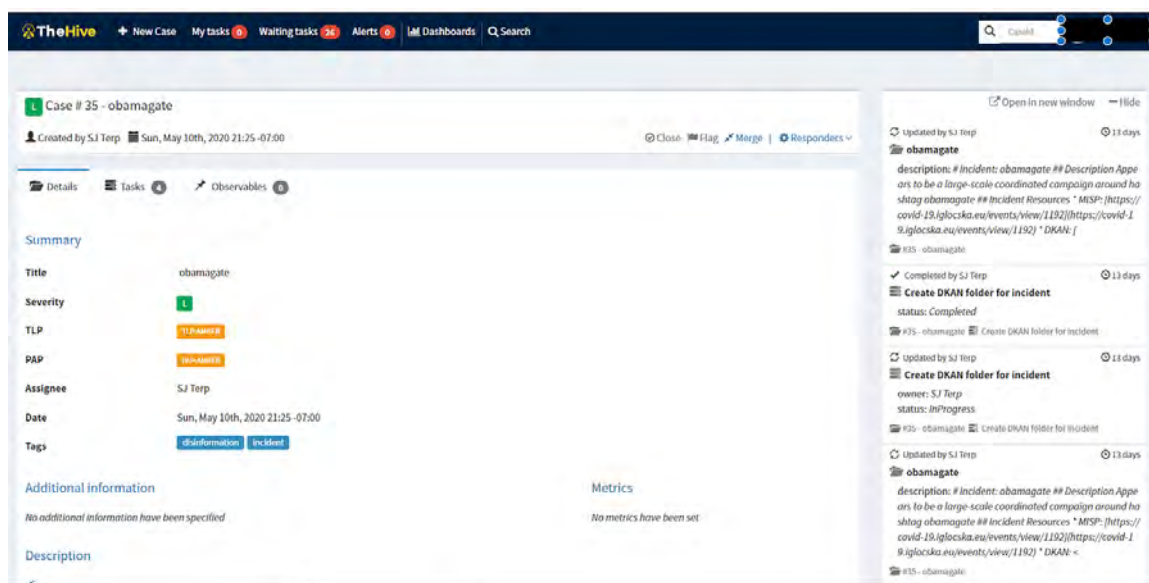
In just one month, from mid-March to mid-April, the supposedly all-volunteer CTIL had grown to "1,400 vetted members in 76 countries spanning 45 different sectors," had "helped to lawfully take down 2,833 cybercriminal assets on the internet, including 17 designed to impersonate government organizations, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization," and had "identified more than 2,000 vulnerabilities in healthcare institutions in more than 80 countries."

At every opportunity the men stressed that they were simply volunteers motivated by altruism. "I knew I had to do something to help," said Zaidenberg. "There is a really strong appetite for doing good in the community," Rogers said during an [Aspen Institute](#) webinar.

And yet a clear goal of CTIL's leaders was to build support for censorship among national security and cybersecurity institutions. Toward that end, they sought to promote the idea of "cognitive security" as a rationale for

government involvement in censorship activities. “Cognitive security is the thing you want to have,” said Terp on a 2019 podcast. “You want to protect that cognitive layer. It basically, it’s about pollution. Misinformation, disinformation, is a form of pollution across the Internet.”

Terp and Pablo Breuer, another CTIL leader, like Zaidenberg, had backgrounds in the military and were former military contractors. Both have worked for [SOFWERX](#), “a collaborative project of the U.S. Special Forces Command and Doolittle Institute.” The latter transfers [Air Force technology, through the Air Force Resource Lab, to the private sector.](#)



[According to Terp's bio](#) on the website of a consulting firm she created with Breuer, “She’s taught data science at Columbia University, was CTO of the UN’s big data team, designed machine learning algorithms and unmanned vehicle systems at the UK Ministry of Defence.

Breuer is a former US Navy commander. [According to his bio](#), he was “military director of US Special Operations Command Donovan Group and senior military advisor and innovation officer to SOFWERX, the National Security Agency, and U.S. Cyber Command as well as being the Director of C4 at U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.” Breuer is listed as having been in the Navy during the creation of CTIL [on his LinkedIn page](#).

In June, 2018, Terp [attended](#) a ten-day military exercise organized by the US Special Operations Command, where she says she first met Breuer and discussed modern disinformation campaigns on social media. Wired summed up the conclusions they drew from their meeting: “Misinformation, they realized, could be treated the same way: as a cybersecurity problem.” And so

they created [CogSec](#) with David Perlman and another colleague, Thaddeus Grugq, [at the lead](#). In 2019, Terp co-chaired the [Misinfosec](#) Working Group within CogSec.

Breuer admitted in a podcast that his aim was to bring military tactics to use on social media platforms in the U.S. "I wear two hats," he explained. "The military director of the Donovan Group, and one of two innovation officers at Sofwerx, which is a completely unclassified 501c3 nonprofit that's funded by U. S. Special Operations Command."

Breuer went on to describe how they thought they were getting around the First Amendment. His work with Terp, he explained, was a way to get "nontraditional partners into one room," including "maybe somebody from one of the social media companies, maybe a few special forces operators, and some folks from Department of Homeland Security... to talk in a non-attribution, open environment in an unclassified way so that we can collaborate better, more freely and really start to change the way that we address some of these issues."

The Misinfosec report advocated for sweeping government censorship and counter-misinformation. During the first six months of 2019, the authors say, they analyzed "incidents," developed a reporting system, and shared their censorship vision with "numerous state, treaty and NGOs."

In every incident mentioned, the victims of misinformation were on the political Left, and they included Barack Obama, John Podesta, Hillary Clinton, and Emmanuel Macron. The report was open about the fact that its motivation for counter-misinformation were the twin political earthquakes of 2016: Brexit and the election of Trump.

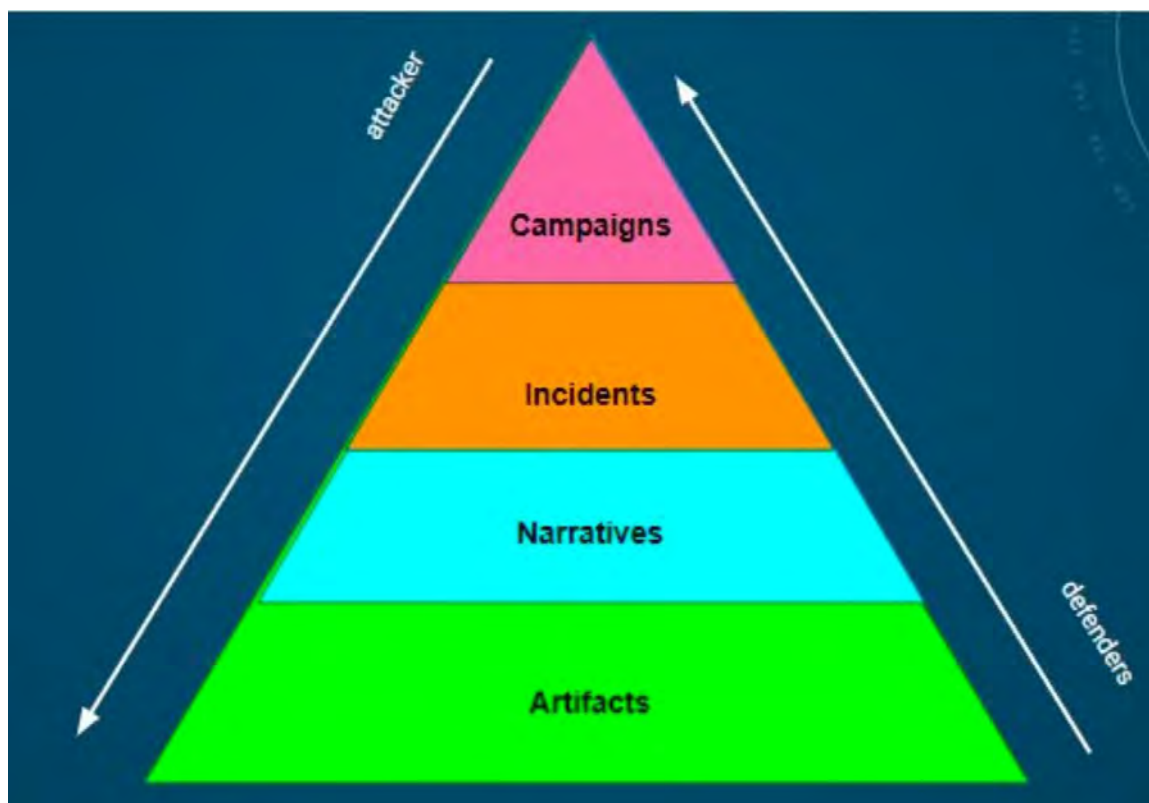
"A study of the antecedents to these events lead us to the realization that there's something off kilter with our information landscape," wrote Terp and her co-authors. "The usual useful idiots and fifth columnists—now augmented by automated bots, cyborgs and human trolls—are busily engineering public opinion, stoking up outrage, sowing doubt and chipping away at trust in our institutions. And now it's our brains that are being hacked."

The Misinfosec report focused on information that "changes beliefs" through "narratives," and recommended a way to counter misinformation by attacking specific links in a "kill chain" or influence chain from the misinfo "incident" before it becomes a full-blown narrative.

The report laments that governments and corporate media no longer have full control of information. "For a long time, the ability to reach mass

audiences belonged to the nation-state (e.g. in the USA via broadcast licensing through ABC, CBS and NBC). Now, however, control of informational instruments has been allowed to devolve to large technology companies who have been blissfully complacent and complicit in facilitating access to the public for information operators at a fraction of what it would have cost them by other means.”

The authors advocated for police, military, and intelligence involvement in censorship, across Five Eyes nations, and even suggested that Interpol should be involved.



The report proposed a plan for AMITT and for security, intelligence, and law enforcement collaboration and argued for immediate implementation. “We do not need, nor can we afford, to wait 27 years for the AMITT (Adversarial Misinformation and Influence Tactics and Techniques) framework to go into use.”

The authors called for placing censorship efforts inside of “cybersecurity” even while acknowledging that “misinformation security” is utterly different from cybersecurity. They wrote that the third pillar of “The information environment” after physical and cybersecurity should be “The Cognitive Dimension.”

The report flagged the need for a kind of pre-bunking to “preemptively inoculate a vulnerable population against messaging.” The report also pointed to the opportunity to use the DHS-funded Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) as the homes for orchestrating public-private censorship, and argued that these ISACs should be used to promote confidence in government.

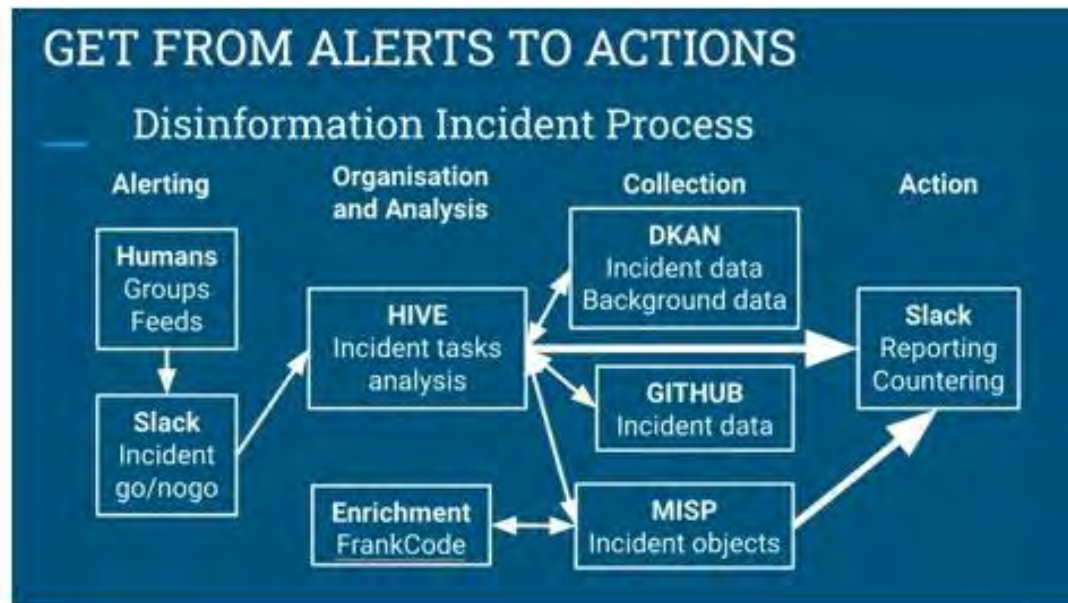
It is here that we see the idea for the EIP and VP: “While social media is not identified as a critical sector, and therefore doesn’t qualify for an ISAC, a misinformation ISAC could and should feed indications and warnings into ISACs.”

Terp’s view of “disinformation” was overtly political. “Most misinformation is actually true,” noted Terp in the 2019 podcast, “but set in the wrong context.” Terp is an eloquent explainer of the strategy of using “anti-disinformation” efforts to conduct influence operations. “You’re not trying to get people to believe lies most of the time. Most of the time, you’re trying to change their belief sets. And in fact, really, uh, deeper than that, you’re trying to change, to shift their internal narratives... the set of stories that are your baseline for your culture. So that might be the baseline for your culture as an American.”

In the fall, Terp and others sought to promote their report. The podcast Terp did with Breuer in 2019 was one example of this effort. Together Terp and Breuer described the “public-private” model of censorship laundering that DHS, EIP, and VP would go on to embrace.

Breuer spoke freely, openly stating that the information and narrative control he had in mind was comparable to that implemented by the Chinese government, only made more palatable for Americans. “If you talk to the average Chinese citizen, they absolutely believe that the Great Firewall of China is not there for censorship. They believe that it’s there because the Chinese Communist Party wants to protect the citizenry and they absolutely believe that’s a good thing. If the US government tried to sell that narrative, we would absolutely lose our minds and say, ‘No, no, this is a violation of our First Amendment rights. So the in-group and out-group messaging have to be often different.”

## "Hogwarts School of Misinformation"



"SJ called us the 'Hogwarts school for misinformation and disinformation,'" said the whistleblower. "They were superheroes in their own story. And to that effect you could still find comic books on the CISA site."

CTIL, the whistleblower said, "needed programmers to pull apart information from Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. For Twitter they created Python code to scrape."

The CTIL records provided by the whistleblower illustrate exactly how CTIL operated and tracked "incidents," as well as what it considered to be "disinformation." About the "we won't stay home" narrative, CTIL members wrote, "Do we have enough to ask for the groups and/or accounts to be taken down or at a minimum reported and checked?" and "Can we get all troll on their bums if not?"

They tracked posters calling for anti-lockdown protests as disinformation artifacts.

"We should have seen this one coming," they wrote about the protests. "Bottom line: can we stop the spread, do we have enough evidence to stop superspreaders, and are there other things we can do (are there countermessagers we can ping etc)."

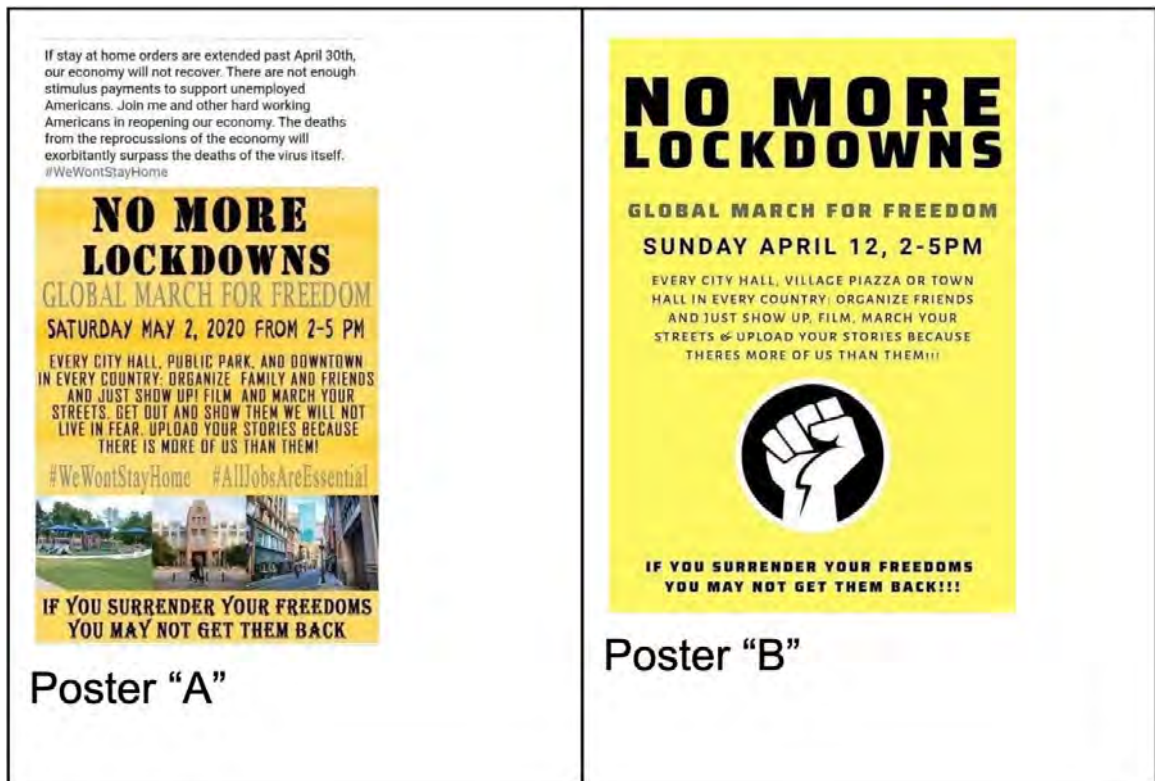
CTIL also worked to brainstorm counter-messaging for things like encouraging people to wear masks and discussed building an amplification network. "Repetition is truth," said a CTIL member in one training.

CTIL worked with other figures and groups in the Censorship Industrial Complex. Meeting notes indicate that Graphika's team looked into adopting AMITT and that CTIL wanted to consult DiResta about getting platforms to remove content more quickly.

When asked whether Terp or other CTIL leaders discussed their potential violation of the First Amendment, the whistleblower said, "They did not... The ethos was that if we get away with it, it's legal, and there were no First Amendment concerns because we have a 'public-private partnership' — that's the word they used to disguise those concerns. 'Private people can do things public servants can't do, and public servants can provide the leadership and coordination.'"

Despite their confidence in the legality of their activities, some CTIL members may have taken extreme measures to keep their identities a secret. The group's handbook recommends using burner phones, creating pseudonymous identities, and generating fake AI faces using the "[This person does not exist](#)" website.

In June 2020, the whistleblower says, the secretive group took actions to conceal their activities even more.



One month later, In July 2020, SIO's Director, Alex Stamos emailed Kate Starbird from the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public,

writing, “We are working on some election monitoring ideas with CISA and I would love your informal feedback before we go too far down this road . . . . [T]hings that should have been assembled a year ago are coming together quickly this week.”

That summer CISA also created the [Countering Foreign Influence Task Force](#) which has measures that reflect CTIL/AMITT methods and includes a “real fake” graphic novel the whistleblower said was first pitched within CTIL.

The “DISARM” framework, which AMITT inspired, has been [formally adopted](#) by the European Union and the United States as part of a “common standard for exchanging structured threat information on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference.”

Until now, the details of CTIL’s activities have received little attention even though the group received publicity in 2020. In September 2020, Wired [published an article](#) about CTIL that reads like a company press release. The article, like the Bloomberg and Washington Post stories that spring, accepts unquestioningly that the CTIL was truly a “volunteer” network of “former” intelligence officials from around the world.

But unlike the Bloomberg and Washington Post stories, Wired also describes CTIL’s “anti-misinformation” work. The Wired reporter does not quote any critic of the CTIL activities, but suggests that some might see something wrong with them. “I ask him [CTIL co-founder Marc Rogers] about the notion of viewing misinformation as a cyber threat. “All of these bad actors are trying to do the same thing, Rogers says.”

In other words, the connection between preventing cyber crimes, and “fighting misinformation,” are basically the same because they both involve fighting what the DHS and CTI League alike call “malicious actors,” which is synonymous with “bad guys.”

“Like Terp, Rogers takes a holistic approach to cybersecurity,” the Wired article explains. “First there’s physical security, like stealing data from a computer onto a USB drive. Then there’s what we typically think of as cybersecurity—securing networks and devices from unwanted intrusions. And finally, you have what Rogers and Terp call cognitive security, which essentially is hacking people, using information, or more often, misinformation.”

CTIL appears to have generated publicity about itself in the Spring and Fall of 2020 for the same reason EIP did: to claim later that its work was all out in the open and that anybody who suggested it was secretive was engaging in a conspiracy theory.

“The Election Integrity Partnership has always operated openly and transparently,” EIP claimed in October 2022. “We published [multiple public blog posts](#) in the run-up to the 2020 election, hosted daily webinars immediately before and after the election, and published our results in a [290-page final report](#) and multiple peer-reviewed academic journals. Any insinuation that information about our operations or findings were secret up to this point is disproven by the two years of free, public content we have created.”

But as internal messages have revealed, much of what EIP did was secret, as well as partisan, and demanding of censorship by social media platforms, contrary to [its claims](#).

EIP and VP, ostensibly, ended, but CTIL is apparently still active, based on the LinkedIn pages of its members.

# Under White House Pressure, Facebook Censored Accurate Covid Vaccine Information

Facebook's censorship of true information about the covid vaccine, discovered by the Attorney General of Missouri, could be a violation of the First Amendment

JAN 12, 2023 • PAID



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Under pressure from the White House, Facebook censored "often-true content" that a company executive said in the spring of 2021 "does not contain actionable misinformation" but was "discouraging vaccines."

The State Attorney General of Missouri, who is suing the Biden Administration for violating the First Amendment, [released](#) the email over the weekend.

"As you know," wrote the Facebook executive whose name was redacted, "in addition to removing vaccine misinformation, we have been focused on reducing the virality of content discouraging vaccines that does not contain actionable misinformation."

From: [REDACTED]@fb.com>  
 Sent: Sunday, March 21, 2021 11:25 PM  
 To: Slavitt, Andrew M. EOP/WHO [REDACTED]@who.eop.gov>  
 Cc: Flaherty, Rob EOP/WHO [REDACTED]@who.eop.gov>  
 Subject: [EXTERNAL] Follow up - Friday call w [REDACTED]

Andy,

Thanks for taking the time to connect on Friday. Per our discussion, I wanted to follow up with next steps:

1. **Consistent Product Team POC:** As discussed, we will make [REDACTED] who has been coordinating the product work that matters most to your teams, available on a regular basis. If it makes sense, we can schedule some time for [REDACTED] to connect with you and/or Rob (and whomever else makes sense) early this week.
2. **Sharing Additional Data:** [REDACTED] mentioned the new internal analytics that we are developing to help us understand and monitor the most viral COVID vaccine-related content. This is a top priority for us, and we will keep you updated on our progress and when we expect to be able to share the data with you.
3. **Levers for Tackling Vaccine Hesitancy Content:** You also asked us about our levers for reducing virality of vaccine hesitancy content. In addition to policies previously discussed, these include the additional changes that were approved late last week and that we'll be implementing over the coming weeks. As you know, in addition to removing vaccine misinformation, we have been focused on reducing the virality of content discouraging vaccines that does not contain actionable misinformation. This is often-true content, which we allow at the post level because experts have advised us that it is important for people to be able to discuss both their personal experiences and concerns about the vaccine, but it can be framed as sensation, alarmist, or shocking. We'll remove these Groups, Pages, and Accounts when they are disproportionately promoting this sensationalized content. More on this front as we proceed to implement.
4. **WhatsApp:** Finally-- [REDACTED] mentioned the policies that apply to WhatsApp. WhatsApp's approach to misinformation focuses on limiting the virality of messages, preventing coordinated abuse, and empowering users to seek out reliable sources of information both in and out of the product. Our product includes features to limit the spread of viral content, such as forward limits and labels, privacy settings to help users decide who can add them to groups, and simple ways for users to block accounts and make reports to WhatsApp if they encounter problematic messages. Additional limitations we placed in April 2020 on forwarding of messages that have been forwarded many times reduced these kinds of messages by over 70%.

Along with these commitments, we'll continue to provide updated data from our COVID-19 Symptom Survey, and would be happy to walk through this data with our research director, if helpful.

Thanks again--and please let me know if there's anything I'm missing or can follow up to clarify.

The email shows Facebook responding defensively to the White House's then-covid advisor, Andy Slavitt. "This often-true content," wrote Facebook, "which we allow at the post level because experts have advised us that it is important for people to be able to discuss both their personal experiences and concerns about the vaccine, but it can be framed as sensation[al], alarmist, or shocking."

"We'll remove these Groups, Pages, and Accounts when they are disproportionately promoting this sensationalized content," said the Facebook executive in an email responding to White House demands for censorship. "More on this front as we proceed to implement."

Another White House official wrote in an angry, scolding email to Facebook, “We are gravely concerned that your service is one of the top drivers of vaccine hesitancy - period.” The official said it believed Facebook was at risk of "doing the same" thing it did before the Jan 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol when "an insurrection ...was plotted, in large part, by your platform.”

All of these censorship demands were occurring against a backdrop of the White House and Congress regularly threatening to revoke Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which indemnifies social media platforms from liability for content posted by users. The social media platforms consider Section 230 repeal an existential threat. Without the Act, they would not be able to exist in their current form.

Aaron Kheriaty, a former professor at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine and a plaintiff in the Attorneys General case, [wrote](#) in the Wall Street Journal, "The First Amendment bars [the] government from engaging in viewpoint-based censorship."

What’s more, the White House had the same impact on Twitter.

## The War To Censor Inconvenient Truths



When Martin Kulldorff, a Harvard epidemiologist, tweeted in March 2021 that not everybody needed the Covid vaccine, Twitter slapped a “Misleading” label, complete with a red hazard sign next to it, even though Kulldorff’s claim was accurate and not misleading (above).

The Twitter files [showed](#) other censorship of accurate covid information. Twitter suspended a Rhode Island physician named Andrew Bostom after he received multiple

“strikes” for supposed misinformation. But one of those strikes referenced the results of a peer-reviewed [study](#).

And an internal Twitter audit after Bostom’s attorney contacted the company found that just one of Bostom’s five violations was actual misinformation. Twitter had mislabeled accurate information as “misinformation” four separate times.

In fact, what is striking about Kulldorff’s claim is its calm practicality. “Thinking that everyone must be vaccinated is as scientifically flawed as thinking that nobody should.... Those with prior vaccines do not need it. Nor children.”

What’s more, the Twitter Files showed a pattern of the Biden White House intimidating Twitter and Facebook execs into censoring accurate information and deplatforming covid vaccine skeptics such as Alex Berenson, who sued Twitter in 2021 and was reinstated by Twitter to the platform last year before Elon Musk bought the company.

- 
- The Biden team was not satisfied with Twitter’s enforcement approach as they wanted Twitter to do more and to de-platform several accounts. Because of this dissatisfaction, we were asked to join several other calls. They were very angry in nature.
  - Here’s a [presentation](#) the Twitter team used.

The Biden administration’s pressure on social media platforms to censor Covid-19 content was relentless and public. In the summer of 2021, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy [declared](#) an “infodemic” that required a “whole-of-society” effort to overcome. He suggested that in order to combat the “infodemic,” Americans needed to be exposed to “inoculation methods such as ‘prebunking’” in order to prepare them for the risk of being “exposed” to misinformation “super-spreaders.”

Murthy’s [report](#) on this health information emergency relied heavily on the research of a London-based non-profit advocacy organization that once called on social media platforms to [ban anyone who says anything racist online for life](#). Then-press secretary Jen Psaki [called on Facebook](#) to remove “harmful, violative posts” and [boasted](#) that the administration was “flagging violative posts for Facebook.”

That context, and the way that Facebook and Twitter caved in to pressure from the White House and FBI, may mean that the federal government violated the First Amendment.

At least one social media executive believes that Facebook's censorship of accurate covid information at the request of the White House was a violation of the First Amendment. In response to our Tweet about the Facebook email, Elon Musk [tweeted](#), "Constitutional violation."



271 Likes

## 41 Comments



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# New Facebook Files Expose Biden Censorship-For-Spying Scheme

Internal emails reveal that fear among Facebook executives over losing White House support in EU privacy case was behind greater censorship



MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER, ALEX GUTENTAG, AND LEIGHTON WOODHOUSE

AUG 7, 2023 • PAID

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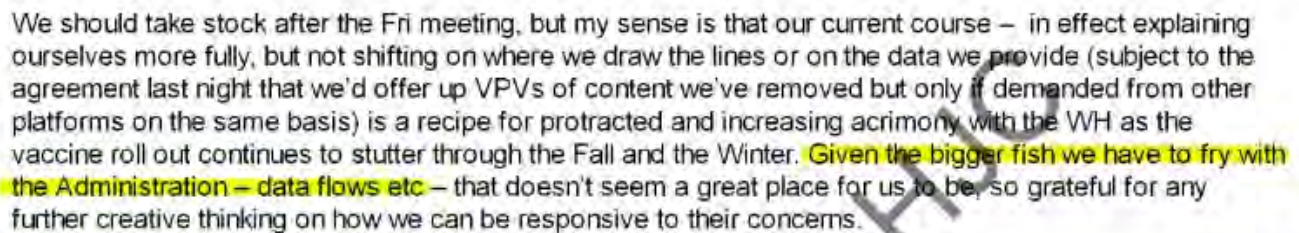


The Biden White House did not violate the First Amendment when it requested that Facebook censor information on Covid's origin and vaccine side effects, say many policymakers, journalists, and legal experts. Rather, White House officials were simply

expressing their free speech rights, and Facebook executives were free to ignore White House requests.

But newly released internal emails show that Facebook executives felt pressure to comply with White House demands in order to resolve a European Union ban on the social media company's ability to transfer the data of European users to its servers in the United States.

In July 2021, after a White House official demanded that Facebook censor more information, Facebook's Vice President of Global Affairs and Communications, Nick Clegg, asked his colleagues to comply. The reason? Because of "the bigger fish we have to fry with the Administration — data flows etc..."

A screenshot of an internal Facebook email. The text is as follows: "We should take stock after the Fri meeting, but my sense is that our current course – in effect explaining ourselves more fully, but not shifting on where we draw the lines or on the data we provide (subject to the agreement last night that we'd offer up VPVs of content we've removed but only if demanded from other platforms on the same basis) is a recipe for protracted and increasing acrimony with the WH as the vaccine roll out continues to stutter through the Fall and the Winter. Given the bigger fish we have to fry with the Administration – data flows etc – that doesn't seem a great place for us to be, so grateful for any further creative thinking on how we can be responsive to their concerns." The phrase "Given the bigger fish we have to fry with the Administration – data flows etc" is highlighted in yellow. A large, faint "DRAFT" watermark is visible across the text.

We should take stock after the Fri meeting, but my sense is that our current course – in effect explaining ourselves more fully, but not shifting on where we draw the lines or on the data we provide (subject to the agreement last night that we'd offer up VPVs of content we've removed but only if demanded from other platforms on the same basis) is a recipe for protracted and increasing acrimony with the WH as the vaccine roll out continues to stutter through the Fall and the Winter. Given the bigger fish we have to fry with the Administration – data flows etc – that doesn't seem a great place for us to be, so grateful for any further creative thinking on how we can be responsive to their concerns.

By "data flows," Clegg was referring to the EU's demand that Facebook stop transferring European user data — which Facebook advertisers value for targeting customers — to the United States.

The dispute was no small matter. In May of this year, EU regulators fined Meta, Facebook's parent company, a record \$1.3 billion for breaking the EU's privacy regulations. The regulator said that Meta had violated a [2020 ruling by the EU's highest court](#).

Two months later, on July 10, 2023, the Biden Administration and European Union [announced](#) a [deal](#), the "EU-US Data Privacy Framework."

The series of events suggests a quid pro quo. Facebook would bow to White House requests for censorship in exchange for its help with the European Union.

"This is a gross violation of the First Amendment," Columbia Law School Professor Philip

Hamburger told Public, “not only because it involves what the Supreme Court considers ‘coercion,’ but also because it’s equally unconstitutional for the government to seek censorship through contract or conspiracy. And that’s what happened here.”

The White House wasn’t the only entity demanding that Facebook censor. NGOs and journalists from NBC and the New York Times were also pressuring Facebook to censor more. In response, Facebook executives weighed the radical “blackholing” measure, which blocks links to external web sites without informing users.

But it’s clear from the newly released emails that Facebook executives felt the greatest pressure from the White House and that they feared the White House would hurt them in other ways.

Until now, critics of government demands for greater Facebook censorship have focused on the White House’s threat to revoke Facebook’s Section 230 status, which immunizes the company from many forms of liability.

But the new emails point to a form of government leverage over the platform that has been ignored until now: the EU demand on Facebook to stop data flows from the EU to the US, and the conditional willingness of the White House to push back against it.

A potential end of EU-to-US data flows is an even more urgent threat to Facebook’s business than White House threats to Section 230. About ten percent of Facebook’s total global advertising revenue, [\\$1.2 billion](#), comes from selling ads in the EU.

While neither Congress nor the Biden Administration have shown much willingness to follow through on their threats to modify Section 230, the European Union [has imposed fine after fine](#) on Meta/Facebook. Last November, EU regulators fined Meta \$291 million for a leak of its data. And in January of this year, they fined Meta \$429 million for making users accept personalized ads in order to use Facebook.

All of which raises the question: why did EU leaders cut a deal with the Biden White House to allow Meta to move data to the United States? While it’s clear what Facebook and the White House got out of the secret *quid pro quo*, what did Europe get?

# Snowden, Spying, and The War in Ukraine

In 2013, a US government contractor named Edward Snowden [released](#) top secret documents showing that the US government had been working with Internet companies to spy on people worldwide without obtaining a warrant. They did so through secretive programs called [Upstream](#) and [PRISM](#) or authorized under US spying laws, [FISA 702](#), and [EO 12.333](#).

The spying went far beyond searching for criminals or terrorism. The US spied on citizens around the world, including in Europe.

Facebook today is in violation of a 1995 EU law, which [holds](#) that Internet companies could not send personal data of EU citizens out of the EU unless there was an "essentially equivalent" protection in the destination nation.

Facebook got around that law through a European Commission Decision called "Safe

Harbor." It held that the US was "essentially equivalent" in 2000.

Then, in 2015, in direct response to the Snowden revelations, Europe's highest court, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), [overturned that decision](#).

The following year, 2016, under US pressure, the European Commission [tried](#) to restore the ability of US companies to transfer data from Europe to the US under the Orwellian name "Privacy Shield."

But the [European high court rejected \(annulled\) that law](#) in 2020, largely on the same grounds as it had in 2015: the right to privacy. That ruling laid the groundwork for the EU's \$1.3 billion fine against Facebook.

After the EU court annulled the so-called "Privacy Shield," Facebook sought greater White House help in negotiating a new law with Europe.

In every instance, the sticking point between the US and EU was that the US wanted to be able to continue its warrantless spying on Europeans. The Europeans objected to this.

Why did European leaders finally give in? The answer is not yet clear, but it may have something to do with a new, earth-shattering development: Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In March 2022, Politico [reported](#) that, "after Russia invaded its Western neighbor in late February, some within US policymaking circles have highlighted how the ongoing conflict in Eastern Europe — and the ability for US intelligence agencies to provide real-time insight to their European counterparts — is just another reason why an agreement should be reached, and quickly."

In other words, the Biden Administration believed that the new war in Ukraine aligned the EU's interests with those of the US in support of spying on European citizens.

We already know that American intelligence organizations have helped Ukraine censor speech online. House investigators last month revealed that the FBI had "facilitated censorship requests to American social media companies on behalf of a Ukrainian intelligence agency infiltrated by Russian-aligned actors."

In April, [Public was the first to report](#) that Facebook had censored journalist Seymour Hersh's Substack [story](#) claiming that NATO had destroyed the Nord Stream pipeline. Later that month, journalist Lee Fang [reported](#) that the FBI had pressured Facebook to censor “disinformation” at the request of Ukrainian intelligence.

“Once we have a trace or evidence of disinformation campaigns via Facebook or other resources that are from the US, we pass this information to the FBI, along with writing directly to Facebook,” the head of the Department of Cyber Information Security in the Security Service of Ukraine [told](#) Fang. “We asked FBI for support to help us with Meta, to help us with others, and sometimes we get good results with that.”

And Facebook and other Internet companies have been more than willing to help the US government violate the privacy rights of Europeans in exchange for the user data they need in order to target advertising.

Politico [noted that](#) “Google’s European head, Matt Brittin, said transatlantic data flows were vital to protecting websites, including those in Ukraine, from cyberattacks. He name-checked the search giant's own ‘Project Shield’ — the search giant's toolbox to protect human rights and election monitoring sites from cyberattack — that one EU official quipped sounded similar to the Privacy Shield pact.”

With all of this taken together, First Amendment experts say Facebook’s internal email about “data flows” shows a clear violation of the law.

“The First Amendment bars government from ‘abridging’ the freedom of speech, not just prohibiting it,” said Professor Hamburger. “So this sort of conspiracy to censor Americans violates the First Amendment. And Facebook needs to be as worried as the government, because this evidence shows a criminal conspiracy to deprive persons of their civil rights.”

“When the White House wants a company to do something, there’s a lot of reasons for the company to do it. And here what the White House wanted them to do was censor based on viewpoint in order to get something else,” said Jenin Younes, lead counsel for New Civil Liberties Alliance in the [Missouri v. Biden](#) case. “So I would consider that to fall under the coercion umbrella.”

# Censorship-For-Spying Unites Left And Right

To date, liberals and conservatives have been sharply divided on censorship. In the United States and Europe, most NGOs, journalists, and politicians on the Left and center-Left have been demanding greater censorship of so-called “misinformation” by Facebook and other Internet companies, while most NGOs, journalists, and politicians on the Right have been demanding less censorship and more free speech.

The new revelations have the potential to change all of that because they show the extent to which warrantless spying and censorship are two sides of the same coin.

This opens the possibility of a broader Left-Right alliance against warrantless spying and censorship in both the US and Europe. US spying on Europeans infuriates people on the Left in Europe.

Noyb, a leading civil liberties organization in Europe, which has done more than any other NGO to raise the alarm about the violation of privacy rights by the Biden Administration and Facebook, notes that “the US has refused to reform FISA 702 to give non-US persons reasonable privacy protections.”

Noyb notes, “There is agreement on both sides of the Atlantic that FISA 702 and EO 12.333 violate fundamental rights under the 4th Amendment in the US and Articles 7, 8 and 47 CFR in the EU — but the US continues to insist that non-US persons do not have constitutional rights in the US — hence a violation of their right to privacy is not covered by the 4th Amendment.”

And today, a bipartisan group in Congress is vowing not to extend FISA after it sunsets at the end of this year.

“I will only support the reauthorization of Section 702 if there are significant, significant reforms,” said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin ( D-IL) said in June. “And that means first and foremost addressing the warrantless surveillance of Americans in violation of the Fourth Amendment.”

Republican leaders agree. “Why should we ever trust the FBI and the DOJ again to police themselves under FISA, when they’ve shown us repeatedly, for more than a decade, that they cannot be trusted to do so?” said Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT).

Noyb, last month, struck a cynical note about FISA reform. “FISA 702 will have to be prolonged by the end of 2023, given that there is a ‘sunset clause’ in US law,” [it wrote](#) last month. “This would have been the perfect opportunity to improve US law, but given the new deal with the EU, there will be little reason for the US to reform FISA 702.”

That might have been true before the Facebook Files, but it’s not clear if it’s true anymore.

And now, Noyb’s founder, Max Schrems, predicts that the European high court could strike down the deal. “We currently expect this to be back at the Court of Justice by the beginning of next year. The Court of Justice could then even suspend the new deal while it is reviewing the substance of it.”

And the Supreme Court of the US may mirror action by the high court of Europe. The

lawsuit by the attorneys general of Missouri and Louisiana against the Biden White House, Missouri v. Biden, may be headed to the Supreme Court. And it may rule that the Biden White House wasn't simply exercising its free speech rights, but rather it was, contra the First Amendment, "abridging freedom of speech" by demanding censorship under threat of revoking Section 230 and not helping Facebook to save its multi-billion dollar business in Europe.

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307 Likes · 30 Restacks

## 47 Comments



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# RISK

## THE H

00:00

**Pressure On Facebook And White House For Greater Censorship Came From News Media**

# As the government's Covid vaccination campaign flagged in 2021, New York Times and others ramped up demands for more censorship



ALEX GUTENTAG, LEIGHTON WOODHOUSE, AND MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER

AUG 8, 2023 • PAID



255



52



29

Share



Yesterday Public [reported](#) for the first time that Facebook censored content at the request of the White House in order to guarantee White House support in a \$1.2 billion battle with the European Union over data privacy.

It is a significant discovery because it points to a major and additional point of financial leverage that the US government used to coerce censorship, in addition to widely discussed Section 230 liability protections, which President Biden, directly and indirectly, [threatened](#) — if Facebook refused its demands to censor.

But it all raises a question: why was the Biden White House so determined to censor Facebook in the first place?

Until the Facebook Files, the answer had been that they wanted people to take the vaccine. The White House believed all the anti-vaccine information on Facebook was contributing to “vaccine hesitancy.”

But now, the Facebook Files reveal that Facebook executives *knew* censoring disfavored vaccine views would backfire and explained to White House officials that censoring such views would violate established norms around freedom of speech. But the White House demanded more censorship, anyway.

In internal emails, Rosa Birch, Facebook’s Director of Strategic Response, argued that vaccine censorship would “1/ prevent hesitant people from talking through their concerns online and 2/reinforce the notion that there’s a cover-up.”

Birch stressed that a large and strong body of research showed the importance of “open dialogue,” access to information, and creating “an open and safe space for people to have

vaccine-related conversations.”

Birch worried that censorship might “risk pushing [the vaccine hesitant] further toward hesitancy by suppressing their speech and making them feel marginalized by large institutions.”

The White House rejected Birch’s evidence-based case against censorship.

“We are facing continued pressure from external stakeholders, including the white house and the press, to *remove* more COVID-19 vaccine-discouraging content,” Birch wrote to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and COO Sheryl Sandberg in an April 2021 email.

Facebook executive Nick Clegg initially attempted to defend his staff. “I countered that removing content like that would represent a significant incursion into traditional boundaries of free expression in the US,” wrote Clegg.

But he eventually caved in. “Given what is at stake here,” he wrote, “it would also be a good idea if we could regroup to take stock of where we are in our relations with the WH [White House], and our internal methods too.”

And so, in direct response to White House pressure, Birch put forward three stronger enforcement options for the demotion or deletion of “vaccine discouraging content.” Listing out the pros and cons of each option, Birch explicitly named satisfying “critics” as a factor in determining which course of action to take.

The White House was warned that censoring “vaccine hesitancy” was not the right approach. Why, then, did it push for it anyway?

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# Corporate Media Demand State Censorship

NBC's Ben Collins and the New York Times' Sheera Frenkel

In the summer of 2021, unable to convince every American to get vaccinated, the administration sought more and more extreme means to control the flow of information.

Facebook executive and top censor Aaron Berman identified the motivation behind the White House's approach in a July 16 email: the administration was trying to scapegoat social media companies for its own policy failures. "It also just seems like when the vaccination campaign isn't going as hoped, it's convenient for them to blame us," Berman wrote.

Nonprofits played a role, particularly a London-based pro-censorship advocacy group called the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH). Facebook considered the radical measure of "off-platform links enforcement" and "blackholing" vaccine critics named by the CCDH as the "Disinformation Dozen."

By May 2021, Facebook had already developed a "tracker on actions related to CCDH entities."

Demand for censorship also came from mainstream corporate news media. When the New York Times' Sheera Frenkel [published](#) a story about Dr. Joseph Mercola on July 24, 2021, Facebook employees responded to the story by looking for ways to blackhole him.

Facebook had already blackholed one domain operated by Dr. Joseph Mercola and his wife, Erin Elizabeth.

But the new New York Times story lit a fire under Facebook executives to censor him more. Several Facebook employees engaged in an active effort to search for enforcement grounds, including retroactively looking at offending posts from months earlier.

All three worked in concert: nonprofits, news media, and the White House. For instance, an email from July 22, 2021, indicates that White House official Andy Slavitt shared a Tweet from NBC "Disinformation reporter" Ben Collins with Facebook staff as part of his campaign to demand more censorship.

As such, the censorship was driven by politics, not science. "This seems like a political battle that's not grounded in facts, and it's frustrating," complained one Facebook executive to Berman.

Berman agreed: "There are so many untested assumptions in what the administration is saying recently — social media misinfo is increasing, it's leading to death, it has an impact different from misinfo [in] other places — not to mention how their definition of 'misinfo' is completely unclear."

Again and again it became clear that it was the news media demanding White House censorship.

"The White House rarely provides any specificity about what it wants removed," one employee wrote, "but it routinely complains to us about content identified in critical media reports."

And why was the White House concerned about the news media? Because the news media shapes public opinion, and public opinion determines the outcomes of elections.

# Independent Media For The First Amendment

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry testifies during the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government hearing on the Missouri v. Biden case challenging the administration's violation of the First Amendment by directing social media companies to censor and suppress Americans' free speech, in Rayburn Building on Thursday, March 30, 2023.  
(Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images)

The Facebook Files reveal the political and financial power of the White House, under pressure from ideologues in the news media, to censor disfavored and often accurate information. They expose clear violations of the First Amendment. If US courts allow such abuses to continue into the future, then the American people will continue to be manipulated by government disinformation and censorship campaigns.

The good news is that the evidence now clearly shows the White House violated the First

Amendment and thus increases the chance that the Supreme Court will side with the attorneys general of Louisiana and Missouri in *Missouri v. Biden*.

And the issue of Section 230 reform remains alive in Congress. Why should the American people give Facebook and other censorial organizations like YouTube liability protection if it is going to censor dissenting views?

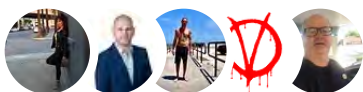
Whatever the Supreme Court and Congress do, it's now clear that the emerging bottom-up international pro-freedom alliance should demand the protection of privacy and free speech. We should support EU efforts to prevent Facebook "data flows" from the EU to the US since they are used as a way to extract more censorship.

In general, we should embrace the fragmentation of social media alongside the diminishment of mainstream corporate news media. We should want Facebook, YouTube, and the New York Times to have reduced revenues, political power, and influence over government and society.

And to a large extent, that's happening. There are now many choices for social media platforms, including a freer Twitter, Substack Notes, and Meta's Twitter clone, Threads. While the latter has engaged in [irresponsible censorship](#), it is at least another option for getting the word out. And there are also encrypted, closed platforms in which we can speak freely within smaller groups, such as WhatsApp and Signal.

If Facebook can spread disinformation and censor, then it has all the rights of a publisher along with the liability protection of Section 230, which traditional publishers do not enjoy. Congress may fear changing this, given Facebook's power. And so, independent news organizations may consider organizing as Section 230 social media so they can enjoy the same legal liability protections.

Doing so may help them better document and expose the abuses of power, including censorship and disinformation like the censorship-for-spying scandal revealed in the Facebook Files.



255 Likes · 29 Restacks


52 Comments



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Top First




**Yuri Bezmenov**  Writes [How To Subvert Subversion with ...](#) Aug 8  
The Soviets had a state run media. We have a media run state.

 LIKE (29)  REPLY (3)  SHARE ...



**Rich Smith** Aug 8  
I am reading this in Yakov Smirnoff's voice.

 LIKE (4)  REPLY (1)  SHARE ...




**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8  
"What a country!"

 LIKE (2)  REPLY  SHARE ...




**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8  
In United Stares, media plays YOU!

 LIKE (2)  REPLY  SHARE ...



**Archduke Abino Coonixus** Writes [Archduke Albino Coonixus smoke ...](#) Aug 9  
she'll go 300 hectares on a single tank of kersosene...

 LIKE  REPLY  SHARE ...



**Richard Speed** Writes [The Crisis](#) Aug 8  
Over a century ago the nation engaged in a debate about how best to deal with industrial monopolies, break them up, or regulate them. Regulation of big business was the dominant choice made by progressives. It was the wrong choice because it gave vast powers to government and made business subservient to federal authorities. Anti-trust or fragmentation, was always the better choice because it maximizes consumer choice and business freedom. The same choice faces the American people today with regard to the

news media in general and social media in particular. Fragmentation is always the best choice because it is the freedom choice. Anti-trust action. Break them up into smaller pieces and make the pieces that remain compete against one another. BREAK THEM UP!

♡ LIKE (14) 💬 REPLY (4) ↗ SHARE

...



**Noam Deplume, Jr. (look,at,me)** Aug 8

The government also oversees mergers. Once, America had quite a number of aerospace contractors. The government has allowed them to merge into a handful of companies with colorful portmanteau names that echo the now vestigial entities they gobbled up. Ironically, the government now has fewer bidders with prices that range competitively from exorbitant to outrageous.

♡ LIKE (7) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE

...



**Richard Speed** Writes The Crisis Aug 8

Names like Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman. The fact is that the United States has an agency whose primary, perhaps sole, purpose is to forestall the emergence of monopolistic enterprises by preventing mergers and acquisitions that may crush competition. It is called the Federal Trade Commission. I don't know all the details, but at least since the New Deal, regulation has eclipsed anti-trust action generally as the way the nation deals with the threat of monopoly. This in turn has led to a virtual merger of government and big business. This is what, in my view needs to be reversed. In short, we need a revolution in anti-trust enforcement.

♡ LIKE (6) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE

...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

Teddy Roosevelt 2024!

♡ LIKE (4) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE

...



**Richard Speed** Writes The Crisis Aug 8

The "trust buster"

♡ LIKE (3) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE

...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

Now that was a man!

He loved the sound of his voice so much he took a bullet and kept on speechifying.

He could wrestle Trump, Biden and a crocodile at the same time while

signing legislation with his toes ;))

♡ LIKE (2) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8

"Speak softly and carry a big stick."

♡ LIKE (2) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

love that guy!

♡ LIKE (2) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8

He invented the National Park. Stupendous!

♡ LIKE (2) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**SmithFS** Aug 8

You nailed it. But even moreso all these big international conglomerates, that are now called "Stakeholders" giving them an innate right to rule over us, need to be broken up. Especially Banking/Financial companies, which have way, way too much power. Power they are already using in Draconian ways, like blocking banking services to anyone who is guilty of "Wrongthink". And there is no doubt that part of the Plandemic operation was to increase the wealth & power of these giant multinationals, while destroying millions of small businesses.

♡ LIKE (7) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Richard Speed** Writes The Crisis Aug 8

Thanks for your comments. What were at one time nation spanning "trusts," like Standard Oil, have in more recent decades become global corporations with little or no loyalty to the nation. Since they think of themselves as "global citizens" rather than mere American corporations, they view nationalist and/or populist movements as threats to their global ambitions. Accordingly they work hand in glove with such organizations as the World Economic Forum to undermine national sovereignty. This puts them on a collision course with the idea that the American people are sovereign within their own borders. So, break up the social media giants and make them compete. The same thing goes for the entertainment giants that own the news outlets. Examples include Disney that owns ABC, and Comcast that owns NBC. Make the news outlets stand on their own merits rather than being cushioned by the balance sheets of huge media conglomerates.

♡ LIKE (7) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**SmithFS** Aug 8

And they have been using their all-encompassing monopoly power to kneecap their competition, like Amazon did to Parler when it was rapidly rising in popularity, or they will just buy out and absorb their competition.

I used Fitbit for a long time, an independent company that put out a good product, now that it has been absorbed into the Google Monolith, it is a complete screwup, just terrible, I'm having to abandon it and lose all my personal data. Real arrogant crooks.

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Pat Robinson** Aug 8

Same thing google did to NEST

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

AMEN!!

Big Tech has way too much power over American politics, discourse, culture and on our "cognitive infrastructure".

We can either be ruled by elected humans or by unelected algorithms who warp our brains then sell us the (fake) cures.

Smash the digital panopticon!

♡ LIKE (5) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Tim** Aug 8

Look up Matt Stoller. He's on substack and is a writer and expert on monopolies. Google is in Lina Khan's crosshairs. <https://www.thebignewsletter.com/>

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Richard Speed** Writes The Crisis Aug 8

Thanks! I'll check out Stoller's Substack!

♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Brad** Writes Euphoric Recall Aug 8

The internet's digital tsunami of information and emancipation of authorship shattered the

traditional newspaper business model and the elite-controlled dispensation that had long endowed newsrooms with a sacrosanct authority as a gatekeeper to knowledge with a monopoly over dissemination and agenda-setting. As a result, mainstream media cretins like Ben Collins have sought to engineer an entirely fresh pseudo-reality through the imposition of limitations on language, thought, and perception.

♡ LIKE (13)    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE

...



**Mike B** Aug 8

Every time I share this information my "liberal" friends want to turn it into a left/right or MAGA/progressive battle. That's not what it is. This is a first amendment issue and there are only three camps you can live in, regardless of the rest of your political views.

1. I support free speech
2. I support censorship
3. I support free speech but I'm willing to cave if the price is right (Facebook)

♡ LIKE (12)    💬 REPLY (2)    ↗ SHARE

...



**BradK (Global Boil)** Aug 8

It goes way beyond just free speech. As far as the Left is concerned the entire Bill Of Rights is nothing more than a MAGA manifesto. In their zero-sum universe individual freedom can only come at the expense of government power, with the latter being far more important to a totalitarian utopia than the former.

♡ LIKE (3)    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE

...



**Hollis Brown** Aug 8

I have the same problem.

they see it as left vs right.

when I explain it's really the Ruling Elite vs The Public, they think I'm Alex Jones.

they don't realize that every civilization in human history was curated or controlled by an elite, for good or bad.

the minute I say "Elites" they picture Eyes Wide Shut. the ignorance of History is staggering nowadays...

♡ LIKE (1)    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE

...



**Bob Marsh** Aug 8

So the NYT and NBC are urging censorship! What a flip from my younger days when Daniel

Ellsberg was being excoriated for the Pentagon Papers.

Young journalists use to try to find government corruption now they join it. Corp media has turned the old fashioned journalist pecking away on their old Royal with a cigarette hanging from their lips to a manicured wealthy news reader who's working for the DNC.

♡ LIKE (6) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Claire Best** Aug 8

Google partnered with NYT, Yahoo, NBC, and others dating back to 2008. Anita Dunn of SKDK was forced to sell Google and Pfizer shares last year for conflicts of interest. The Godfather of Google is John Hennessy who was also President of Stanford from 2000-2016. The Godfather of Big Ad Tech is Dr Boris Moussykantskii who is based in Russia and Israel. His son, Ilya Moussykantskii was a student at Stanford and started "The Fountain Hopper" in September 2014, the same week that the White House announced "Its On Us" which is part of Civic Nation and UN Women had the SKDK announcement for Emma Watson and the #HeForShe campaign which references the ties to the White House and the use of media and social media influencers. Google, NYT, Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, NBC, Washington Post (Amazon), Conde Nast, META are all partners of the World Economic Forum as was FTX. Censorship it would seem had more to do with economic goals for the WEF and its partners and their shareholders such as Biden's PR person Anita Dunn/SKDK using certain narratives & # which supported major advertisers like Pfizer and provided \$\$\$ for election campaigns out of such clicks. To see exactly how this worked, consider that "Its On Us" (Civic Nation aka United States of Women) partnered with YSL (a L'Oreal (WEF partner) company for the #AbuselsNotLove Valentines Day campaign. So Civic Nation (DNC) gets money for each engagement with the # from L'Oreal/YSL and both Its On Us and L'Oreal are represented by SKDK which is led by Anita Dunn and Hillary Rosen. Anita Dunn was Biden's PR advisor and her husband, Bob Bauer was a partner at Perkins Coie which houses an office of the FBI which was having meetings with Twitter and Facebook. All roads seem to lead to SKDK, Google and Stanford.

♡ LIKE (6) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**BradK (Global Boil)** Aug 8

Thanks. That just ruined my day.

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8



♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Frank Paynter** Writes Common Sense Aug 8

Capitalism at its finest - Platforms like SubStack who use section 230 for good - not evil will clearly be more competitive in the marketplace of ideas than Facebook and other crapforms (copyright 2023!). After all, the only difference between FacePlant (copyright 2023!) and Substack is the number of servers in some deep hole in Iceland, and those are literally a dime a dozen.

♡ LIKE (3) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE

...



**Noam Deplume, Jr. (look,at,me)** Aug 8

The Gray Lady decides what news is fit to print (and by definition, what's not) and has enough connections with the "intelligence community," quoted anonymously of course, to dictate to the politicians. J. Edgar Hoover used to "warn" politicians that the FBI had found dirt on them that their enemies might exploit if they weren't careful.

♡ LIKE (2) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE

...



**Pete Morris** Writes Terra Cognita Aug 8

Mike Solana mentioned the CCDH in his Pirate Wires post today, too.

<https://www.piratewires.com/p/a-tale-of-two-karens>

In a hoped-for future of free, open, and pluralistic exchange of information and ideas online, how do we foster a sense of common values and shared norms? Like so many of our failing urban spaces, how we keep our digital information commons from collapsing into a mix of anarchy and partitioned territories of tribalized groupthink? Solana doesn't see a technocratic solution. He instead calls for an improved version of the much-maligned "Karen". He does not mention Jane Jacobs by name, but there are hints of Jacobs in Solana's piece—the welcome role of the benign community leader, yes, but even more so the cultivation of a broader sense of community that effectively polices its own by keeping a casual eye on real and metaphorical sidewalks.

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE

...



**David 1260** Aug 8

You built this post around the question "why was the Biden White House so determined to censor Facebook in the first place?" However, your answer failed to satisfy me. It can't just be the push from corrupt media. I'd like to see you do more with this question.

Hint: The Biden team clearly wasn't concerned about the health of the American people. Here's evidence from Canada that hiding vaccine adverse reactions was a priority to governments: <https://jessica5b3.substack.com/p/secret-memo-exposes-plan-to-mislead>

Why were they so motivated to get jabs into arms when it was harming people? Or was that the whole point???

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Sharon F.** Aug 8

Rosa Birch is my hero! And all the people at Public, of course...

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Scott** Aug 8

The media is dead

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

not dead enough

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Scott** Aug 8

It's a propaganda machine

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Clever Pseudonym** Aug 8

this made me laugh:

<https://babylonbee.com/news/ai-transformed-into-illiterate-moron-after-just-three-hours-watching-cnn>

♡ LIKE (3) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Scott** Aug 8

It does that much more efficiently with human beings 😂

♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**H8SBAD** Aug 8

I love your work. I am a happy paying subscriber. One of my best investments.

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Boris Petrov** Aug 8

Thank you !! One reason to also maximally support RFK, Jr. -- he disclosed more truth facts about his father assassination than it was disclosed in 40 preceding years..

"Coffee and a Mike" episode #651 with Ron Unz | RFK Jr. vs. I.F. Stone on the Kennedy Assassinations

<https://rumble.com/v3409yo-coffee-and-a-mike-episode-651-with-ron-unz-rfk-jr.-vs.-i.f.-stone-on-the-ke.html> - Aug 2

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Brook Hines** Writes Brook Hines' Substack Aug 8

I wish everyone could read this. thank you for doing this [thankless] job! btw, there were far more organizations pushing vx agenda than is frequently mentioned. you have to look at HHS efforts. this sorts thru some of that mess relating to entertainment AND other organizations —><https://www.brookhines.com/p/how-government-uses-hollywood-to>

♡ LIKE (1) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Brook Hines** Writes Brook Hines' Substack Aug 8

takeaway is that our lives depend on dismissing everything we see from the US govt and its mass media

♡ LIKE (3) 💬 REPLY (1) ↗ SHARE ...



**Richard Speed** Writes The Crisis Aug 8

The only things I trust that appears in the mainstream media are the sports scores!

♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**MelodicMethod** Aug 9

"While the latter [Threads] has engaged in irresponsible censorship, it is at least another option for getting the word out" Why would you even write this? If the users are being censored, how are people supposed to "get the word out?" Baffling sentence, considering the otherwise excellent reporting coming from you all.

♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Jack Reid** Writes Hokie Analytics Aug 9

Now take the next step and figure out which journalists are witting intelligence assets (a la Operation Mockingbird from the 1970s). My understanding is that Obama opened the door to a resumption of such activities late in his second term. So, obviously, Ben Collins would be a journo to investigate. There are many others.

♡ LIKE 💬 REPLY ↗ SHARE ...



**Thomas Lewis** Writes Useless Liberal Aug 8

.

If You Took  
Your Covid Vaccine Shot ( .5 cc )  
You Would Have Been Better Off  
Injecting 1/2 Of A Cubic Centimeter  
Of Anything That You Can Buy  
In A Paint Store  
Into Your Human Body.

.

♡ LIKE    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE    ...



**Sybelle** Aug 8

This is very ugly. As Shellenberger said with their concerns going to the High Courts and ours going to the Supreme Court, maybe, just maybe, this can be handled for the good of the people.

♡ LIKE    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE    ...



**Steve houlette** Aug 8

God make me care

♡ LIKE    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE    ...



**Thomas Lewis** Writes Useless Liberal Aug 8

The Make Or Break For This Movement

Is Whether Just One Of The Notable Doctors

That We So Carefully Follow, Will Dismantle The Core Credibility/Foundation Of The Very Same Medical Institutions That They Themselves Depend Upon So Dearly

- For Their Own Credibility.

Their Own Readership And Followers, In The Hundreds Of Thousands, Are Further Along Than Many Of The Doctors Who Have Yet To "Unlearn" The Lies.

Consequently The Longer Each Of Them Takes

- The Less Credibility They Are Each Left With.

♡ LIKE    💬 REPLY    ↗ SHARE    ...



**Leon Drozd** Aug 8

Seems to me that a Journalism 101 class in college might teach something about editing of information and views that appear on the limited spaces of a publication. Someone has to sort the wheat from the chaff.

This censorship craziness has the ring of sour grapes. If someone feels there is a view that has been overlooked, they can always buy ad space and showcase their side of the story. We see those from time to time in major publications. People can read and care or not care. This might be a better spend of political ideological money than buying politicians and judges.



LIKE



REPLY (1)



SHARE



**Chilblain Edward Olmos** Aug 8



Defenestrate Mr. Overton.



LIKE



REPLY



SHARE



# Government Intel And Security Agencies Behind NGO Demands For More Censorship By X/Twitter

Groups leading the advertiser boycott of X/Twitter receive money from and have a history of spying for governments



ALEX GUTENTAG AND MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER

SEP 5, 2023 • PAID



320



45



27

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Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO, ADL; MP Damian Collins, CCDH Advisory Board Member; Sasha Havlicek, CEO of ISD

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) are nongovernmental organizations, their leaders say. When they demand more censorship of online hate speech, as they are currently doing of X, formerly Twitter, those NGOs are doing it as free citizens and not, say, as government agents.

But the fact of the matter is that the US and other Western governments fund ISD, the UK government indirectly funds CCDH, and, [for at least 40 years](#), ADL spied on its enemies and shared intelligence with the US, Israel and other governments. The reason all of this matters is that ADL's advertiser boycott against X may be an effort by governments to regain the ability to censor users on X that they had under Twitter before Musk's takeover last November.

[Internal Twitter](#) and [Facebook messages](#) show that representatives of the US government, including the White House, FBI, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), as well as the UK government, successfully demanded Facebook and Twitter censorship of their users over the last several years.

ADL is waging a very similar campaign against X/Twitter that it successfully waged [against Facebook](#) in 2020. In just three days, 800 companies, including \$129 billion consumer products giant Unilever, withdrew tens of millions of dollars in ad revenue from Facebook until it agreed to ADL's censorship demands. "The Facebook caved to far-left pressure groups and now allows them to silently dictate policy in exchange for ad money," [said](#) Musk yesterday. "That is the relationship they've had with X/Twitter for many years. Presumably, they have that with all Western search or social media orgs."

It's possible that there has been an increase in hate on X since Elon Musk bought the company. With greater free speech policies comes the possibility of more offensive speech, including racist or antisemitic speech. Bigotry does exist, and it should be challenged.

But there is no good evidence of that. Public has debunked claims by [ISD](#) and [CCDH](#) of an increase. And researchers have repeatedly debunked ADL's claims of rising antisemitism for years. In 2009, an Israeli filmmaker found that ADL could not support its claims of an antisemitism crisis. [Wrote NPR in a review of the film](#), "When he presses ADL staffers for evidence to back up their claims of a sharp spike in North American anti-Semitism in 2007, they can offer only wan transgressions..."

Eleven years later, Liel Leibovitz [noted](#) in Tablet that ADL had, for a report, "counted hundreds of threatening calls to Jewish community centers made by a mentally troubled

Israeli teenager. You had to read the report's fine print to learn that the number of violent attacks against Jews that year had actually decreased by 47%."

ADL, ISD, and CCDH have not presented any good evidence that offensive speech online directly causes "hate-motivated violence," nor that censorship prevents it. Moreover, last week Public [reviewed](#) evidence suggesting that the best way to combat hate speech is through open and public debate, which allows people to change their minds, not censorship.

ADL's main goal is supposed to be stopping "the defamation of the Jewish people," but the organization is using the legacy of antisemitism and the Holocaust to justify unrelated censorial advocacy work. This is exploitative, and it is defamatory to say that Jews, in general, need and favor censorship. Many Jews on both [the left](#) and [the right](#) have argued that ADL does not represent their interests. By claiming to speak for all Jewish people while demanding highly unpopular policies, the ADL may be inadvertently driving antisemitism.

As troubling as these highly partisan ideological biases are, what's most dangerous are the past and present ties between ADL, ISD, CCDH, and governments, particularly security and intelligence organizations, which we detail below. Neither ADL, ISD, nor CCDH have responded to multiple requests for more information or an interview.

While we have yet to uncover documented proof of a conspiracy by the intelligence and security agencies of the US and British governments to censor citizens, there is sufficient evidence to merit an investigation by members of Congress and the British Parliament.

## ADL's Spying For Governments



FBI Director Robert Mueller gives the keynote speech at the Anti-Defamation League's 2005 National Commission Meeting November 3, 2005 in New York City. Mueller, who was joined by UN Ambassador John Bolton, spoke on terrorism, extremism and other global topics that are the centerpiece of this years ADL National Commission Meeting. (Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Although ADL is currently focused on demonizing Trump supporters as “domestic terrorists,” it has a history of partnering with the state and law enforcement to target the Left. In the 1950s, ADL cooperated with the House Committee on Un-American Activities and shared its internal files with the committee. ADL purged suspected Jewish communists from its organization, created anti-communist committees, and [aided the FBI](#).

In 1993, ADL California police discovered that ADL was operating what the Los Angeles Times called a “[nationwide intelligence network](#)” and kept files “on more than 950 political groups, newspapers and labor unions and as many as 12,000 people.” In addition to a few white nationalist organizations, the ADL was also surveilling groups like Greenpeace, the United Farm Workers, the Institute for Palestine Studies, ACT UP,

the Association of Vietnam Veterans, and the Japanese-Americans Citizens League. ADL's files on these groups were confidential and had been "obtained illegally from law enforcement agencies."

Following the revelation of these illegal surveillance tactics, ADL [avoided prosecution](#) by agreeing to pay \$75,000 to anti-hate programs in San Francisco. The organization later settled a class-action lawsuit in federal court for spying on Arab-Americans, African Americans, and left-wing groups. Plaintiffs [alleged](#) that the ADL had hired intelligence agents to gather information about them and had sold information about anti-apartheid groups to the South African government.

Investigative journalists say ADL is deeply connected to Western intelligence agencies. "There are some intelligence fronts that are not CIA fronts but fronts for foreign intelligence agencies," wrote Wayne Madsen in his 2016 book *The Almost Classified Guide to CIA Front Companies, Proprietaries & Contractors*. "Although the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is richly deserving of being included in any list of front organizations, it belongs in Israel's Mossad, not the CIA."

Former Los Angeles law enforcement investigator and journalist, Michael C. Ruppert, wrote in *Crossing the Rubicon*, in response to the ADL spying scandal, "To think of the ADL affair as something that originated solely with Israeli impetus is to overlook some key historical data." Ruppert argued that US intelligence agencies used ADL to spy on Americans after the Congressional investigations of the mid-1970s.

"As the LAPD scandal was unfolding I served as one of the unnamed sources for the Los Angeles Times' reporting," wrote Ruppert. "Although the Times stopped short of stating that US intelligence agencies had supported this intelligence gathering, two decades later the pattern is very clear. The ADL was there when it was needed. Yet, in using the ADL as a plausibly deniable cutout, American intelligence agencies at the state and federal levels paid a price. They gave ADL a license to use the data for its own purposes and created a monster."

Today, ISD, CCDH, and ADL manipulate their research methodology to claim rising hate and antisemitism. ADL, for decades, has claimed that hate is increasing by expanding the definition of "hate" and "hate speech." ADL's [Hate Symbols Database](#), for

example, asserts that anti-antifa flags, the “okay” hand sign, and “100%” are all examples of white supremacist hate. ADL classifies the numbers 12, 13, 14, 18, 23, 28, 38, 43, 83, 88, 109, 110, 211, 311, 318, and many more as hate speech.

ADL also alleges that terms like “[deep state](#)” and phrases like “[do your own research](#)” are rallying cries for QAnon followers. These classifications can easily lend themselves to the over-reporting of hate and extremism.

ADL’s 2023 [report](#) about antisemitic attitudes in America states that 85% of Americans believe in at least one anti-Jewish trope, but the most common trope Americans agreed with was the statement, “Jews stick together more than other Americans.” The idea that Jewish people preserve community ties is not necessarily a negative trope, and many people surveyed may have interpreted it as something positive.

ADL’s most recent [audit](#) of antisemitic incidents was almost entirely based on emails, online form entries, and phone calls to ADL. Hying antisemitism as a crisis, which ADL explicitly does, can easily lead to an increase in reports regardless of whether incidents are actually on the rise or not. The organization’s sloppy statistics and continual conflation of real antisemitism with criticism of divisive figures like [George Soros](#) suggest that it is deliberately using accusations of antisemitism as a partisan tool to silence its political opponents.

Today, ADL is demanding ever more power to censor. “What they are demanding is what ADL has long called for in our COMBAT Plan: A unified national strategy to combat antisemitism,” the ADL’s top lobbyist, ex-AIPAC executive Dan Granot, [told Jewish Insider](#). “Now is the time for a concerted, coordinated, whole-of-government strategy to address the hatred that is becoming dangerously mainstream.”

Government ties abound. Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair is on the ADL board, serving as its Special Advisor for Global Affairs. During the Covid pandemic, Blair’s Institute for Global Change [lobbied](#) parliament to enact harsher flagging and fact-checking measures online.

Anyone who looks at the [ADL Board of Directors](#) and has some awareness of [the key players in the Censorship Industrial Complex](#) will be struck by one member, in particular, Yasmin Green. Green is the CEO of Google Jigsaw, an internal group at the

Big Tech company founded by Jared Cohen, who worked at the State Department under both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Jigsaw developed the “Redirect Method” and has worked with ADL to steer Google users toward videos that would “undermine extremist narratives” as a late-stage “War on Terror” program. Green is also a senior advisor on innovation to the private intelligence firm Oxford Analytica and a member of the Aspen Institute’s Cybersecurity Group, two key Censorship Industrial Complex leaders.

Today, ADL’s ties to intelligence and security organizations are closer than ever. It works with the FBI by holding a training session with agents and hosting FBI Director Christopher Wray as a featured speaker. According to Greenblatt, the FBI works directly with ADL “every day.”

## The Case For An Investigation



Chairman Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, and counsel Steve Castor are seen during the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the

Federal Government to "examine abuses seen at the Bureau and how the FBI has retaliated against whistleblowers," in Rayburn Building on Thursday, May 18, 2023. FBI whistleblowers testified. (Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images)

We do not have firm proof that there is a conspiracy by the intelligence and security agencies of the United States and Britain to control the content on social media platforms like X and Facebook through their control over CCDH, ISD, and ADL. Perhaps ideological, cultural, and political alignment alone explain the remarkable coordination we have documented. Perhaps the US and UK government funding for CCDH and ISD is insignificant compared to their nongovernmental funders.

But there is enough evidence of conspiracy for members of Congress and Parliament to investigate CCDH, ADL, ISD, and other so-called "nongovernmental" organizations for the advocacy of censorship. Who is funding them? What are their relationships with government officials? What is their role in intelligence and security organizations?

Evidence abounds of tight connections between the intelligence community and these groups. Consider that all of the above has been taking place in the background of investigations by UK NGO Big Brother Watch, which has [discovered and publicized](#) over the last several months a secretive UK censorship organization, the "Counter-Disinformation Unit" (CDU), which collaborated with British intelligence and security organizations, as well as the BBC.

It worked to censor users in the UK just as the Virality Project, run by Stanford Internet Observatory, worked to censor users in the US, on identical issues relating to Covid vaccines. "The intelligence community," reported the Telegraph of London last week, "which includes MI6, MI5 and GCHQ – continued 'working closely' with the CDU 'where appropriate' during this time [2019 to 2020], documents show."

There is reason to believe that the US State Department, which has funded ISD, and the UK government, which has funded CCDH, are using those organizations as "cut-outs" or "fronts" for demanding censorship.

A former member of the UK parliament, Imran Ahmed, started CCDH. And before running for parliament, Ahmed studied Russian at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow and

earned a bachelor's degree in war studies at King's College London, which is [famous as a place from where spy agencies recruit](#).

Ahmed then went to work for the United Nations as a special assistant for political affairs in Mogadishu. After that, he developed his information operation skills at advertising giant M&C Saatchi. His appears to be an intelligence career tailor-made for spreading disinformation and demanding censorship on behalf of the UK government and its allies.

Just this summer, the Member of Parliament who has most championed a crackdown on free speech in the UK, Damien Collins, [joined](#) CCDH's advisory board. The arrival of Collins comes shortly after the UK government [gave](#) a 5 million pound grant to a foundation that funds CCDH.

ISD accepts funding from many governments, including Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Canada, the UK, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States. It also receives funding from the European Commission and the United Nations.

The US State Department gave the ISD a grant in September 2021 to “advance the development of promising and innovative technologies against disinformation and propaganda.” The Institute for Strategic Dialogue won the grant after participating in an event sponsored by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the US Embassy in Paris, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

What's clear is that we also need to change our view of ADL, CCDH, and ISD. They cannot be considered “nongovernmental organizations.” Their ties to the government, particularly the national security state, are too strong. It's high time we got to the bottom of who, exactly, is behind them. After we do, we need to clean house. That will start with replacing the heads of the FBI, CIA, and MI6 and rooting out the unelected, authoritarian, and paramilitary elements within them in the same way our governments did after the Church Committee hearings of the 1970s.

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# Stanford Group Helped US Government Censor Covid Dissidents and Then Lied About It, New Documents Show

A trove of newly released Virality Project reports confirms that the government used a Stanford cut-out to censor true content about Covid vaccines, vindicating Twitter Files reporting



ALEX GUTENTAG AND ANDREW LOWENTHAL

NOV 10, 2023 • PAID

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A Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO) spokesperson says it “did not censor or ask social media platforms to remove any social media content regarding coronavirus vaccine side

effects.” This denial came in response to Twitter Files published by Matt Taibbi in March, which revealed that SIO’s so-called “Virality Project” had [pushed platforms](#) to treat user concerns about vaccine mandates and passports as “disinformation” and to [consider](#) “stories of true vaccine side effects” to be actionable content on social media. The Virality Project was an initiative undertaken jointly by Big Tech, universities, and NGOs to combat “anti-vaccine misinformation.” SIO responded to Taibbi’s Twitter Files by claiming that his findings were “inaccurate and based on distortions of email exchanges in the Twitter Files.”

But new evidence shows that Stanford lied about the scope of the Virality Project and that its censorship efforts were undertaken on behalf of the US government.

As Public [reported](#) on Tuesday, new documents shared by the House Judiciary Committee revealed that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), created the Virality Project’s predecessor, the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP), to censor protected speech. Explains the committee, “EIP reconstituted as the Virality Project” and continued working with the federal government. The Twitter Files also [found](#) that the Project partnered “with several government agencies,” including the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Office of the Surgeon General, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Still, Stanford and the mainstream media insist that “disinformation” experts were merely conducting research, and not involved in actual censorship.

Now, an investigation by Public has uncovered clear evidence that the Project was directly and deliberately involved in successful censorship efforts. Public analyzed a trove of newly released [Jira system tickets](#), the Virality Project’s tipline to social media companies. These tickets overwhelmingly contradict Stanford’s assertion that it did not try to get content censored.

The Virality Project, acting as a cut-out for DHS and CISA, worked directly with employees at Facebook, Google, YouTube, TikTok, and more, who were all signed up to their Jira system. Those companies regularly assured the Project that they were addressing the content it flagged. Companies responded with comments like, “Thanks for flagging this. We have actioned the content,” or “Thanks for escalating to us — our team is looking into this now.” The Virality Project kept track of actions on the content it flagged, and was

frequently successful in getting content labeled or removed by platforms, and in getting users suspended.

The Virality Project appears to have played a major role in one particularly infamous case of Covid-related censorship. On March 15, 2021, Harvard professor of medicine Martin Kulldorff [tweeted](#), “Thinking that everyone must be vaccinated is as scientifically flawed as thinking that nobody should. COVID vaccines are important for older high-risk people, and their care-takers. Those with prior natural infection do not need it. Nor children.”

“Dear Twitter Team,” a representative of the Virality Project wrote in response to Kulldorff’s post, “This Tweet directly contradicts CDC’s advice.”

“Thanks team — we’re looking into this,” a senior Twitter Trust & Safety policy specialist wrote back.

Kulldorff’s tweet was then labeled as misleading and he was temporarily suspended from the platform. Internally, the Virality Project identified Kulldorff, a renowned biostatistician, as a “repeat offender.”

This process was indeed a deliberate, state-sponsored act of censorship. In many egregious instances, the Virality Project — again, a government cut-out — intentionally and knowingly worked to silence and deplatform social media users. Jira records vindicate the Twitter Files and are evidence of First Amendment violations.

These are some of the Virality Project’s most egregious, absurd, and anti-science censorship efforts:

- After Krispy Kreme announced it would give free donuts to people who got vaccinated, the Virality Project alerted platforms about “criticism against Krispy Kreme’s vaccine for donut promo” and labeled such criticism as “general anti-vaccination.”
- The Virality Project flagged a PDF of consolidated data from the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), a national vaccine safety reporting system co-managed by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration. (VAERS data is publicly available.) The Project noted that Google had removed the content after its report.
- The Project flagged an Israeli pre-print that found natural immunity to be as

protective as vaccination. “Please note this Israeli narrative claiming that Covid-19 immunity is equivalent to vaccination immunity,” Virality Project wrote to Twitter and Facebook, including the link to [a tweet](#) from Congressman Thomas Massie.

- The Virality Project flagged a Lancet research article about the absolute risk reduction of Covid vaccines, calling it an “alleged authoritative source.” Facebook then labeled the article.
- In one highly troubling instance, the Project flagged someone’s Google Drive. “See the following Google Drive links being used to compile testimonies about vaccine shedding, videos showing side effects, and PDFs detailing conspiracy theories,” the Virality Project wrote. “This was reported to us from one of our public health partners, who found that an individual commented on these links on their website.” The Project noted that Google removed the content.
- On multiple occasions, the Virality Project sent platforms reports about resistance to vaccine mandates and lockdowns, such as the “Worldwide Rally for Freedom” and a TikTok trend to “raise middle fingers to vaccine.” The Project called this content “organized outrage.”
- Contrary to Stanford’s claim that the Project did not “ask social media platforms to remove any social media content regarding coronavirus vaccine side effects,” the Virality Project repeatedly reported testimonials of vaccine injuries to Twitter and Facebook, including testimonials from healthcare workers. Accounts of vaccine injuries, the Project wrote to platforms, could “fuel vaccine hesitancy.”
- When Pfizer claimed that its vaccine for children age 12 to 15 was 100% effective, the Project reported that “anti-vaccine groups” were expressing concerns about mandates for children and “disbelief at the 100% efficacy number.”
- In June 2021, the Virality Project flagged accurate claims that the World Health Organization (WHO) did not recommend vaccinating children. In its communication with platforms, the Project flagged [a tweet](#) by journalist David Zweig that contained this claim. (The WHO has since changed the advice on its website.)
- The Virality Project flagged jokes, including what it called the “Right-Wing & Anti-Vaxx Viral Trend” to say, “I Identify as Vaccinated.”

According to Stanford, the Virality Project’s work “centered on identification and analysis

of social media commentary relating to the COVID-19 vaccine, including emerging rumors about the vaccine where the truth of the issue discussed could not yet be determined.” Yet in its Jira system, the Virality Project expressed absolute certainty about the vaccine, called doubters “anti-vax,” and targeted individuals like Kulldorff who challenged CDC advice. The Project clearly aimed to control the vaccine narrative and prohibit questions about vaccine safety and efficacy.

The Virality Project also flagged swathes of content related to general concepts like medical freedom and protests in opposition to government mandates. Why did the Virality Project have this mission, and why is it denying its participation in these activities?

## **Manufacturing Consensus**

Despite Stanford’s denials, comments on the Jira system reveal that the Virality Project was aware that part of its purpose was to have companies “take action” on content. In one exchange with Facebook representatives, a Virality Project flagger told the company that a vaccine side effect group “was already taken down once,” suggesting that it should be taken down again. One flagger asked Google, “Is this against your policies?” In another instance, a Virality Project representative wrote that a tweet did not have enough engagement to pursue, but that they were still “happy to flag it to Twitter for it to take action under its policies.” Although Stanford claims the Project was merely engaged in “analysis,” Jira tickets such as these prove that it clearly made considerations about content removal.

The Virality Project’s identification of social media commentary was centered around encouraging vaccination and removing any narrative that could discourage vaccination. This often meant labeling reasonable doubts as conspiratorial or anti-vaccine. For instance, the Project identified “conspiracy theories” about the Delta variant, but alerted social media platforms to associated posts that were not conspiracy theories at all, but rather questions about vaccine efficacy and breakthrough infections.

The Virality Project seemingly considered vaccine hesitancy to be almost exclusively right wing, labeling vaccine skeptical posts as “right wing” even though the vast majority of these posts were not explicitly political.

The Project did identify some “disinformation” rumors about topics like 5G, microchips,

and the “mark of the beast.” But it was more concerned with general objections to vaccine mandates and Big Pharma, scientific debate around natural immunity and vaccine side effects, and broad resistance to government dictats.

The Virality Project, through its academic veneer, provided [a rationale](#) for the move to frame true content that could fuel hesitancy as “misinformation.” As the EIP did, the Virality Project [worked to](#) “fill in the gap of things the government couldn’t do,” providing a way for CISA to launder its censorship operation. The close relationship between the Project and CISA is further evidenced by the fact that one Stanford student who acted as the Project’s primary correspondent with Twitter is now employed by CISA.

Evidence of illegal DHS and CISA involvement in censorship is a likely factor behind Stanford’s attempts to characterize its activities as innocent research. Twitter Files suggest that in late 2020, Stanford was already proposing turning the DHS-created EIP into what would become the Virality Project.

In the below Twitter File, Virality Project staff explain that the same Jira platform as EIP was to be used.

Stanford staff also reassured Twitter's Head of Trust and Safety, Yoel Roth, that he needn't sign up again as he can make use of his EIP account. "Yoel, your Jira credentials are the same as from the EIP,"

Indeed, as published on Tuesday by Public, at inception the broader CISA initiative was to include content related to Covid-19. The Virality Project was said strictly to relate to vaccine “misinformation” but routinely went beyond this scope.

The Jira tickets also show that the Virality Project had deep connections to the larger Censorship Industrial Complex, and other major censors like the Aspen Institute. A little-known project called the [Algorithmic Transparency Institute](#) (ATI) appears to have played a role in the Project's activities. ATI ran two important projects, "[Junkipedia](#)" which the Virality Project used to collect and store "misinformation" examples, and the [Civic Listening Corps](#), a Stasi-style initiative that mobilized volunteers to seek out WrongThink online for reporting to social media.

ATI was an initiative of the [National Conference on Citizenship](#), a Congressionally chartered nonprofit. Its chair at the time was Garret Graff, director of cyber initiatives at the Aspen Institute and coordinator of the infamous [Hunter Biden laptop tabletop](#). It was

Graff that brought together and encouraged the New York Times, Washington Post, Twitter, Facebook, CNN and others to bring their “most devious and cynical imaginations!” as they practiced their response to the “theoretical” hack-and-leak operation two months in advance of its public appearance.

That SIO now feels the need to deny key elements of its work on the Virality Project, and even attempt to evade subpoenas from the House Judiciary Committee, shows that the censors are much weaker now than they were in 2021. Two years ago, the Virality Project could operate both in plain sight and with impunity. Now, its architects are trying to cover their tracks.



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A guest post by

**Andrew Lowenthal**

I am a writer and consultant focused on digital authoritarianism. I manage the Network Affects Substack, write for Racket and Public, and direct the digital civil liberties start-up <https://liber-net.org>

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# New Documents Reveal US Department Of Homeland Security Conspiracy To Violate First Amendment And Interfere In Elections

Emails released by the U.S. House of Representatives, when combined with the Twitter Files, reveal a sweeping and secretive effort by Stanford and DHS officials, two of whom are now business partners



ALEX GUTENTAG AND MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER

NOV 7, 2023 • PAID



437



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Stanford Internet Observatory's Alex Stamos (Left) and former DHS-CISA Director Chris Krebs (Right) are now business partners. The current CISA Director is Jen Easterly (Center). [All photos from Getty Images]

The idea that the officials within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security worked with a Stanford think tank to censor ordinary Americans and thus interfere in the 2020 elections is a debunked conspiracy theory, say journalists in the mainstream news media. The

Republicans spreading that conspiracy theory, say journalists with the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), and New Yorker, are also waging a witch hunt against university researchers who study misinformation. It is for that reason that the Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO), which is home to those researchers, had long refused Republican requests for their emails and data.

But [newly released documents](#) suggest that SIO may have had a very different motivation for not sharing their files with Congressional investigators: they show that the idea for sweeping government censorship, in which the Stanford think tank played a central role, came from the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Internet Security Agency (CISA). According to one of CISA's censorship partners, the so-called "Election Integrity Partnership" (EIP), which was ostensibly separate from CISA, was created at its behest.

In an internal Atlantic Council email sent on July 21 2020, Graham Brookie, the senior director of the Council's "Digital Forensic Research Lab," (DRFLab), [wrote](#) to a colleague to say the following: "I know the Council has a number of efforts on broad policy around the elections, but **we just set up an election integrity partnership at the request of DHS/CISA** and are in weekly comms to debrief about disinfo, IO, etc." (Emphasis added.)

Brookie's acknowledgment contradicts the claim made by the EIP that the idea for the project "came from four students that the Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO) funded to complete volunteer internships at [CISA]." Brookie's email also contradicts the testimony of the SIO's Director, Alex Stamos, earlier this year, who told Congressional investigators that the idea for EIP was his.

BS Scully, Brian  
Agenda and Invite  
To: Stacia Cardille, Yoel Roth

April 15, 2020, 4:28 PM

Yoel and Stacia,

Thanks for the call this afternoon. As an FYI, I sent the WebEx invite to you both a little while ago. I've been told by my IT folks you can forward it to industry participants and it should still work. Attached is the updated agenda based on our conversation. Please let me know if you have any questions. Look forward to the meeting tomorrow.

Regards,  
Brian

Brian Scully  
Chief, Countering Foreign Influence Task Force  
DHS/CISA/NRMC



There is evidence that DHS-CISA had started interfering in elections several months earlier. On April 15, 2020, the DHS-CISA chief of “Countering Foreign Influence Task Force,” Brian Scully, emailed Twitter executives about a “Government-Industry Meeting,” that was held the next day. The issues discussed included election information.

- Government-Industry Meeting  
April 16, 2020  
2:00pm EST
- I. Welcome and Introductions
    - a. Chris Krebs, CISA Director
    - b. Twitter
  - II. Strategic Threat Update – This discussion should cover threats related to the elections as well as COVID-19. There should be a particular focus on post-COVID impacts to elections.
    - a. Threat update from Government (unclass)/Lessons learned from the primaries to inform ongoing work. (DHS/FBI)
    - b. Report on trends from private sector... what are they seeing, what changes in tactics and techniques are they encountering? (Industry)
  - III. 2020 Primary Season So Far – Lessons learned
    - a. Super Tuesday (CISA/All)
    - b. Other observations (All)
  - IV. What to Expect Going Forward
    - a. Revised primary calendar (CISA)
    - b. Changes to election administration for remaining primaries and general election (CISA)
    - c. Threat Mitigation Activities – what actions have been taken so far, particularly around COVID-19 Disinformation and what actions are planned going forward. (Industry)
    - d. Infrastructure risks due to the changing voting mechanics. (CISA/Industry)
    - e. Operational Expectations
      - i. Operations Center coordination and information sharing (CISA/ALL)
  - V. Closing Remarks
    - a. Matt Masterson, CISA
    - b. Twitter

By November, Twitter executives, Scully, and at least one of the Stanford interns were on a

Signal text messaging app group together.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, it is “axiomatic” that the US government “may not induce, encourage or promote private persons to accomplish what it is constitutionally forbidden to accomplish.” Whether it was Stamos or the Director of CISA at the time, Chris Krebs, it’s clear that the U.S. government was directly involved in the Stanford-linked effort to censor Americans.

The documents are revelatory in showing that CISA officials, Stanford officials, and social media executives worked together in secret in ways that not only violated the First Amendment but also interfered in the 2020 elections by attempting to censor protected political speech, particularly that of conservatives and Republicans.

Although we do not know the effects of EIP’s activities on the 2020 election results, and although some of these activities occurred after election day, it’s clear that SIO, EIP, and CISA engaged in viewpoint-based censorship that amounts to attempted interference leading up to the election.

There was virtually no separation between CISA and Stanford employees in 2020. On September 30, 2020, an EIP staffer said that Stamos and Krebs were texting each other “with some regularity.”

Since 2021, former CISA Director Krebs, and Stanford Internet Observatory Director Stamos have [owned a consulting firm](#) that works for private equity, aerospace, and satellite companies, among many others.

In 2020, CISA officials and personnel from EIP were often on emails together, and CISA’s personnel had access to EIP’s tickets through an internal messaging system, Jira, which EIP used to flag and report social media posts to Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.

The Biden administration and journalists have insisted that CISA did not violate the constitution because it was not coercive and merely engaged in “switchboarding” activities, acting as a middleman. But, the new documents reveal that CISA included a threatening disclaimer in its switchboarding communications, which stated that “information may also be shared with law enforcement or intelligence agencies.”

The Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO) has denied that the EIP tried to censor content or labeled political content as misinformation. “EIP did not make recommendations to the platforms about what actions they should take,” [wrote](#) SIO in response to the Twitter Files.

But the [Jira system tickets](#) (EIP’s tipline to social media companies) prove that this is a lie. In ticket after ticket, EIP told platforms to remove content, reduce visibility, and suspend users with specific instructions:

- “We repeat our recommendation that this account be suspended for the duration of election day from posting additional misleading information about voting.”
- “We recommend labeling all instances of the article being shared on Facebook.”
- “We recommend that you all flag as false, or remove the posts below.”
- “Hi Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter . . . we recommend it be removed from your platforms.”
- “We recommend you label or reduce the discoverability of the post.”
- “We recommend taking action specifically on this account, such as suspending their

ability to continue tweeting for 12 hours.”

Under the guise of a research project, EIP was enmeshed with the federal government leading up to the 2020 election. Four students involved with EIP were even employed by CISA. One Stanford student, for example, worked as a DHS intern “inside the EIP network.”

CISA was not supposed to have involvement in EIP’s flagging activities, but, notes the House Judiciary, numerous Jira tickets mention CISA, and CISA referenced EIP Jira codes when switchboarding.

Stanford’s legal counsel insisted that EIP and SIO “did not provide any government agency... access to the Jira database,” but in one November 2020 email, Stamos told a Reddit employee, “It would be great if we could get somebody from Reddit on JIRA, just like Facebook, Google, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, CISA, EI-ISAC...” Stamos’s statement indicated that CISA had access to EIP’s Jira system.

In communications with social media platforms, the House report states, Stamos made it clear “that the EIP’s true purpose was to act as a censorship conduit for the federal government.” In an email to Nextdoor, Stamos wrote that EIP would “provide a one-stop shop for local election officials, DHS, and voter protection organizations to report potential disinformation for us to investigate and to refer to the appropriate platforms if necessary.”

As such, it’s clear from the documents released that CISA violated the First Amendment and, together with Stanford and the other EIP groups, interfered in the 2020 election. Why did they do this? How did they get away with it? And what must be done now?

## **“CISA” And “CIS” May Be Confusing For A Reason**

We roll our eyes at government acronyms as a bad habit of bureaucrats, and most of the time, it probably is. Why do we need so many different agencies? Why are their names so similar?

But sometimes, the confusion may not be an accident. Consider the nonprofit, “Center for Internet Security (CIS).” Given that CISA funds it, why is its name so similar? Why didn’t it choose a different name so people wouldn’t be confused. Perhaps because CISA and CIS wanted people to be confused.

CIS’s job was at the border between government and non-governmental. Could it be that somebody thought it would protect CISA from precisely the accusations of violating the First Amendment that it is now facing?

Consider what CIS did. Throughout 2020, CIS sent reports about alleged “mis- and disinformation” from local government officials to social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. It did so — apparently — separate from DHS, even though, behind the scenes, the newly revealed emails show, CIS and CISA worked together to plan an additional “misinformation” reporting portal.

But then, somebody inside the US government realized that they had a potential problem. By May 2020, the House Judiciary notes, “planning for a CIS-CISA misinformation reporting portal had hit a roadblock” because, according to notes from a call between Facebook and DHS, “DHS cannot openly endorse the portal.” And so DHS created a work-around: EIP.

DHS, according to the call notes, “has behind-the-scenes signaled that [the National Association of Secretaries of State]/[the National Association of State Election Directors] has told them it would be easier for many states to have ‘one reporting channel’ and CISA and its ISAC [Information Sharing and Analysis Center] would like to have incoming the same time that the platforms do.”

“Less than two months later,” the House Judiciary writes, “the EIP would be established to serve that very purpose.”

By July 2020, Stamos emailed Kate Starbird from the University of Washington’s Center for an Informed Public, writing, “We are working on some election monitoring ideas with CISA and I would love your informal feedback before we go too far down this road . . . . [T]hings that should have been assembled a year ago are coming together quickly this week.”

These exchanges suggest that CISA, in a premeditated fashion, created EIP to use as a national portal for alleged misinformation with independent academic veneer, to avoid legal implications of DHS involvement.

CISA, EIP, and CIS engaged in mass flagging because, internal communications suggest, their goal was to target and censor entire “narratives.” Although EIP claims to be only concerned with “mis-” and “disinformation,” it acknowledged that only 42% of its Jira tickets were associated with an external fact-check.

“In other words,” writes the House Judiciary, “EIP analysts were unable to identify a single external source to support its designation of a particular post or narrative as “mis- or disinformation” in a *majority of posts* it flagged.”

This suggests that most of EIP’s censorship recommendations were not based on well-established truths or falsehoods but on subjective assessments of disfavored viewpoints and statements. Even in cases where fact-checks were available, EIP used them to flag generic or unrelated content.

For example, one flagged Tweet from Republican Party official Harmeet Dhillon that EIP associated with a fact check about signs posted outside polling sites actually did not make

claims about the signs and was not disputed by the fact-check.

## Media Manipulation

: Kate Starbird, co-founder of the Center for an Informed Public, poses for a portrait on the University of Washington Seattle campus, on Monday, March 6, 2023, in Seattle, Wash. (Photo by Jovelle Tamayo/ forThe Washington Post via Getty Images)

On top of this, emails show that when EIP officials flagged content for censorship, CISA officials were not simply intermediaries but actively discussed what constituted misinformation in emails with social media companies.

One email from a CIS address in November 2020, for instance, sent misinformation reports to CISA, EIP, and Facebook. Explains the House Judiciary report, “the Facebook personnel on the receiving end of this email would understand that CISA and the EIP were receiving the same notifications at the same time.”

Moreover, EIP consistently used the media to pressure social media companies into compliance with censorship. Stamos testified that the SIO used blogposts to draw media attention to “misinformation.” Said Stamos, “So, if we wrote a blogpost that said, ‘This is something viral that’s happening that’s not true,’ you very well could find members of the media going out and then finding that content on five different platforms and then writing about it being up or not.”

The bottom line is this: the DHS, in collusion with Stanford and the media, attempted to conceal a politically motivated election interference project as a legitimate academic endeavor. Stanford has attempted to evade accountability and withhold data from the House Committee, refusing to produce the EIP Jira tickets, which Stanford had sole access to. Stanford counsel claimed that the Jira tickets “concern[ed] only a research project conducted by Stanford students.”

The mainstream media, which was aligned with EIP’s political objectives, continues to participate in the Stanford and DHS conspiracy, defending censorship as “disinformation” research. In one correspondence between SIO personnel and Alphabet, the parent company of Google and YouTube, an Alphabet executive expressed concern that SIO and EIP planned to “engage the press.”

All of this suggests that we are more likely to see action from Congress and the Supreme Court, to rein in the Censorship Industrial Complex before we see the mainstream news media acknowledge its existence. But as new revelations showing a tight relationship between government agencies and researchers emerge, it will become increasingly difficult for the media to claim that they were independent, innocent, and being unfairly investigated.



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# Government-Funded Stanford Group Successfully Urged Censorship Of Republicans But Not Democrats For Equivalent Claims

Both Republicans and Democrats claimed election fraud, but Stanford Internet Observatory and Twitter only sanctioned Republicans



MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER AND ALEX GUTENTAG

NOV 16, 2023 • PAID



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Stanford Internet Observatory Founding Director Alex Stamos (left) and Research Manager Renée Diresta (right)

The US government-funded Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO) [claims](#) that its 2020 Election Integrity Project (EIP) and its 2021 Virality Project (VP) were “non-partisan research coalitions.” They did not discriminate against Republicans or conservatives, SIO

insists.

But a new tranche of SIO files requested by the House Homeland Security Committee Chairman, Mark Green (R-TN), and Homeland Security Subcommittee for Oversight Chairman Dan Bishop (R-SC) reveal that SIO singled out Republicans for censorship, even though Democrats engaged in similar kinds of inaccurate or misleading speech.

One member of Congress singled out for censorship was alarmed to learn of the pattern. “In striving to silence duly elected Congressmen and prevent them from communicating with constituents,” Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) told Public, “this government-funded censorship network has shown itself to be a far greater threat to our representative democracy than any foreign nation.”

Representatives from Stanford Internet Observatory did not respond to a request for comment.

To see the pattern of partisan behavior, we have to go back to November 2020, when the EIP was well underway.

At 5:58 am, November 4, 2020, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-SC) tweeted, “The Silicon Valley Cartel is in on the STEAL! Censoring our President while DEMOCRATS work overtime to STEAL THIS ELECTION! I need you to join me in the fight to STOP THIS.!”



**Marjorie Taylor Greene**  

@mtgreenee

...

Some or all of the content shared in this Post is disputed and might be misleading about an election or other civic process. [Learn more](#)

The Silicon Valley Cartel is in on the STEAL!

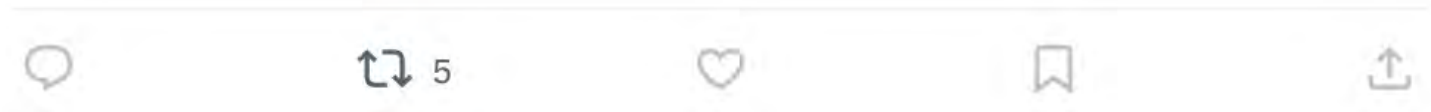
Censoring our President while DEMOCRATS work overtime to STEAL THIS ELECTION!

I need you to join me in the fight to STOP THIS.

SIGN YOUR PETITION: [marjorietaйлorgreene.com/stop-the-steal/](https://marjorietaйлorgreene.com/stop-the-steal/)



5:58 AM · Nov 4, 2020



At 8:32 AM on November 4, 2020, an EIP staff person wrote a note to Twitter staff in the Jira messaging system. It read, "Twitter team - We know you are aware of the #stopthesteal push but we have gathered here some of the major contributors which according to our data // past incidents are high priority incidents... We recommend actioning these quickly."

The EIP representative flagged the above tweet and two others. Shortly after, Twitter censored at least three of Greene's tweets, and these tweets are still censored on the platform.

When one clicks on the arrow to the right of the tweet, which normally allows a user to

copy the link, a box pops up that reads, “Why can’t you share this? We try to keep X a place for healthy conversation, so we’ve disabled most of the ways to engage with this post.”



Twitter executives acknowledged their censorship of Greene internally.

At 6:24 pm, November 4, 2020, Twitter's senior legal counsel, Sean Edgett, emailed other Twitter executives. "We continue robust enforcement of our policies and have labeled approximately 150 Tweets for premature claims of victory," Edgett wrote. "Additionally, we continue to [label](#) and [interstitial](#) the account of House candidate Marjorie Taylor Green for violations of our policies."

Defenders of the censorship advocacy by Stanford sometimes argue that only Republicans made false statements about the elections. SIO has said that Republicans and Trump supporters simply spread more falsehoods. "EIP's research determined that accounts that supported President Trump's inaccurate assertions around the election included more false statements than other accounts," wrote SIO.

But many Democrats, including Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacy Abrams, have claimed, without evidence, that Republicans have stolen elections. For example, in May 2020, Abrams [wrote on Twitter](#) that "the GOP wins by impeding eligible citizens from voting."

But where Twitter executives throttled Greene's tweet, which cannot be shared, Abrams'

tweet has over 1,2000 retweets.

It's true that Abrams made her claim before EIP had been created. But other Democrats claimed election fraud while EIP was operational.

"Feeling oddly thankful that @staceyabrams had her own election stolen from her so that she had time to save America," [tweeted](#) actor Edward Norton on January 6, 2021.

"@staceyabrams had her election stolen from her," [tweeted](#) woman's soccer star Megan Rapinoe the same day.

Twitter censored neither the tweet by Norton nor by Rapinoe, even though they made accusations nearly identical to Greene's.

EIP analysts might say that by January 2021, they only researched the 2020 election, not actively flagging content about other elections. But the partisan bias of SIO can also be seen in its approach to Covid. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, and many Democratic officials made inaccurate claims about the ability of the Covid vaccine to prevent infection and transmission, yet the VP never flagged them.

In the summer of 2021, when VP was searching for Covid misinformation to report, Democrats like Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA) and California Governor Gavin Newsom pushed the misleading narrative that [only](#) unvaccinated people could spread Covid and that there was a "[pandemic of the unvaccinated](#)."

They made these claims well after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had admitted that "breakthrough infections" were common in vaccinated people. If VP cared about accuracy and objectivity, it would have recognized that this Democrat-driven narrative was not based on solid national data. As Rochelle Walensky [said](#) last June, the CDC never had aggregate Covid vaccination and hospitalization data.

When Twitter censored Greene, she accused the platform of violating the First Amendment. Internally, Twitter executives dismissed her allegation and told themselves

that Greene was wrong. However there is strong evidence that the Department of Homeland Security created EIP and VP to demand censorship on its behalf. What's more, two of the university partners involved in EIP and VP received considerable funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), which is part of the federal government.

The exchanges between VP, EIP, and social media platforms raise a troubling question: Was SIO acting on behalf of the federal government when it demanded censorship of elected Republicans?

## **Partisan Weaponization Of Government To Coerce Censorship**

Graphic from EIP's final report (Source: [EIP](#))

Public [previously reported](#) that the idea for the EIP came from DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). The above request by SIO that Twitter censor Rep. Greene tagged the DHS' "Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center."

The Twitter Files reveal a close relationship between DHS officials and Twitter executives.

On Sat, Oct 24, 2020, senior DHS official Matthew Masterson emailed a top censor at Twitter, Yoel Roth. “Any chance you are willing to share a phone number so [CISA] Dir. [Chris] Krebs can reach out?”

Perhaps recognizing that the contact violated the First Amendment, Masterson added, “I understand if you aren’t comfortable doing that and would prefer he email.”

Roth responded by giving Masterson his phone number.

While Public [has reported](#) over the last two weeks on Stanford’s censorship efforts, this is the first time anyone has documented the clear partisan and ideological bias. VP even internally labeled some posts as simply “right-wing,” which suggests that SIO’s explicit intention was to censor for viewpoints.

In other cases, VP misrepresented political rhetoric as misinformation. In the spring of 2021, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) called vaccine passports “[Biden’s Mark of the Beast.](#)” But in its report to Twitter about this post, VP also flagged innocuous tweets from Greene that made no reference to the “mark of the beast.”

For example, one of Greene’s tweets that VP sent to Twitter stated, “[We WILL NOT COMPLY with Biden’s vaccine ‘passports’!](#)” Another simply said, “[I OPPOSE vaccine passports.](#)”

In VP’s report to Twitter about Greene, a VP analyst wrote that VP staff had already discussed her posts with Twitter during their weekly meetings with the company.

This was not the only time SIO and CISA targeted Republican members of Congress.

VP flagged Rep. Massie’s tweets about natural immunity twice and labeled his posts as “right wing.”

“Here’s a comprehensive study that tracked re-infections and COVID complications for 187,549 people with prior SARS-CoV2 infection,” Massie wrote in one of the flagged tweets, sharing an Israeli pre-print. “Conclusion: Effectiveness of immunity due to prior infection is the same as for the Pfizer vaccine,” [he wrote.](#)

“If the data show the vaccine is likely to harm young children more than the virus is likely to harm young children, giving children the vaccine as a sacrifice to save older adults is immoral and reprehensible,” Massie [wrote](#) in another flagged tweet.

“Hi TIOS Heroes,” a VP analyst wrote to Twitter, “Please note this narrative about ‘natural immunity’ being pushed by Rep. Thomas Massie, which we included in this week’s briefing.” Acquired immunity from infection is a well-established scientific concept. At the time of Massie’s tweet, [Israeli data](#), which he previously cited, showed natural immunity to be effective in protecting against Covid infection. Yet VP internally labeled Massie as a “repeat offender.”

VP and EIP consistently conflated Republicans’ political speech with mis- and disinformation. On November 5, 2020, EIP flagged [a tweet](#) from Congressman Jody Hice that said, “GA’s handling of this election is embarrassing! Two days are gone and we still don’t know results... are you kidding? Worse yet, partisan ballots keep appearing. A fair vote & Trump wins, end of story! Stop the fraud!”

Again, Democrats have repeatedly claimed that elections were stolen from them and undermined faith in election results, as is their Constitutional right. Yet EIP considered only Republican speech that questioned election results to be a dangerous narrative that needed to be censored.

EIP sent Hice’s tweet to Twitter and wrote, “Hello Twitter – We are sending this over as it is from a prominent verified individual and poses a larger threat to quickly growing narratives.” EIP also tagged the DHS’ Information Sharing Analysis Center, writing, “ISAC – Tagging you as the statements are from another congressman and very location specific.”

The next day, EIP flagged a YouTube video [posted](#) by Congressman Clay Higgins. “Hi YouTube,” EIP wrote, “we wanted to flag this video for you quickly. It is of Congressman Clay Higgins declaring premature victory for Trump and that the election has been compromised. We are concerned this video could circulate widely.” VP used a label for Higgins and others called, “Individual in or aspiring to public office.”

“Ack, routing,” YouTube responded.

In another instance, EIP flagged North Carolina Senator Thom Tillis for [declaring victory](#) in his race before official sources called the election. “Facebook, Twitter,” EIP wrote, “we are sending this content over to you due to an early claim of victory in NC for Senator Thom Tillis.”

“Thanks, Twitter has received and is reviewing,” Twitter responded.

Not only did EIP and VP work with DHS to target conservatives, but their activities were also funded, in part, by NSF. In 2021, NSF gave SIO a five-year \$750,000 [grant](#) to study misinformation while VP was ongoing. This grant was for collaboration with the University of Washington’s Center for an Informed Public (CIP), a partner in EIP and VP. NSF gave CIP [\\$2.25 million](#) to study misinformation while participating in VP.

SIO claims that it did not use these grants for EIP or VP, but NSF lists a paper called “Repeat Spreaders and Election Delegitimization,” which uses EIP data, as research funded through its grant. Additionally, CIP admits that “UW personnel funded by Kate Starbird’s NSF [CAREER grant](#) did participate in post-election period analysis of EIP data for the partnership’s final report and for subsequent peer-reviewed publications.” NSF also gave Starbird grants to study [election misinformation](#) and [Covid misinformation](#) while CIP participated in EIP and VP.

This pattern of grant allocation strongly suggests that EIP and VP were not only created by DHS but also financially supported by the federal government.

## Shut It Down

The Twitter Files and the demands SIO and its partners made of Twitter and other social media platforms show more than a bias toward censoring Republican members of Congress: they *only* show the censoring of Republican members of Congress. While VP did flag a prominent Democrat, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., for censorship, he was not running for office at the time, nor was he an elected official. Moreover, while a Democrat, RFK has long been reviled by the party establishment. In contrast, EIP and VP appear to have explicitly targeted elected Republicans and “right-wing” beliefs.

As a result, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the US government and Stanford not

only violated the First Amendment to the US Constitution and interfered in an election, but they also did so in a wholly partisan and ideological way.

EIP and VP's partisan demands for censorship shed new light on an oft-made claim by advocates of greater censorship at places like Stanford and Harvard. Republicans, they say, simply spread more misinformation. They point to studies that they have conducted that purport to prove those claims.

However the new information provided by SIO to Congress and the Twitter Files show that the bias was in the researchers' selection of what they counted as misinformation in the first place. The reason they could claim that Republicans made more false claims than Democrats was simply because the researchers did not count Democrats' claims of election fraud or misleading claims about Covid as misinformation.

As such, this episode should do more than add to the case for defunding and dismantling the Censorship Industrial Complex. It should also change how we consider claims about partisan bias in misinformation. It may be that the bias is not more significant among individuals in one party or the other but in the minds of the misinformation researchers.



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