CIA allegedly made fake social media accounts to troll the Chinese government

The CIA allegedly launched a secret operation to troll Chinese officials and turn public opinion against them through leaked intelligence and negative news on social media.

Reuters reports the operation began in 2019 and was also aimed at causing paranoia within Xi Jinping's government. CIA agents reportedly made fake social media accounts to spread rumors, such as allegations that Communist Party members hid ill-gotten wealth outside the country, and criticize Chinese government initiatives, like saying a program financing infrastructure projects in other countries was corrupt.

The CIA declined to comment to *Reuters*, which could not confirm whether the program is still in place. *Reuters* said the operation, authorized by then-President Donald Trump, operated beyond China and used social media to influence public opinion in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the South Pacific. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which gave grants and loans for infrastructure projects, operates in developing countries in those regions. This initiative was one of the CIA program's targets.

Social media-fueled propaganda from state actors is nothing new, but news has more often been about other countries targeting the US. Russia has been accused many times of creating fake accounts and troll farms to influence public opinion in the US, with a former ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin admitting last year to founding a troll farm to meddle in US elections. The same year, *Rolling Stone* wrote

that a network based in China created a fake far-right publication that pushed fake stories to European social media users. Meanwhile, American politicians, in their quest to ban TikTok, claim the Chinese government could use the social media platform to spy on or influence users.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/3/14/24100984/cia-china-fake-social-media-spying