Facebook Removes 3 More Russian Networks for Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior

|
7 hours ago

Sample content from one of the pages removed by Facebook
Facebook removed three more networks of accounts for coordinated inauthentic behavior, all of which originated in Russia.

Head of cybersecurity policy Nathaniel Gleicher said in a Newsroom post that the three networks were connected to entities associated with Russian financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who was previously indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The first of the three groups consisted of 35 accounts, 53 pages, seven groups and five Instagram accounts, with its activity focused on Madagascar, the Central African Republic,

Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire and Cameroon.

They used a combination of fake accounts and authentic accounts of local nationals in Madagascar and Mozambique to manage pages and groups and post content, typically regarding global and local political news on topics including Russian policies in Africa, elections in Madagascar and Mozambique, election monitoring by a local non-governmental organization and criticism of French and U.S. policies.

According to Gleicher, some 475,000 accounts followed one or more of the removed pages, about 450 people followed at least one of the groups and roughly 650 users followed one or more of the Instagram accounts.

This network spent about $77,000 on Facebook ads, paid for in U.S. dollars, with the first ad running in April 2018 and the most recent ad running this month.

He also shared sample content from some of the removed pages:

Page Name: “Sudan in the Eyes of Others.” Caption Translation: Yam Brands, the company that owns the KFC franchise, stated that it intends on opening three branches of its franchise in Sudan. The spokesman of the company based in the American state of Kentucky, Takalaty Similiny, issued a statement saying that the branches are currently under construction and will open in mid-November.

Translation: The Police of the Republic of Mozambique announced today that nine members of RENAMO were detained for

their participation in the attempt to remove urns from one of the voting posts in the district of Machanga, Sofala, and for having vandalized the infrastructure. According to the spokesperson for PRM, that spoke in a press-conference in Maputo, the nine people are accused of having led around 300 RENAMO supporters that tried to remove the urns during counting at the Inharingue Primary School.

Translation: President of Central African Republic asked

Vladimir Putin to organize the delivery of heavy weapons. Wednesday, in Sochi, President Faustin-Archange Touadera asked his counterpart Vladimir Putin to increase the military assistance to the Republic, asking specifically for the supply of heavier weapons. “Russia is giving a considerable help to our country. They already carried out two weapons deliveries, trained our national troops, trained police officers, but for more effectiveness, we need heavy weapons. We hope that Russia will be able to allocate us combat vehicles, artillery cannons and other killing weapons in order for us to bring our people to safety,” said Touadera. However, there is still an issue which is blocking us to implement this. The embargo on the Central African Republic was not fully lifted in order for Russia to implement the plans of Touadera. Until now, it is only possible to supply weapons with a caliber less than 14,5 mm. The embargo does not stop armed groups to get illegally heavy weapons for themselves, which is not helping the efforts of the government to establish peace. We ask the Security Council of United Nations to draw attention on what their (sometimes reckless) sanctions are bringing.
The second network was made up of 17 accounts, 18 pages, three groups and six Instagram accounts, focused primarily on Sudan and using authentic accounts of Sudanese nationals, as well as fake and compromised accounts, to comments, post and manage pages posing as news organizations, as well as to direct traffic to off-platform sites.

Stories from Sudanese state news agency SUNA were often shared, as well as content from Russian state-controlled media Sputnik and RT, posted primarily in Arabic but sometimes in English. Topics included local news and events in Sudan and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, such a Sudanese-Russian relations, U.S.-Russian relations, Russian foreign policy and Muslims in Russia.

About 457,000 accounts followed at least one of the pages, while some 1,300 joined at least one of the groups and around 2,900 followed at least one of the Instagram accounts.

About $160 was spent on Facebook ads, paid for in Russian

rubles, with the first running in April 2018 and the most recent one this past September.

Gleicher shared sample content from some of the removed pages:

Translation (first two paragraphs): “American and British intelligence put together false information about Putin’s inner circle … a diplomatic military source said that American and British intelligence agencies are preparing to leak false information about people close to the president, Vladimir Putin, and the leadership of the Russian defense ministry.“

Page title: “Nile Echo.” Post translation (first paragraph only): French movements to abort Russian and Sudanese mediation in the Central African Republic …

Translation: #Article (I am completely sure that the person in the cell is not [ousted Sudanese leader Omar] al-Bashir, but I don’t have physical evidence proving this) Aml al-Kordofani wrote: The person resembling al-Bashir who is sitting behind the bars … who is he? The double game continues between the military and the sons of Gosh (referring to former Sudanese intelligence chief Salah Abdullah Mohamed Saleh) according to the American plan. The American plan employs psychological operations, as we mentioned earlier, and are undertaken by a huge office within the U.S. Department of Defense.

And the final group of 14 accounts, 12 pages, one group and one Instagram account focused on Libya, using a combination of authentic accounts of Egyptian nationals and fake and compromised accounts to manage pages and drive people to an off-platform domain.

Stories from Sputnik and RT were frequently shared, and posts in Arabic covered local news and geopolitical issues including Libyan politics, crimes, natural disasters, public health, Turkey's alleged sponsoring of terrorism in Libya, illegal migration, militia violence, the detention of Russian citizens in Libya for alleged interference in elections and a meeting between Khalifa Haftar, head of the Libyan National Army, and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Gleicher added that some of the pages posted content on multiple sides of political debate in Libya, including criticism of the Government of National Accord, U.S. foreign policy, and Haftar, as well as support of Muammar Gaddafi and his son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Russian foreign policy and Khalifa Haftar.

Approximately 212,000 accounts followed at least one of the pages, while just one account joined the group and around 29,300 people followed the Instagram account.

Continue Reading

https://www.adweek.com/digital/facebook-removes-3-more-russian-networks-for-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior/