Shooting conspiracies trend on X as Musk endorses Trump



Conspiracy theories about the shooting at a rally for Donald Trump began surfacing on X shortly after the news broke this afternoon, with the platform promoting topics including “#falseflag” and “staged” to users. X owner Elon Musk has staunchly advocated for “free speech” on social media platforms – which can include misinformation like the above.

Other major platforms largely seemed to avoid promoting misinformation

On X, neither trending topic about the shooting is flush with particularly robust or coherent conspiracies; clicking through, you’ll largely find short posts from X users saying that the shooting looks fake or is a stunt. (There is no evidence of either.) But by placing the subjects into X’s trending topics area, the conspiracies are elevated to more people.

Other major social media platforms seemed to be handling the situation better in the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

YouTube surfaced news clips and largely directed search results toward news reports and verified creators. Facebook’s search results primarily pointed to news outlets; the platform removed its trending topics section in 2018 over constant complaints about its curation. Threads occasionally displayed conspiracy-related posts atop its trending topic for the incident, but they didn’t appear to surface consistently.

X did not return a request for comment. An email to its press team returned an automatic reply saying, “Busy now, please check back later.”

The company seems to be embracing its role as a center of discussion, though — accurate or otherwise. Even as conspiracy subjects continued to trend, X’s official account posted a short note this evening saying simply, “global town square.”

https://www.theverge.com/2024/7/13/24198049/trump-x-shooting-conspiracy-theories-trending