



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 16, 2014

British Surveillance Agents Create False Internet Information

Every day the boundaries of government manipulation of social media are being redrawn as new revelations come to light on the Internet.

On Monday, Glenn Greenwald reported that the NSA's British counterpart, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ),



has developed covert tools to seed the internet with false information, including the ability to manipulate the results of online polls, artificially inflate pageview counts on web sites, "amplif[y]" sanctioned messages on YouTube, and censor video content judged to be "extremist." The capabilities, detailed in documents provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, even include an old standby for pre-adolescent prank callers everywhere: A way to connect two unsuspecting phone users together in a call.

Not surprisingly, the tools used by the British surveillance agency were developed by its Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group (JTRIG) and reportedly "constitute some of the most startling methods of propaganda and internet deception contained within the Snowden archive."

In a similar disclosure made earlier this year, Greenwald reported that GCHQ was attempting "to control, infiltrate, manipulate, and warp online discourse."

Specifically, the story revealed that in the JTRIG document released by Snowden, agents are instructed in ways to achieve two central goals: First, "to inject all sorts of false material onto the internet in order to destroy the reputation of its targets"; and second, "to use social sciences and other techniques to manipulate online discourse and activism to generate outcomes it considers desirable."

Page after page, the document outlines how agents should "disrupt" the lives — online and real life — of targets, including instructions on conducting "false flag operations" online.

This latest document shines light on a lengthy roster of tactics and tools employed by GCHQ and NSA to monitor and manipulate social media content. Of the newly publicized methods, Greenwald reports:

The "tools" have been assigned boastful code names. They include invasive methods for online surveillance, as well as some of the very techniques that the U.S. and U.K. have harshly prosecuted



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young online activists for employing, including “distributed denial of service” attacks and “call bombing.” But they also describe previously unknown tactics for manipulating and distorting online political discourse and disseminating state propaganda, as well as the apparent ability to actively monitor Skype users in real-time — raising further questions about the extent of Microsoft’s cooperation with spy agencies or potential vulnerabilities in its Skype’s encryption.

Given the amount of time the connected world spends online and the amount of identifying data willingly dumped into Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, It’s difficult to imagine a more unconscionable program. The activities described deserve to be shouted from the rooftops. The governments of the United States and Great Britain currently employ teams of agents whose responsibility is to ruin the lives of those individuals who’ve had the misfortune to run afoul of the establishment.

In light of these revelations, it is difficult to know what to believe and what not to believe, even when the evidence presented against someone appears “credible” or “reliable.”

Every day that passes without putting the pause on these programs and imposing some oversight by Congress on such activities, another brick is stacked on the wall of surveillance that is being constructed around the United States and other countries.

In his [article on The Intercept](#), Greenwald wonders how much government officials are brought into the loop on these massive manipulation operations carried out by NSA and GCHQ. Greenwald writes:

Chris Huhne, a former cabinet minister and member of the national security council until 2012, insisted that ministers were in “utter ignorance” about even the largest GCHQ spying program, known as Tempora — not to mention “their extraordinary capability to Hoover up and store personal emails, voice contact, social networking activity and even internet searches.” In an October *Guardian* op-ed, Huhne wrote that “when it comes to the secret world of GCHQ and the [NSA], the depth of my ‘privileged information’ has been dwarfed by the information provided by Edward Snowden to *The Guardian*.”

Regardless of how much prior knowledge elected representatives have about these programs, Americans and Britons know they are under constant surveillance by agents of the intelligence community and these operatives are deliberately creating, changing, and hyping information on the Internet in order classify civilians as friend or foe of the regimes under whose authority they operate.

The deceptions perpetrated by GCHQ and NSA are sophisticated enough that people who are innocent of any crime can be painted as the vilest of criminals based on evidence manufactured by their accusers.

In the name of national (and international) security, approved governments are violating the fundamental right of people to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. The typical intelligence community response that these tactics are merely ideas rather than real-world practices is immaterial. Most understand that once a government usurps some authority they will immediately begin acting under the color of that new power.

The question remains: How many people or organizations will have to have their reputations obliterated by the tampering of technologically advanced government agents before those governments are brought to heel?



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