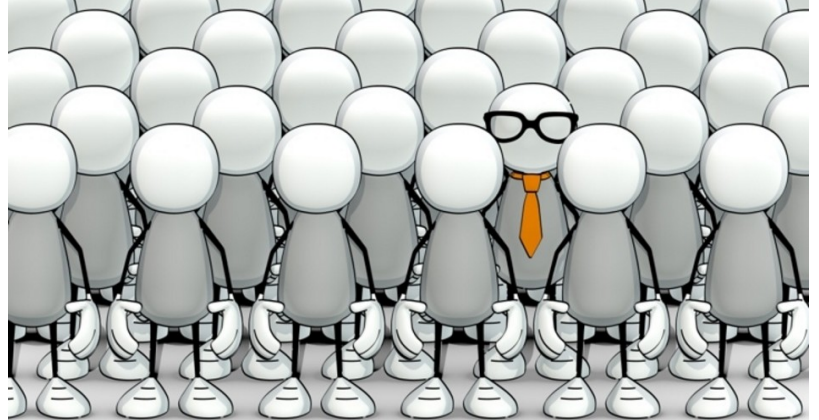




Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 8, 2015

Government Uses Psy-ops, Trolls, Propaganda to Push “Conformity”

Have you ever wondered if that corny Facebook user or that statist online commenter parroting government talking points was actually a paid propagandist working for Big Government? Well, there is a good chance he or she actually was. According to [recently published official documents](#), a scandal-plagued U.K. government snooping unit bombastically styling itself the “Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group” (JTRIG) has been using “behavioral science,” social-media trolls, and online propaganda to manipulate public opinion and destroy critics at home and abroad. And it wants still more “behavioral science support” to further enhance its troubling “capabilities.”



Among other objectives, the outfit and its armies of online trolls work to promote “obedience” and “conformity” while countering activists whom authorities characterize as “radical” or “extremist,” the documents show. The British snoops also work closely with the U.S. National Security Agency, which has found itself embroiled in growing scandals for lawlessly spying on millions of innocent Americans without so much as a warrant or even probable cause. And like the NSA, it is hardly the first time that the British snooping bureaucrats have come under fire for their shady activities. Officials insist all of their scheming is “legal.”

The latest revelations surrounding the manipulation of public discourse and opinion by JTRIG trolls, part of the U.K. signals-intelligence agency known as the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), were exposed last month by *The Intercept*. Several previously secret documents were published. Perhaps the most revealing, though, was a 42-page paper from 2011 entitled “Behavioral Science Support for JTRIG’s Effects and Online HUMINT [Human Intelligence] Operations” authored by psychologist Mandeep K. Dhami.

“It provides the most comprehensive and sweeping insight to date into the scope of this unit’s extreme methods,” [explained](#) *The Intercept*’s Glenn Greenwald and Andrew Fishman. “Among other things, the document lays out the tactics the agency uses to manipulate public opinion, its scientific and psychological research into how human thinking and behavior can be influenced, and the broad range of targets that are traditionally the province of law enforcement rather than intelligence agencies.”

Also confirmed once again in the latest documents is the fact that JTRIG is hardly limiting its activities to foreign intelligence gathering. Instead, it is collaborating with agencies including the police, the Security Service, the Border Agency, Revenue and Customs, and other domestic-focused government outfits in going after targets within Britain. It also gathers information on “radicalization” for the



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Department for Children, Schools and Families, in addition to helping law enforcement to work on “civil and family justice.” Even the Bank of England receives “intelligence” from the scandal-plagued snoops.

Among the “objectives” outlined in the Behavioral Science document: “providing intelligence for judicial outcomes,” “denying, deterring or dissuading” criminals and “hacktivists” (hacker activists), and pursuing various forms of domestic crimes. Especially troubling to analysts, though, is the bureaucracy’s targeting of what the document describes as “domestic extremists” — from trying to destroy the government’s political enemies using sleazy tactics and lies to warping online discourse to support the government’s agenda.

Instead of listing Islamic extremists or terrorists within the U.K., the same official report lists the “English Defence League,” a protest organization opposed to mass immigration and the “Islamization” of Britain, as its example of radicals. According to the document, JTRIG bureaucrats are “monitoring” the group by “conducting online HUMINT,” a reference to gathering “human intelligence” on its targets using the Internet. Other “radicals” monitored by the snoops at GCHQ, as previous documents revealed, include people who visit the pro-transparency WikiLeaks website.

More recently, in a speech to the United Nations seeking the dictators club’s help to [wage war on “non-violent extremism.”](#) U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron claimed belief in conspiracy theories or religious prophecies were evidence of radicalism that must be stamped out by government. Just this week, the U.K. education boss Nicky Morgan came under major fire for calling on school teachers to be conscripted in the war on non-violent extremism by [reporting children who disagree with homosexuality to the police and social services.](#)

Beyond simply gathering “intelligence” on people and groups that British authorities characterize as “extremist,” which now apparently includes Christian school children, the snooping outfit is also involved in trying to manipulate public opinion. In the executive summary of the document, JTRIG boasts that it “currently lies at the leading edge of cyber influence practice and expertise.” The document also describes a “range of techniques” that the manipulators use to “discredit, disrupt, delay, deny, degrade, and deter” their victims — including U.K. political activists and other targets worldwide.

Among those “techniques:” “Uploading YouTube videos containing ‘persuasive’ communications”; “Setting up Facebook groups, forums, blogs and Twitter accounts that encourage and monitor discussion on a topic”; “Establishing online aliases/personalities who support the communications or messages in YouTube videos, Facebook groups, forums, blogs etc”; “Establishing online aliases/personalities who support other aliases”; and much more.

In other words, next time you are reading extremist pro-government propaganda in a comment thread or on social media, it would be prudent to consider the very real possibility that, yes, as official documents revealed, it may really be taxpayer-funded propaganda propagated by bureaucratic trolls hiding behind an alias and “national security.” Based on the information contained in the latest leaked documents, it is clear that the British government’s paid “sock puppet” voices operate all across social media. Less than five years ago, the U.S. military was caught working on a similar plot to create armies of “sock puppets” and have them parrot government propaganda online.

Other tactics outlined in the 2011 “Behavioral Science” report include sending “spoof e-mails and text messages from a fake person or mimicking a real person” to discredit, promote distrust, and more. If that sounds very Sovietesque, or East German perhaps, it should. Also described are plots to lie to victims by providing “spoof online resources such as books and magazines” that provide “inaccurate



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information.”

Finally, JTRIG bureaucrats and would-be social engineers boast of “interrupting (i.e., filtering, deleting, creating or modifying) communications between real customers and traders.” In some cases, the document explained, the snoops actually take over control of online websites, attack telephone and computer services, or contact host websites and ask them to remove material. It touts the fact that the unit “may cover all areas of the globe,” ranging from South America and Eastern Europe to Britain.

But all of that malfeasance is not nearly enough for JTRIG, the latest leaked document declares. Instead, it wants more “behavioral science support” to help manipulate the public into supporting the government’s increasingly extreme agenda. Among other items on its wish list are more research into “social psychology”; the “psychology of trust and distrust”; “developing realistic online aliases/personalities”; “psychology of persuasion”; “mass messaging”; “marketing/branding of Youtube videos”; and much more.

“Theories and research in the field of social psychology may prove particularly useful for informing JTRIG’s effects and online HUMINT operations,” the document states. The topics identified as “particularly relevant” for “social influence” include “attitudes, persuasive communications, conformity, obedience,” and more. “In addition, the application of social psychological ideas to marketing and advertising would be useful,” it concludes, touting schemes to get unwitting victims to obey its trolls.

The same controversial outfit came under major fire last year after its bureaucrats were exposed by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden engaging in “dirty tricks.” Those deeply immoral schemes included [planting false evidence to destroy the reputations of their targets](#) — thereby potentially calling into question the “evidence” behind every government/media/establishment crusade and even prosecution against critics. In essence, authorities have been using “false flag” attacks to destroy people whose views they dislike, the documents show.

Citing documents leaked by Snowden, investigative journalist Greenwald, now with *The Intercept*, said the NSA and the U.K. GCHQ were “attempting to manipulate and control online discourse with extreme tactics of deception and reputation-destruction.” The document that exposed the scheming was entitled: “The Art of Deception: Training for Online Covert Operations.” It called on bureaucrats to, among other wild plots, “inject all sorts of false material onto the internet in order to destroy the reputation of its targets,” and “use social sciences and other techniques to manipulate online discourse and activism to generate outcomes it considers desirable.”

It has become beyond clear that self-styled “intelligence” bureaucracies in the U.K. and beyond have crossed the Rubicon. Their propaganda and social engineering efforts now represent a threat to the very liberties, values, and people they were ostensibly set up to protect. How can a supposedly self-governing people make informed decisions about voting and policy, for example, when armies of government hacks are trying to warp public opinion in favor of a statist agenda, even if it means using lies? The simple answer is that it is not possible.

The implications of the growing lawlessness should alarm everyone — even those who have fallen victim to government’s psy-ops and actually believe the propaganda and the talking points regurgitated by government trolls. And as *The New American* has been exposing for years, the Obama administration and the rest of the U.S. government have been involved in similar schemes. It is time for people to rein in their supposed public servants before those servants get further out of control and become full-blown totalitarian masters.



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