


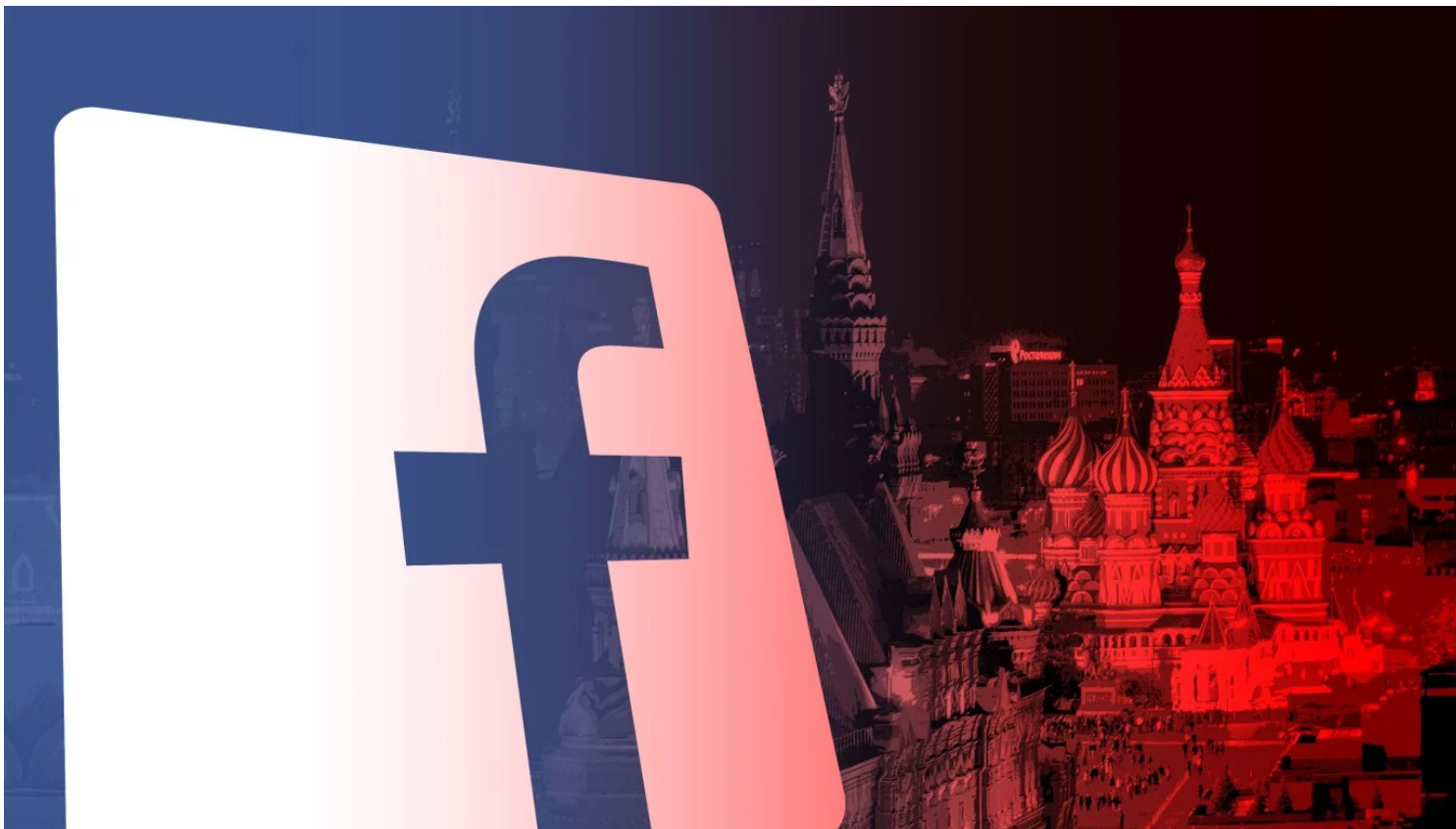
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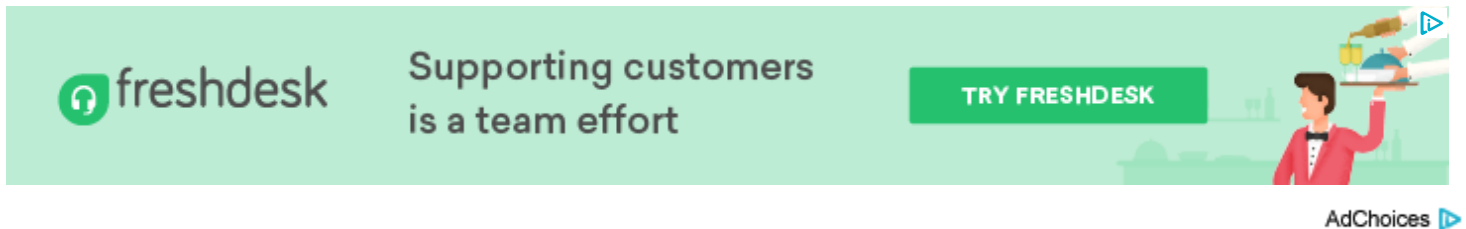


Facebook and Twitter remove hundreds of accounts linked to Iranian and Russian political meddling

Devin Coldewey

@techcrunch / Aug 21, 2018



A banner advertisement for Freshdesk. On the left is the Freshdesk logo. In the center, the text reads "Supporting customers is a team effort". To the right is a green button that says "TRY FRESHDESK". On the far right is an illustration of a waiter in a red jacket holding a tray with a globe and a drink. In the bottom right corner of the banner is the "AdChoices" logo.

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with the help of security firm FireEye. The latter [provided its own initial analysis](#), with more to come.

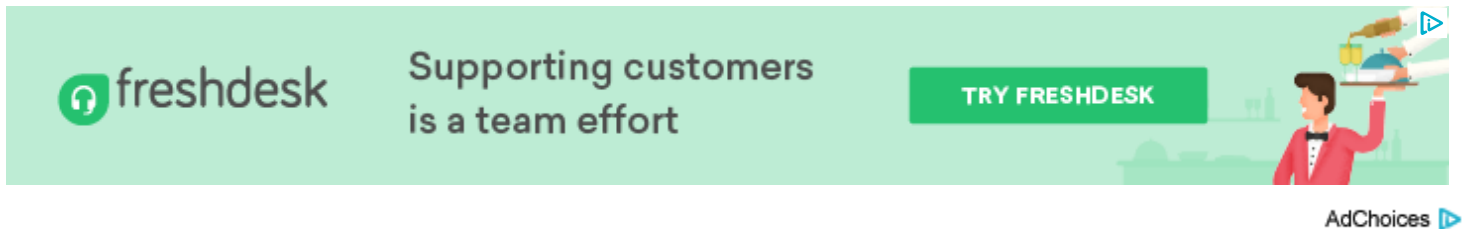
Notably, few or none of these were focused on manipulating the 2018 midterm elections here in the States, but rather had a variety of topics and apparent goals. The common theme is certainly attempting to sway political opinion — just not in Ohio.

For instance, a page may purport to be an organization trying to raise awareness about violence perpetrated by immigrants, but is in fact operated by a larger shadowy group attempting to steer public opinion on the topic. The networks seem to originate in Iran, and were promoting narratives including “anti-Saudi, anti-Israeli, and pro-Palestinian themes, as well as support for specific U.S. policies favorable to Iran,” as FireEye describes them.

The first network Facebook describes, “Liberty Front Press,” comprised 74 pages, 70 accounts and 3 groups on Facebook, and 76 accounts on Instagram. Some 155,000 people followed at least one piece of the Facebook network and they had 48,000 Instagram followers. They were generally promoting political views in the Middle East and only recently expanded to the States; they spent \$6,000 on ads beginning in January 2015 up until this month.

A related network to this one also engaged in cyberattacks and hacking attempts. Its 12 pages and 66 accounts, plus nine on Instagram, were posing as news organizations.

A third network had accounts going back to 2011; it was sharing content in the Middle East as well, about local, U.S. and U.K. political issues. With 168 pages, 140 Facebook accounts and 31 Instagram accounts, this was a big one. As you’ll recall, the big takedown of Russia’s IRA accounts only amounted to 135. ([The full operation was of course much larger than that.](#))



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interestingly this network also hosted 25 events, meaning it was not just a bunch of people in dark rooms posting under multiple pseudonyms and fake accounts. People attended real-life events for these pages, suggesting the accounts supported real communities despite being sockpuppets for some other organization.

Twitter, almost immediately after Facebook's post, announced that it had banned 284 accounts for "coordinated manipulation" originating in Iran.



 **Twitter Safety**
@TwitterSafety

Working with our industry peers today, we have suspended 284 accounts from Twitter for engaging in coordinated manipulation. Based on our existing analysis, it appears many of these accounts originated from Iran.

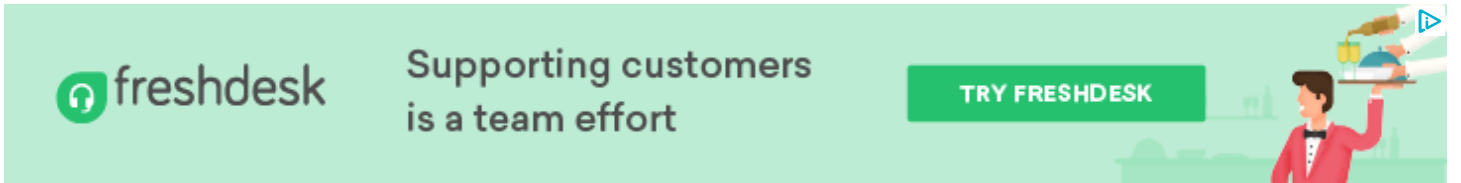
8:01 PM - Aug 21, 2018

3,786 2,515 people are talking about this

The Iranian networks were not alleged to be necessarily the product of state-backed operations, but of course the implication is there and not at all unreasonable. But Facebook also announced that it was removing pages and accounts "linked to sources the U.S. government has previously identified as Russian military intelligence services."

The number and nature of *these* accounts is not gone into in detail, except to say that their activity was focused more on Syrian and Ukrainian political issues. "To date, we have not found activity by the accounts targeting the U.S.," the post reads. But at least the origin is relatively clear: Russian state actors.

This should be a warning that it isn't just the U.S. that is the target of coordinated disinformation campaigns online — wherever one country has something to gain by



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now following the Kremlin’s playbook from 2016. While I’m encouraged to see Facebook taking steps to rid their platforms of these bad actors, there’s clearly more work to be done.”

He said he plans to bring this up at the Senate Intelligence Committee’s grilling of Facebook, Twitter and Google leadership on September 5th.

 **Image Credits:** Bryce Durbin / TechCrunch

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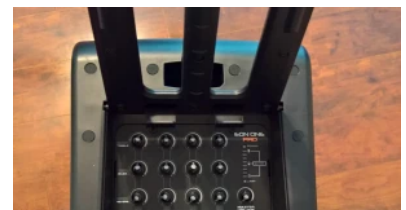
Benchmark and Tiger double down on going public

10 minutes ago Danny Crichton



The JBL Eon One Pro is a powered sound system for speakers and performers

27 minutes ago John Biggs



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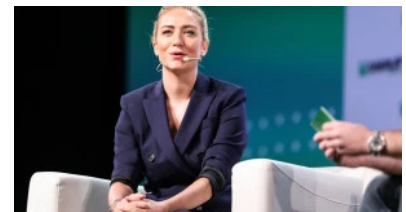


Uber, One Year Later with Dara Khosrowshahi (Uber) | Disrupt SF 2018

36 minutes ago TC Video

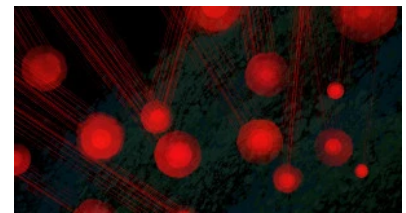
Dating app Bumble says buzz off to Facebook, plans Hive space expansion next year

43 minutes ago Ingrid Lunden, Sarah Perez



ProtonMail names one of the attackers behind a major DDoS this summer

43 minutes ago Natasha Lomas



British Airways customer data stolen in data breach

1 hour ago Zack Whittaker



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1 hour ago Jonathan Shieber



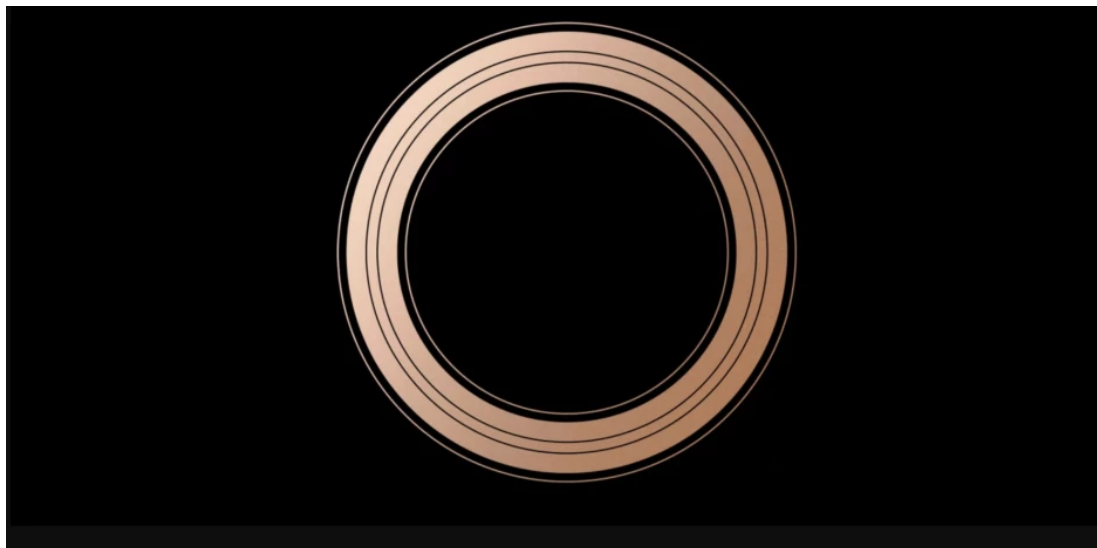
Uber makes it easier to switch between rides, scooters, bikes and car rentals

1 hour ago Megan Rose Dickey



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What to expect from next week's big iPhone event

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Instagram

2 hours ago Kate Clark



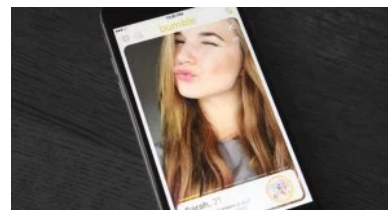
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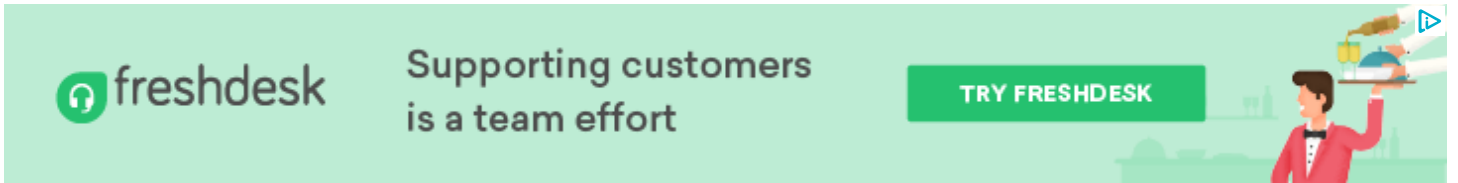
Ford gives the first peek at its Mustang-inspired electric crossover

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2 hours ago Zack Whittaker



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The advertisement features the Freshdesk logo on the left, the slogan "Supporting customers is a team effort" in the center, and a green button labeled "TRY FRESHDESK" on the right. An illustration of a waiter in a red jacket holding a tray with drinks is on the far right.

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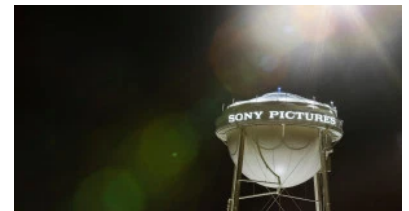


2 hours ago **Brian Heater**



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