

# Facebook steps up fight on state-led propaganda

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Facebook says it is taking aim at efforts by governments and others to use the social media network to manipulate public opinion

Facebook said Thursday it is stepping up its security to counter efforts by governments and others to spread misinformation or manipulate discussions for political reasons.

The new effort expands Facebook's security efforts beyond "abusive" actions such as hacking and financial scams to "more subtle and insidious forms of misuse, including attempts to manipulate civic discourse and deceive people," according to a white paper released by the world's leading social network.

The initiative is part of Facebook's efforts to counter "fake news" but goes beyond that to tackle efforts by governments and non-state entities to use the social network to manipulate public opinion.

With the new effort, Facebook will be using its security team to take aim at so-called "information operations" that aim "to distort domestic or foreign political sentiment," the document said.

Facebook said it will focus on three areas in this drive: "targeted data collection" by governments to locate and counter dissidents; "content creation" or [fake news](#) spread via the social network; and "false amplification," or using artificial means or automated "bots" to promote or denigrate a group or cause.

Facebook, which came under criticism for its role in the spread of misinformation during the 2016 US presidential campaign, has argued the platform did not play a major role in influencing voters.

But in Thursday's [white paper](#), Facebook said it "responded to several situations that we assessed to fit the pattern of information operations."

"We have no evidence of any Facebook accounts being compromised as part of this activity, but, nonetheless, we detected and monitored these efforts in order to protect the authentic connections that define our platform," the report said.

Facebook said it "is not in a position to make definitive attribution to the

actors sponsoring this activity" but added that its data "does not contradict" the conclusions of US intelligence in January that Russia sought to influence the election outcome.

Separately, Facebook released its global transparency report showing [government](#) requests for account data increased by nine percent in the second half of 2016 from 59,229 to 64,279 requests.

About half of the data requests from law enforcement in the US contained a "non-disclosure order" that prohibited Facebook from notifying the user, it said.

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