

D-Day for Facebook, Zuckerberg before skeptical lawmakers

April 10 2018, by Rob Lever



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg held private meetings Monday with lawmakers ahead of his congressional testimony Tuesday and Wednesday

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg was set for a fiery face-off on Capitol Hill Tuesday as he attempts to quell a firestorm over privacy and security

lapses at the social network that have angered lawmakers and the site's two billion users.

Zuckerberg, making his first formal appearance at a Congressional hearing, will seek to allay widespread fears ignited by the leaking of private data on tens of millions of users to a British firm working on Donald Trump's 2016 campaign.

The scandal has sparked fresh talk about regulation of [social media platforms](#), and Facebook in the past week has sought to stem criticism by endorsing at least one legislative proposal, which would require better labeling and disclosure on political advertising.

Senator Bill Nelson, one of the lawmakers who met privately Monday with Zuckerberg, said he believes the 33-year-old CEO is taking the matter seriously.

"I believe he understands that regulation could be right around the corner," the Florida Democrat said.

Other lawmakers were less clear about the need for new regulations.

Republican Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana said, "I'm not interested in regulating Facebook. I'm interested in Facebook regulating itself and solving the problems. I come in peace."

Zuckerberg was set to appear before a Senate panel from 1815 GMT, with another session in the House of Representatives Wednesday.

The huge social network has begun alerting some users about whether their data was leaked to the British firm Cambridge Analytica.

Notification is among several steps pledged by Facebook to fix pervasive

problems on data security and manipulation of the platform used by some two billion people worldwide.



Cardboard cutouts of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg stand outside the US Capitol, placed by advocacy group Avaaz to call attention to what the group says are fake accounts still spreading disinformation on Facebook

Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley said Tuesday's hearing is the first step in an "open dialogue about how we address growing consumer privacy concerns."

"The tech industry has a duty to respond to widespread and growing privacy concerns and restore the public trust. The status quo no longer

works," Grassley added.

Suit and tie

On Monday, Zuckerberg ditched his trademark T-shirt for a somber dark suit and tie as he made the rounds on Capitol Hill and sounded contrite about Facebook's conduct.

"We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility, and that was a big mistake. It was my mistake, and I'm sorry," Zuckerberg said in his written testimony released by the House commerce committee.

"I started Facebook, I run it, and I'm responsible for what happens here."

In his written remarks, Zuckerberg called Facebook "an idealistic and optimistic company" and said: "We focused on all the good that connecting people can bring."

But he acknowledged that "it's clear now that we didn't do enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm as well. That goes for fake news, foreign interference in elections, and hate speech, as well as developers and data privacy."

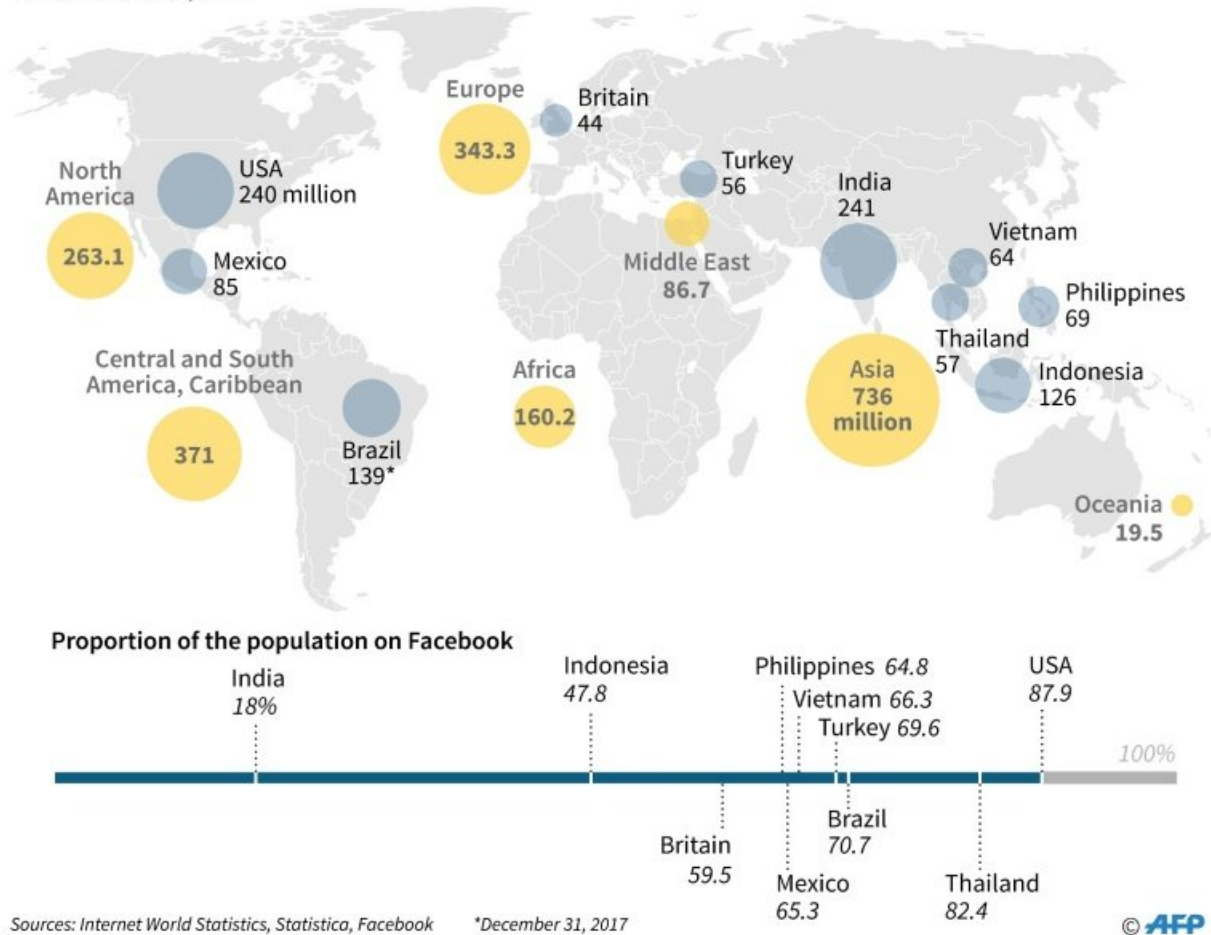
Zuckerberg said he has called for more investments in security that will "significantly impact our profitability going forward," adding: "I want to be clear about what our priority is: protecting our community is more important than maximizing our profit."

Exposed to Facebook

2.1 billion monthly users of Facebook at the end of 2017, representing 27.6 percent of the global population

Regions and top 10 countries

Data on June 30, 2017



Graphic showing Facebook's presence around the world

'Investigating every app'

Zuckerberg recounted a list of steps announced by Facebook aimed at averting a repeat of the improper use of data by third parties like Cambridge Analytica, and noted that other applications were also being

investigated to determine if they did anything wrong.

"We're in the process of investigating every app that had access to a large amount of information before we locked down our platform in 2014," said Zuckerberg.

"If we detect suspicious activity, we'll do a full forensic audit. And if we find that someone is improperly using data, we'll ban them and tell everyone affected."

Zuckerberg met behind closed doors with Senators Bill Nelson of Florida and Dianne Feinstein of California, among others.

Backing 'Honest Ads'

On Friday, Facebook sought to quell some concerns over political manipulation of its platform by announcing support for the "Honest Ads Act" that requires election ad buyers to be identified, and to go further with verification of sponsors of ads on key public policy issues.

Zuckerberg said the change will mean "we will hire thousands of more people" to get the new system in place ahead of US midterm elections in November.

"We're starting this in the US and expanding to the rest of the world in the coming months," Zuckerberg said.

On Monday, Facebook agreed to supply proprietary data for a study on its role in elections and democracy.

"The goal is both to get the ideas of leading academics on how to address these issues as well as to hold us accountable for making sure we protect the integrity of these elections on Facebook," Zuckerberg wrote on his

Facebook page.

"Looking back, it's clear we were too slow identifying election interference in 2016, and we need to do better in future elections."

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