

Facebook closes hundreds of 'inauthentic' Russia-linked pages

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Facebook has come under intense pressure from a wave of scandals, mainly over the sharing of its users' data without their consent but also over rampant Russian "fake news" influence campaigns

Facebook announced Thursday that it has removed more than 500 pages,

groups and accounts originating in Russia for engaging in what the social network called "coordinated inauthentic behavior."

The California-based social media giant said they were part of two separate but similar Russian-based influence operations, one that was active in a variety of former Soviet republics and another focused specifically on Ukraine.

"We didn't find any links between these operations, but they used similar tactics by creating networks of accounts to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing," Nathaniel Gleicher, the head of Facebook's cybersecurity policy, said in a post.

He said 364 [pages](#) and accounts were removed that posed as independent news sites or general interest sites but were found to be linked to employees of Sputnik, a Moscow-based [news agency](#).

Those operated in the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Central and Eastern European countries, Facebook said.

"Some of the pages frequently posted about topics like anti-NATO sentiment, protest movements, and anti-corruption," Gleicher said.

Sputnik confirmed that its Facebook pages and accounts were removed, denouncing the action as "undoubtedly a purely political decision and in fact censorship."

Another 107 pages, groups and accounts were removed from Facebook and 41 from Facebook-owned Instagram that were identified as part of a Russia-based network targeting Ukraine.

"We identified some technical overlap with Russia-based activity we saw prior to the US midterm elections, including behavior that shared

characteristics with previous Internet Research Agency (IRA) activity," Facebook said.

In those cases, Facebook acted on a tip from US law enforcement, the post said.

US intelligence says the IRA is a troll farm linked to Russian intelligence.

Facebook has come under intense pressure from a wave of scandals, mainly over the sharing of its users' data without their consent but also over the rampant use of its platform for Russian "fake news" influence campaigns during the 2016 US presidential elections.

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