

Facebook targets 30,000 fake France accounts before election

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Republican guards, right, line up in the courtyard of the presidential Elysee Palace, in Paris, Friday, April 14, 2017. The two-round presidential election is set for April 23 and May 7. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

Facebook says it has targeted 30,000 fake accounts linked to France ahead of the country's presidential election, as part of a worldwide effort against misinformation.

The company said Thursday it's trying to "reduce the spread of material generated through inauthentic activity, including spam, misinformation, or other deceptive content that is often shared by creators of fake accounts."

It said its efforts "enabled us to take action" against the French accounts and that it is removing sites with the highest traffic.

Facebook and French media are also running fact-checking programs in France to combat misleading information, especially around the campaign for the two-round April 23-May 7 presidential election.

European authorities have also pressured Facebook and Twitter to remove extremist

propaganda or other postings that violate European hate speech or other laws.

Facebook ramped up its efforts against the spread of false news and misinformation on its service in December, a month after the U.S. presidential election. The company said at the time that it will focus on the "worst of the worst" offenders and partner with outside fact-checkers and news organizations to sort honest news reports from made-up stories.

It was accused of allowing the spread of false news in the months leading up to the U.S. election, which critics said may have helped sway the results in favor of Donald Trump. Since December, the company has broadened its efforts beyond the U.S.

Last week, it launched a resource to help users spot false news in 14 countries including the U.S., France and Germany. It's a notification, available for a few days, that leads users to a list of tips for spotting false news and ways to report it.

Facebook's other efforts include participating with other companies and tech industry leaders to establish a "news integrity" nonprofit organization to promote news literacy and increase the public's trust in journalism. A nascent Facebook Journalism Project, meanwhile, is a lofty effort to work with news organizations to develop products, provide tools for journalists and generally promote trust in news.

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