

Facebook removes nearly 200 accounts tied to hate groups

Facebook says it has removed nearly 200 social media accounts linked to white supremacy groups planning to rally members to show up at protests over police killings of black people – in some cases with weapons

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

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Facebook has removed nearly 200 social media accounts linked to white supremacy groups that planned to encourage members to attend protests over police killings of black people — in some cases with weapons, company officials said Friday.

The accounts on [Facebook](#) and Instagram were tied to the Proud Boys and the American Guard, two hate groups already banned on the platforms. Officials were already monitoring the accounts in preparation for removing them when they saw posts attempting to exploit the ongoing protests prompted by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

“We saw that these groups were planning to rally supporters and members to physically go to the protests and in some cases were preparing to go with weapons,” said Brian Fishman, [Facebook’s](#) director of counterterrorism and dangerous organizations policy.

The company did not divulge details of the account users — such as their specific plans for protests or where in the U.S. they live. It said “approximately” 190 accounts were removed overall.

Both the Proud Boys and American Guard had been banned from Facebook for violating rules prohibiting hate speech. Facebook said it will continue to remove new pages, groups or accounts created by users trying to circumvent the ban.

Earlier this week, Facebook announced the removal of a “handful” of other accounts created by white supremacists who had been posing on Twitter as

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members of the far-left antifa movement.

Facebook announced two other actions on Friday to root out networks of fake accounts used in attempts to manipulate public opinion in Africa and Iraq:

— Hundreds of fake Instagram and Facebook accounts created in Tunisia in an alleged effort to influence elections in that country and other French-speaking nations in sub-Saharan Africa:

The accounts and related pages were used to impersonate local citizens, politicians and news organizations. More than 3.8 million accounts followed one or more of the pages, and more than 171,000 people had followed one of the fake Instagram accounts.

The network of fake accounts and pages was uncovered by the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab. In their report, researchers at the DFRL said they've noticed more and more PR firms dabbling in misinformation and online manipulation.

— Facebook also deactivated another network of 102 fake Instagram and Facebook accounts used to impersonate local politicians and news organizations in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Company officials said the fake accounts, which appeared to target domestic audiences in Kurdistan, were linked to Kurdish intelligence services.

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