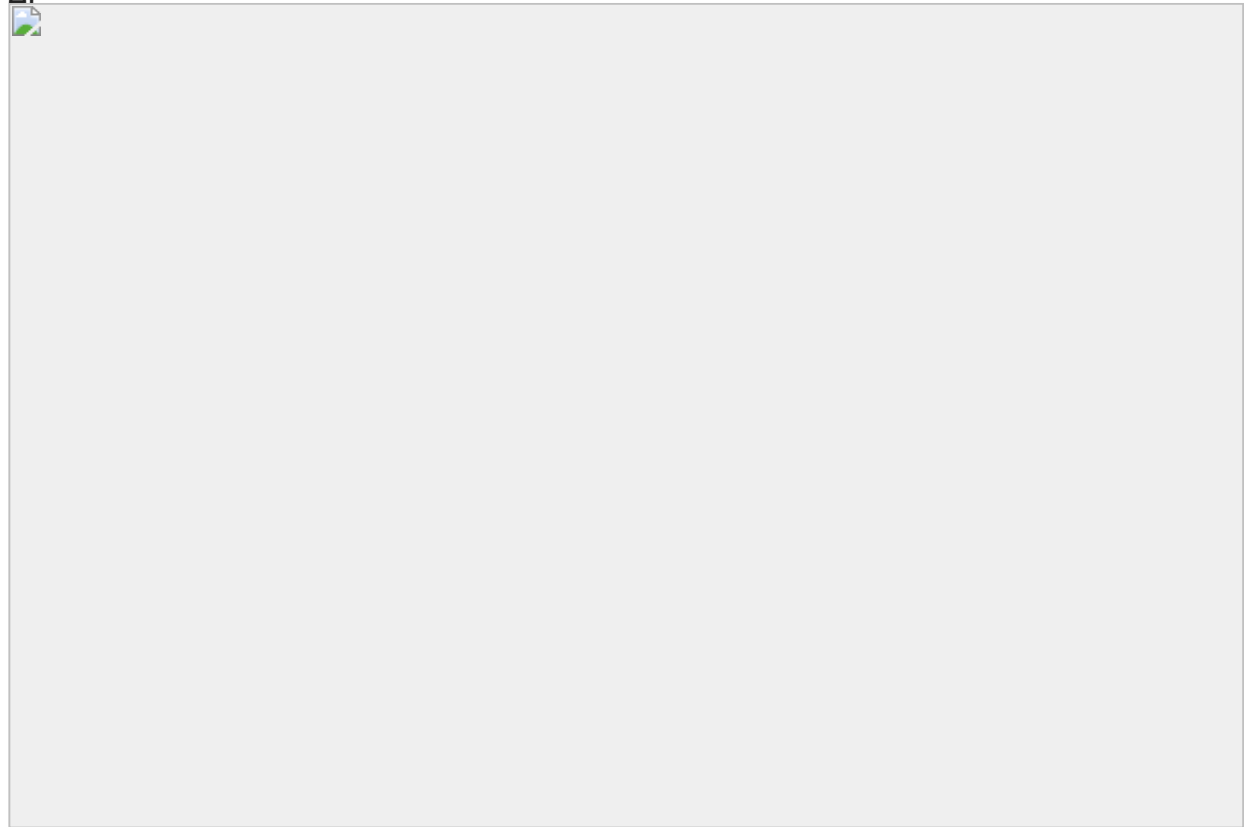


Tech Companies Are Gathering For A Secret Meeting To Prepare A 2018 Election Strategy To Destroy Conservative News

Reps from up to a dozen of the US's biggest tech companies plan to meet in San Francisco to discuss efforts to counter manipulation of their platforms.

 **Kevin Collier**
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Representatives from a host of the biggest US tech companies, including Facebook and Twitter, have scheduled a private meeting for Friday to share their tactics in preparation for the 2018 midterm elections.

Last week, Facebook's head of cybersecurity policy, Nathaniel Gleicher, invited employees from a dozen companies, including Google, Microsoft, and Snapchat, to gather at Twitter's headquarters in downtown San Francisco, according to an email obtained by BuzzFeed News.

"As I've mentioned to several of you over the last few weeks, we have been looking to schedule a follow-on discussion to our industry conversation about information operations, election protection, and the work we are all doing to tackle these challenges," Gleicher wrote.

The meeting, the Facebook official wrote, will have a three-part agenda: each company will present the work they've been doing to counter information operations; there will be a discussion period for problems each company faces; and a talk about whether such a meeting should become a regular occurrence.

In May, nine of those companies met at Facebook to discuss similar problems, alongside two US government representatives, Department of Homeland Security Under Secretary Chris Krebs and Mike Burham from the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force, created in November. Attendees left the meeting discouraged that they received little information from the government.

Tech companies, Facebook and Twitter in particular, have faced intense scrutiny for how slowly they initially reacted to reports that foreign intelligence and affiliated operations used their platforms to manipulate users ahead of the 2016 election, leading to drops in user confidence and a threat of regulation from lawmakers.




Jon Nazca / Reuters

In February, special counsel Robert Mueller’s office charged 13 people affiliated with Russia’s Internet Research Agency — a “troll factory” where employees created personas across multiple platforms — with breaking laws in order to influence American voters. Since then, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, and YouTube have each had at least one public purge of accounts believed to be foreign influence operations.

The meeting highlights tech companies’ recent efforts to be more proactive with governments’ use of their sites to achieve political goals. Several companies have announced operations this week where they partnered with other organizations to address such problems.

On Tuesday, Microsoft announced that it had, for the 12th time since 2016, legally acquired control of a handful of web domains registered by Russian military intelligence for phishing operations, then shut them down. The next day, after receiving a tip from the threat intelligence company FireEye, Facebook and Twitter announced they had taken down a network of fake news sites and spoofed users meant to create sympathy for the Iranian government’s worldview. Google made a similar announcement about YouTube on Thursday.

 **Pict
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