

SEPTEMBER 2020

DETAILED REPORT

September 2020 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report

FACEBOOK



We're constantly working to find and stop coordinated campaigns that seek to manipulate public debate across our apps. Since 2017, we've taken down over 100 networks worldwide for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), including ahead of major democratic elections.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Over the past three years, we've shared our findings about coordinated inauthentic behavior we detect and remove from our platforms. As part of our regular CIB reports, we're sharing information about all networks we take down over the course of a month to make it easier for people to see progress we're making in one place. You can find more information about our previous enforcement actions [here](#).

WHAT IS CIB?

We view CIB as coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the operation. There are two tiers of these activities that we work to stop: 1) coordinated inauthentic behavior in the context of domestic, non-government campaigns and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor.

COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR (CIB)

When we find domestic, non-government campaigns that include groups of accounts and Pages seeking to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing while relying on fake accounts, we remove both inauthentic and authentic accounts, Pages and Groups directly involved in this activity.

FOREIGN OR GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE (FGI)

If we find any instances of CIB conducted on behalf of a government entity or by a foreign actor, we apply the broadest enforcement measures including the removal of every on-platform property connected to the operation itself and the people and organizations behind it.

CONTINUOUS ENFORCEMENT

We monitor for efforts to re-establish a presence on Facebook by networks we previously removed. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to networks we took down in the past.

SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 2020 FINDINGS

In September, we removed six networks of accounts, Pages and Groups. Four of these influence operations — one from China and three networks from Russia — targeted audiences outside of their countries. Two networks, from Russia and the Philippines, targeted people domestically.

We have shared information about our findings with law enforcement, policymakers and industry partners. We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before, it's an ongoing effort. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed: 511**
- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed: 85**
- **Total number of Pages removed: 103**
- **Total number of Groups removed: 29**

NETWORKS REMOVED IN SEPTEMBER 2020:

1. **NEW — Russia:** We removed 40 Facebook accounts, 17 Pages, 1 Group, and 6 Instagram accounts in Russia. This network focused on domestic audiences. We identified this network after receiving information about its off-platform activity from our colleagues at Twitter. Our investigation linked this activity to individuals associated with the United Russia party.
2. **Russia:** We removed 224 Facebook users, 35 Pages, 18 Groups and 34 Instagram accounts linked to the Russian military including military intelligence services. This activity originated in Russia and focused primarily on Syria and Ukraine, and to a lesser extent on Turkey, Japan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, and Moldova. A small portion of this activity focused on the UK and the US. We identified this network as part of our investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior connected to the networks we had removed in [August 2018](#) and [February 2020](#). **(Originally announced on September 24, 2020)**
3. **Russia:** We removed 1 Page, 5 Facebook accounts, 1 Group and 3 Instagram accounts linked to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA). This small network originated in Russia and focused primarily on Turkey and Europe, and also on the United States. We began our investigation based on information from the FBI about this network's off-platform activity. **(Originally announced on September 24, 2020)**
4. **Russia:** We removed 23 Facebook accounts, 7 Pages, and 3 Instagram accounts linked to individuals in Russia, including those associated with Russian intelligence services. This network focused on global audiences and Russia's neighboring countries including Belarus. We found this activity as a result of our investigation into the suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior linked to our previous enforcement in [July 2019](#). **(Originally announced on September 24, 2020)**
5. **China:** We removed 155 accounts, 11 Pages, 9 Groups and 6 Instagram accounts linked to individuals in the Fujian province of China. This network focused primarily on the Philippines and Southeast Asia more broadly, and also on the United States. We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. **(Originally announced on September 22, 2020)**

6. **Philippines:** We removed 64 Facebook accounts, 32 Pages and 33 Instagram accounts linked to Philippine military and Philippine police. This network focused on domestic audiences in the Philippines. We found the full scope of this activity after investigating information about a portion of this network brought to our attention by civil society in the Philippines and Rappler, an independent news organization in the Philippines.
(Originally announced on September 22, 2020)

01

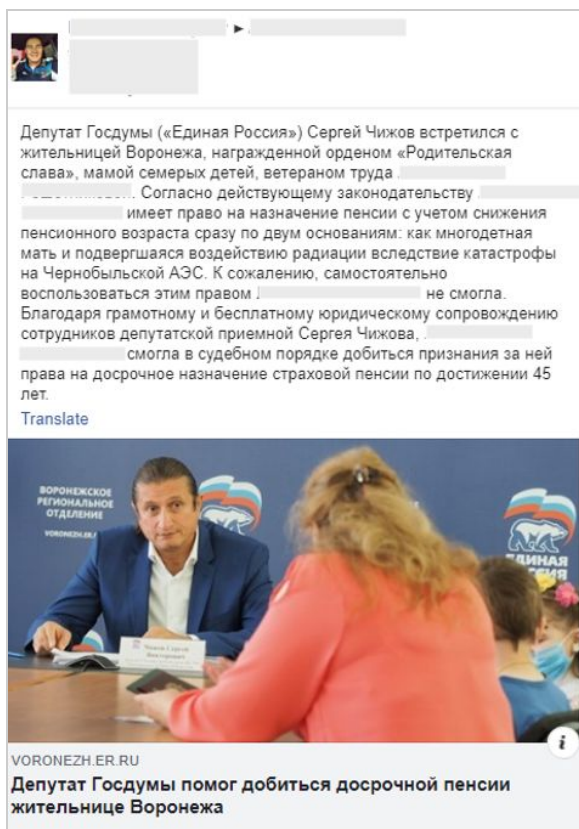
We removed 40 Facebook accounts, 17 Pages, 1 Group and 6 Instagram accounts that were involved in [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) in Russia. This network focused on domestic audiences.

The people behind this activity used fake accounts — some of which had already been detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post content and manage Pages posing as independent news entities. Many of these Pages have been dormant for some time. This campaign amplified and commented on other people's posts about the United Russia party and local politicians in Voronezh. The people behind this activity posted about local and regional elections, various reconstruction projects in Moscow, and criticism of United Russia's political opponents and local candidates.

We identified this network after receiving information about its off-platform activity from Twitter. Although the people behind this network attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation linked this activity to individuals associated with the United Russia party.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 40 Facebook accounts, 17 Pages, 1 Group, and 6 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 36,500 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 1,500 people joined this Group, and around 2,200 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$5,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for primarily in rubles.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:

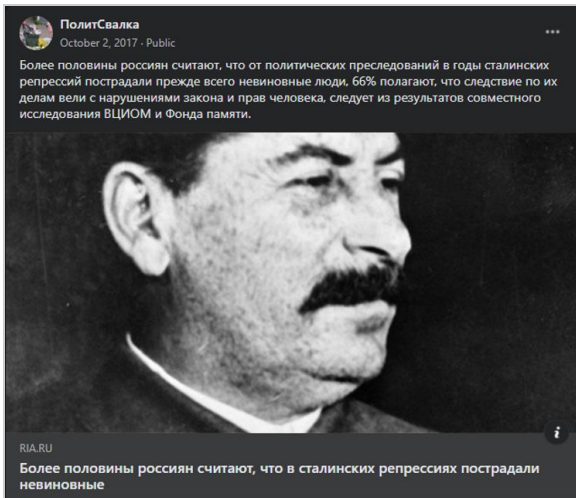


Translation:

Page Title:

“A member of the State Duma (“United Russia”) Sergey Chizhov met with a Voronezh citizen, awarded with the “Parental glory” order, a mother of seven children and a veteran of labour <name omitted>.

According to the current legislation <name omitted> has a right for an early pension with a reduced pension age due to two factors: as a mother of many children and as an individual who was affected by radiation after the nuclear power plant catastrophe in Chernobyl. Unfortunately, <name omitted> was not able to independently exercise this right. Thanks to the competent and free of charge legal support from the employees of the Sergey Chizhov’s office, <name omitted> was able to get the court’s acknowledgement of the right to receive the insurance part of the pension from the age of 45.”

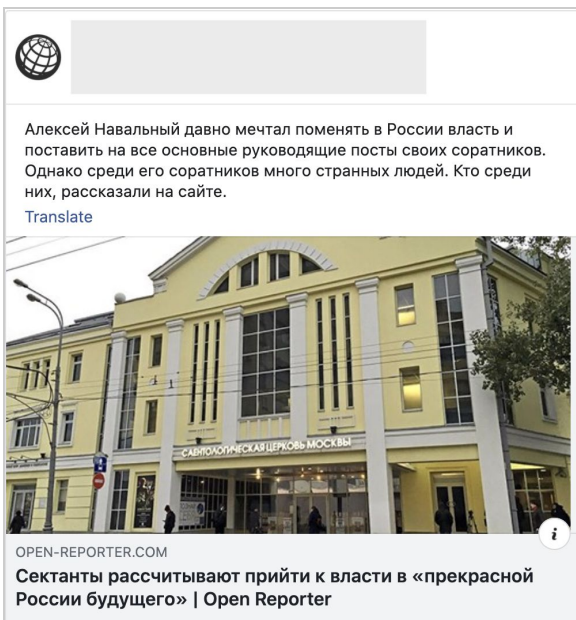


Translation:

Page Title: PolitDump

Caption:

According to the joint study of VTSIOM and Memory Fund, more than half of the Russian citizens think that political repressions during Stalin's years affected mostly innocent people; 66% think that investigations into their cases were conducted with legal and human right violations.

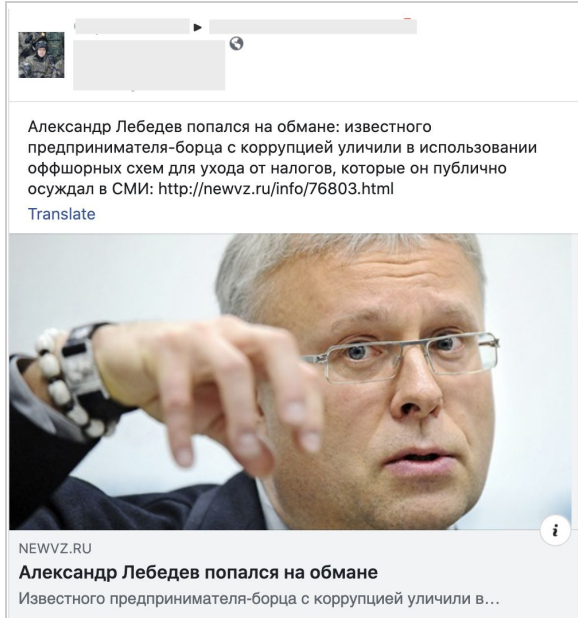


Translation:

Caption:

“Alexey Navalny has long dreamt of changing power in Russia and placing his associates in all main leadership positions. However, there are a lot of weird people among his associates. Who are they- learn on the website.

URL title: “Sectarians plan to come to power in the “beautiful Russia of the future”



Translation:

Caption:

“Alexander Lebedev was caught lying: a famous entrepreneur and a corruption fighter was caught using offshore tax avoidance schemes, which he publicly condemned in the media.”

Same in the URL title

02

We removed 224 Facebook users, 35 Pages, 18 Groups and 34 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [foreign or government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This activity originated in Russia and focused primarily on Syria and Ukraine, and to a lesser extent on Turkey, Japan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, and Moldova. A small portion of this activity focused on the UK and the US.

We identified several clusters of connected activity that relied on fake accounts — many of which had been detected and removed by our automated systems. This network appears to have centered around a number of regions including the Far East, Russia's neighboring countries, and Syria. They used fake accounts to create elaborate fictitious personas across many internet services, posing as journalists to contact news organizations, purporting to be locals in countries they targeted, and managing Groups and Pages, some of which proclaimed to be hacktivist groups. These clusters also focused on driving people to their off-platform sites and other social media platforms where, among other themes, they promoted content related to past alleged leaks of compromising information. The operation had almost no following on our platforms when we removed it.

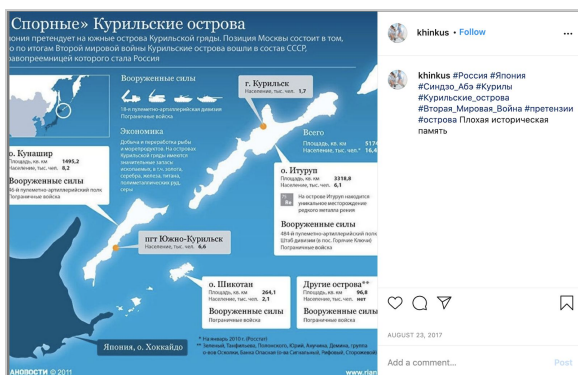
The people behind this campaign posted in many languages including English, Ukrainian, Russian and Arabic as they tailored their activity to each audience. They frequently posted about news and current events, including the Syrian civil war, Turkish domestic politics, geopolitical issues in the Asia-Pacific region, NATO, the war in Ukraine and politics in the Baltics, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and the US.

We identified this activity as part of our investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior connected to the networks we had removed in [August 2018](#) and [February 2020](#).

Although the people behind this operation took steps to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation connected these clusters to the Russian military including military intelligence services.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 224 Facebook accounts, 35 Pages, 18 Groups and 34 Instagram accounts
- *Followers:* About 8,500 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 9,500 accounts joined one or more of these Groups, and around 7,500 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$60 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for in US dollars and rubles.

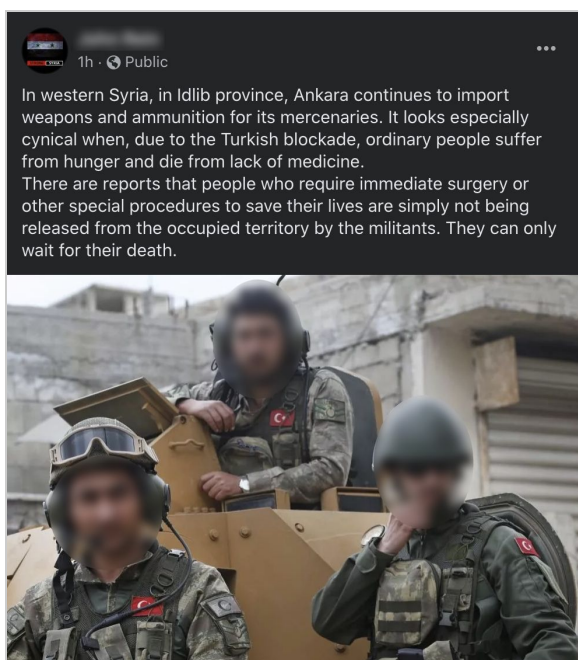
Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:



Translation:

Image Title: Disputed Kuril Islands

Post: #Russia #Japan #Kuril islands
#Shinzo_Abe #SecondWorldWar #islands
#claims Bad historical memory





03

We also removed 5 Facebook accounts, 1 Page, 1 Group and 3 Instagram accounts for [foreign or government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This small network originated in Russia and focused primarily on Turkey and Europe, and also on the US.

This operation relied on fake accounts — some of which had been already detected and removed by our automated systems — to manage their Page and their Group, and to drive people to their site purporting to be an independent think-tank based primarily in Turkey. These accounts posed as locals based in Turkey, Canada and the US. They also recruited people to write for their website. This network had almost no following on our platforms when we removed it.

The people behind this activity posted off-platform articles primarily in English and Turkish about global news and current events relevant to the countries they targeted, including local elections; geopolitical conspiracies; presidential and parliamentary elections in Hong Kong, Spain, the UK, and the US; social and racial injustice; police brutality; the coronavirus pandemic; criticism of US sanctions in the Middle East, US foreign policy, and US allies including Israel; and politics in Venezuela.

We began this investigation based on information from the FBI about this network's off-platform activity. Our internal investigation enabled us to find the full scope of this network on Facebook. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identity and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA).

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 5 Facebook accounts, 1 Pages, 1 Group and 3 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 4,900 accounts followed this Page, 1 account joined this Group and about 5,600 people followed one of more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around \$4,800 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for in euros and rubles.

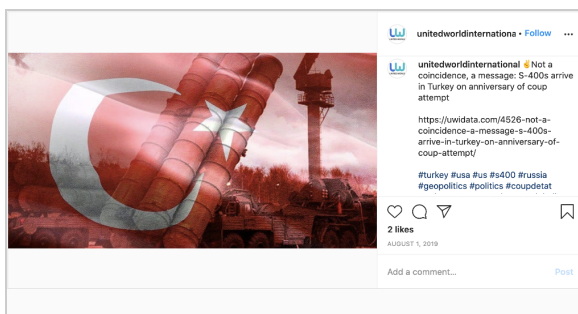
Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:



Translation:

Image Title: Disputed Kuril Islands

Post: Travel limit brought in #China's #Hubey state due to #coronavirus has been removed. #Sinciang #Uyghur Autonomous Region schools are open again as no more cases are seen. #COVID19 #Qingfeipaidutang





United World International shared a link.

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July 18

New protests in [Iran](#) in the context of [Western](#) sabotage

On July 16 in the [Iranian](#) city of [Behbahan](#) (province of [Khuzestan](#)) anti-government rallies took place. Before that, many strange accidents happened in other parts of the country.



UWIDATA.COM

New protests in Iran in the context of Western sabotage

[Learn More](#)

04

We also removed 23 Facebook accounts, 7 Pages, and 3 Instagram accounts for [foreign or government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This network originated in Russia and focused on global audiences, Russia's neighboring countries including Belarus.

We identified several clusters of connected activity that used a combination of authentic and fake accounts — some of which had been already disabled by our automated detection systems — to create fictitious personas, post and comment on content, manage Pages, amplify their content, and drive people to off-platform sites posing as independent journals. They posed as editors and researchers to solicit articles for these websites. This network posted primarily in Russian and English about news and current events, including protests and elections in Belarus, Russian and Ukrainian politics, geopolitical conspiracies, Russia-NATO relations, Russia's relations with neighboring countries, and criticism of US foreign policy, socio-economic issues in the US, and US political candidates on both sides of the political spectrum.

We found this activity as a result of our investigation into the suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior linked to our previous enforcement in [July 2019](#). Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals in Russia, including those associated with Russian intelligence services.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 23 Facebook accounts, 7 Pages, and 3 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 60,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and around 2,000 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$13,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for primarily in rubles.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:



Translation:

Page name: Strategic Culture foundation

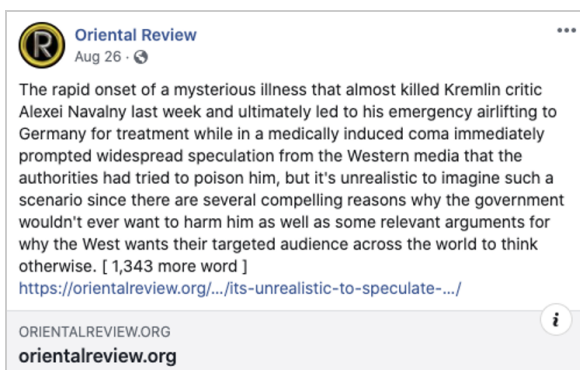
Caption: The indigenous population of European countries is aging and extinct, and Muslim families are common, and this is fueled by the continuous influx of immigrants from the East countries.



Translation:

Page title: Strategic Culture foundation

Caption: The West is trying to drag Belarus, probably not perfect, but overall stable, on the same path that Ukraine, Syria, Libya and the former Yugoslavia are walking.



05

We removed 155 accounts, 11 Pages, 9 Groups and 6 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [foreign or government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This activity originated in China and focused primarily on the Philippines and Southeast Asia more broadly, and also on the US.

We identified several clusters of connected activity that relied on fake accounts to pose as locals in countries they targeted, post in Groups, amplify their own content, manage Pages, like and comment on other people's posts particularly about naval activity in the South China Sea, including US Navy ships. This campaign took operational security steps to conceal their identity and location including through the use of VPNs. Some of this network's Pages were previously removed for violating our inauthentic behavior and spam policies.

In South East Asia where this network focused most of its activity, they posted in Chinese, Filipino and English about global news and current events including China's interests in the South China Sea; Hong Kong; content supportive of President Rodrigo Duterte and Sarah Duterte's potential run in the 2022 Presidential election; criticism of Rappler, an independent news organization in the Philippines; issues relevant to the overseas Filipino workers; and praise and some criticism of China. In the US, where this network focused the least and gained almost no following, they posted content both in support of and against presidential candidates Pete Buttigieg, Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals in the Fujian province of China.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 155 Facebook accounts, 11 Pages, 9 Groups and 6 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 133,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 59,000 people joined one or more of these Groups, and about 150 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$60 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for in Chinese yuan.
- *Advertising:* About \$13,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for primarily in rubles.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:



Translation:

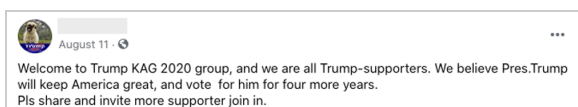
"There is no use for emergency powers. We will oppose it in the Senate."

- Sen. Franklin Drilon

Where is your shame Drilon? Right now you are a nuisance, you did nothing but harass and talk nonsense things.

You did nothing but oppose!

You don't think anything but personal interest only...



06

We also removed 64 Facebook accounts, 32 Pages and 33 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against foreign or [government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This network originated in the Philippines and focused on domestic audiences.

This network consisted of several clusters of connected activity that relied on fake accounts to evade enforcement, post content, comment and manage Pages. This operation appeared to have accelerated between 2019 and 2020. They posted in Filipino and English about local news and events including domestic politics, military activities against terrorism, a pending anti-terrorism bill, criticism of communism, youth activists and opposition, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing the New People's Army, and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

We found the full scope of this activity after investigating information about a portion of this network brought to our attention by civil society in the Philippines and Rappler, an independent news organization in the Philippines. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found links to Philippine military and Philippine police.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 64 Facebook accounts, 32 Pages and 33 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 209,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and about 5,500 people followed one of more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around \$1,300 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for in Philippine peso.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages and accounts:



Translation:

Page Title:

Joining any organizations of the terrorist CPP-NPA-NDF is suicide because it is like slowly approaching your death. Which is why my fellow country men, be smart and do not be deceived by the terrorist CPP-NPA-NDF, because they take delight in Filipino citizens joining their cause. Please share!

Text overlay:

Joining any organizations of CPP-NPA-NDF is like suicide because you are slowly approaching your own death. Stairway to death



Translation:

Caption:

Let's all unite to defeat the terrorists that are an obstacle to the freedom of our fellow countrymen which they've poisoned with their beliefs!



Translation:

Caption:

Be cautious of progressive groups such as these...

They use these schools as recruitment basins of CPP NPA in Central Luzon

#ThoseWhoKnowAreSafe

