

The Government's Plan to Criminalize Your Thoughts

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Documents received by investigative journalists Michael Shellenberger, Alex Gutentag and Matt Taibbi from an anonymous but “highly credible” whistleblower reveals new details on how the U.S. censorship-industrial complex — a network of more than 100 government agencies, private firms, academia and nonprofits — seeks to police and criminalize “wrong-think”
- › The documents describe how the modern digital censorship programs were created, and the various roles of the military, U.S. intelligence agencies, civil society organizations and commercial media
- › They also describe the methods and techniques used, such as the creation and use of sock puppet accounts to spy on and steer online discussions and propagate desired narratives, and the discrediting of dissenters “as a necessary prerequisite of demanding censorship against them”
- › The documents show that the weaponization of the financial sector originated with the Cyber Threat Intelligence League (CTIL), which expressly sought to get banks to “cut off financial services to individuals who organize rallies or events”
- › The CTIL files also show there was a clear intent to circumvent the First Amendment by outsourcing censorship to the private and nongovernmental sector. According to the whistleblower, “The ethos was that if we get away with it, it’s legal”

While the weight of propaganda appears to have eased up a little in recent months, evidence shows there’s much more to come.

Documents received by investigative journalists Michael Shellenberger, Alex Gutentag and Matt Taibbi from an anonymous but “highly credible” whistleblower reveals new details on how the U.S. censorship-industrial complex – a network of more than 100 government agencies, private firms, academia and nonprofits – polices and criminalizes “wrong-think.”¹

Explosive Revelations

The new cache of documents, referred to as the “CTIL files,” which refers to the Cyber Threat Intelligence League, were released by the three journalists in late November 2023.

“A whistleblower has come forward with an explosive new trove of documents, rivaling or exceeding the Twitter Files and Facebook Files in scale and importance,” the trio wrote on their Substack, “Public.”²

“They describe the activities of an ‘anti-disinformation’ group called the Cyber Threat Intelligence League, or CTIL, that officially began as the volunteer project of data scientists and defense and intelligence veterans but whose tactics over time appear to have been absorbed into multiple official projects, including those of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The CTI League documents offer the missing link answers to key questions not addressed in the Twitter Files and Facebook Files. Combined, they offer a comprehensive picture of the birth of the ‘anti-disinformation’ sector, or what we have called the Censorship Industrial Complex.”

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narratives, the discrediting of dissenters, and the intentional weaponization of the financial industry against the same.

According to the whistleblower, CTIL was also involved in the creation of a counter-disinformation project to “prevent a repeat of 2016,” a reference to Brexit and Donald Trump’s surprise election win — two situations in which the democratic processes actually won out.

As noted by Jimmy Dore in the video above, this was not about preventing the circulation of false information. It was to ensure that no political outsider will ever be able to get into the Oval Office again. The instruction to prevent a repeat of 2016 was a direct call to undermine, if not eliminate, the process of free and fair elections.

Importantly, the documents admit that censorship efforts against Americans must be done by partners in the private sector, because the government doesn't have the "legal authority" to do so.

The CTIL

The new cache of documents and videos reveal that 2019 was a pivotal year for the censorship-industrial complex. According to Public,³ that’s when “U.S. and U.K. military and intelligence contractors led by a former U.K. defense researcher, Sara-Jayne ‘SJ’ Terp, developed the sweeping censorship framework.”

These contractors became co-leaders of the CTIL, the original founders of which included a former Israeli intelligence official, Ohad Zaidenberg, Microsoft security manager Nate Warfield, Chris Mills, another Microsoft security officer, and Marc Rogers, the head of security operations for the hackers convention, DEF CON.

According to media articles,⁴ these highly skilled and in-demand professionals made the altruistic decision to volunteer their services to help billion-dollar hospitals with their cybersecurity, free of charge, no strings attached. It wasn’t a credible cover story then, and it sure hasn’t aged any better.

Within one month of the CTIL's founding in March 2020, this supposedly all-volunteer group had grown to 1,400 "by invitation only" members in 76 countries and officially partnered with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Information Security Agency (CISA). As reported by Public:⁵

"The CTIL framework and the public-private model are the seeds of what both the US and UK would put into place in 2020 and 2021, including masking censorship within cybersecurity institutions and counter-disinformation agendas; a heavy focus on stopping disfavored narratives, not just wrong facts; and pressuring social media platforms to take down information or take other actions to prevent content from going viral."

Parallel Censorship Agendas

In the spring of 2020, CISA also created the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) — a consortium made up by the Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO), the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, and Graphika (a social media analytics company) — and outsourced what would otherwise be illegal and unconstitutional censorship to it.

During the 2020 election cycle, the EIP and CISA worked with the State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) and the DHS-backed Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) to influence and police political discussions online. The EIP coordinated the take-down of undesirable content using a real-time chat app that the DHS, EIP and social media companies all share.⁶

At the same time, the CTIL was tracking and reporting anti-lockdown views on social media. A "law enforcement" channel was created specifically to spy on and track social media users who posted anti-lockdown hashtags. CTIL even kept a spreadsheet with details from their Twitter bios.

According to Public, the CTIL also "engaged in offensive operations to influence public opinion, discussing ways to promote 'counter-messaging,' co-opt hashtags, dilute

disfavored messaging, create sock puppet accounts, and infiltrate private invite-only groups.” In February 2021, the EIP was rebranded as the Virality Project, at which point their focus of censorship shifted from elections to COVID-related matters.

Government Infiltration and Take-Over

While one CTIL member, Bonnie Smalley, replied to a query by Public saying the CTIL “had nothing to do with the government,” the evidence shows otherwise. At least a dozen of government employees who worked with the DHS, FBI and CISA were also active members of CTIL.

According to the whistleblower, the CTIL’s goal “was to become part of the federal government.” Terp’s plan was to set up “MisinfoSec communities” that would include the federal sector, and the documents show this aim was achieved. In April 2020, Chris Krebs, then-director of CISA, also publicly announced the agency’s partnership with CTIL.

“ The documents show the weaponization of the financial sector originated with the CTIL, which expressly sought to get banks to ‘cut off financial services to individuals who organize rallies or events.’ ”

Public continues:⁷

“The documents also show that Terp and her colleagues, through a group called MisinfoSec Working Group, which included [Stanford Internet Observatory research manager Renee] DiResta, created a censorship, influence, and anti-disinformation strategy called Adversarial Misinformation and Influence Tactics and Techniques (AMITT).

They wrote AMITT by adapting a cybersecurity framework developed by MITRE ... Terp later used AMITT to develop the DISARM framework, which the World Health Organization then employed in 'countering anti-vaccination campaigns across Europe.'

A key component of Terp's work through CTIL, MisinfoSec, and AMITT was to insert the concept of 'cognitive security' into the fields of cybersecurity and information security ...

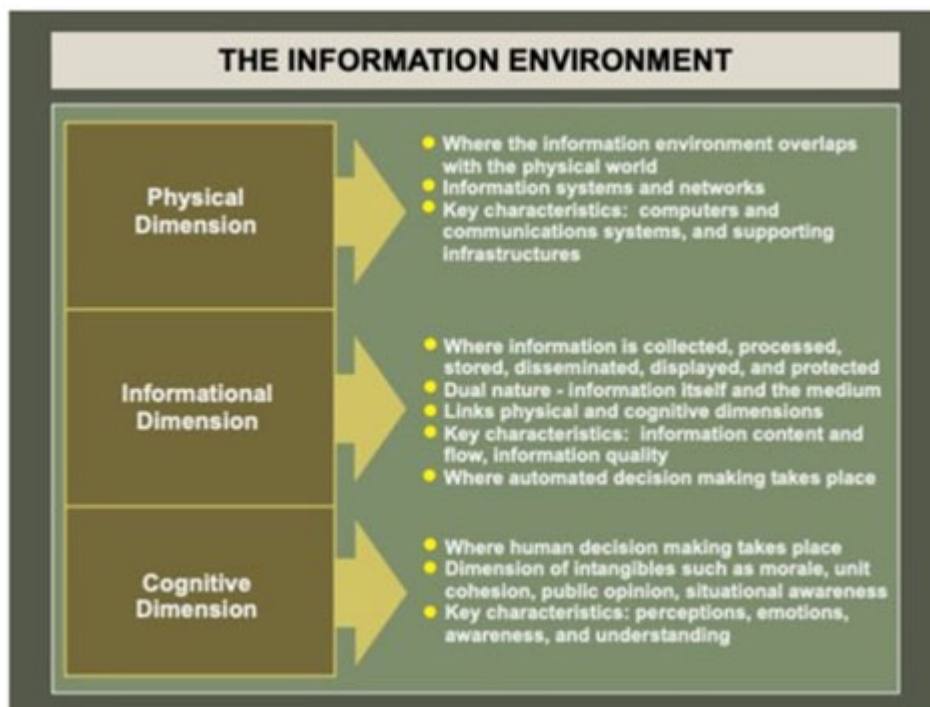


Figure 2: Dimensions of The Information Environment

The ambitions of the 2020 pioneers of the Censorship Industrial Complex went far beyond simply urging Twitter to slap a warning label on Tweets, or to put individuals on blacklists.

The AMITT framework calls for discrediting individuals as a necessary prerequisite of demanding censorship against them. It calls for training influencers to spread messages. And it calls for trying to get banks to cut off financial services to individuals who organize rallies or events."

Weaponization of Finance Sector Originated With CTIL

So, now we know where the weaponization of the financial sector came from. It originated with the CTIL, which expressly sought to get banks to “cut off financial services to individuals who organize rallies or events.”

Clearly, as **evidenced by my own case** and many others, banks and online payment processors have also been enticed into cutting services for people who simply expressed opposing views. It isn't just rally organizers that are being targeted.

Under the Cover of Altruism

While CTIL officials have repeatedly stressed that the organization was founded on purely altruistic principles, the clear goal of its leaders was to “build support for censorship among national security and cybersecurity institutions,” Public writes, and they built that support by promoting Terp's idea of “cognitive security.”

The choice of the term “cognitive security” takes on a rather sinister flavor in light of Dr. Michael Nehls' findings that there's been what appears to be an intentional effort to destroy the autobiographical memory function in the brains of the public over the past four years, thereby facilitating mass indoctrination and inhibiting personal will and critical thinking.

He presents his thesis in the book “The Indoctrinated Brain: How to Successfully Fend Off the Global Attack on Your Mental Freedom,”⁸ published in mid-December 2023.

The whistleblower's material clearly reveal that sophisticated military tactics were turned on the American public, powerful psychological tools – the very tools Nehls says can literally alter biological brain function.

Public cites a MisinfoSec report in which “The authors called for placing censorship efforts inside of ‘cybersecurity’ even while acknowledging that ‘misinformation security’ is utterly different from cybersecurity. They wrote that the third pillar of ‘The information environment’ after physical and cybersecurity should be ‘The Cognitive Dimension.’”

Indeed, your mind – your cognition, your very ability to think independently – is the battlefield of today’s war, as Nehls proposes in his book. The frightening part is that the tools employed actually have the power to reprogram who you are.

We are indeed “hackable animals,” as proposed by Yuval Noah Harari, and the censorship-industrial complex has been hacking into the very brain structure of billions of people for the last four years already. Gutentag even touches on this in a December 3, 2023, article:⁹

“What was once considered a ‘conspiracy theory’ that military and intelligence forces were manipulating public opinion through inorganic interventions, has now been confirmed.

Our study of the Censorship Industrial Complex has exposed a far-reaching plan to subvert the democratic process and engage in activities that have a basis in military techniques and which are tantamount to attempts at thought or mind control.”

‘It’s Legal if We Can Get Away With It’

The CTIL files also show there was a clear intent to circumvent the First Amendment by outsourcing censorship to the private and nongovernmental sector. According to the whistleblower:¹⁰

“The ethos was that if we get away with it, it’s legal, and there were no First Amendment concerns because we have a ‘public-private partnership’ – that’s the word they used to disguise those concerns. ‘Private people can do things public servants can’t do, and public servants can provide the leadership and coordination.’”

Good News, Bad News

The good news is that more and more information is coming out about the U.S. government's illegal outsourcing of censorship, and with it, legal challenges that throw up blocks against this circumvention of the Constitution.

We've also had other victories. In August 2022, the DHS was forced to terminate the Disinformation Governance Board due to public backlash. CISA has also deleted information about domestic censorship work from its website, and has dismantled its Misinformation, Disinformation, and Malinformation (MDM) subcommittee.

The Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government is also continuing its search for truth, and will (hopefully) use whatever power at its disposal to rein in the abuse. Its most recent report, "The Weaponization of 'Disinformation' Pseudo-Experts and Bureaucrats: How the Federal Government Partnered with Universities to Censor Americans' Political Speech"¹¹ was published November 6, 2023.

Unfortunately, we also have a global effort underway to not only normalize but also legalize this kind of third-party censorship. In an August 1, 2023, video (below), Mike Benz¹² explained this strategy.

In short, they're trying to restructure the censorship industry "away from a top-down government-driven model" to a "competitive middleware model" where "content curation" (read censorship) is simply outsourced to third-party organizations.

This way, a "legal" disinformation compliance market is created while government can claim it has nothing to do with the control of information. Basically, what we're looking at is the emergence of organized corporate censorship.

There's no clear solution to this threat, other than to continue pushing back against any and all efforts to legalize, standardize and normalize censorship. To vocally object, to refuse using middleware like [NewsGuard](#), and to boycott any company or organization that uses middleware or engages in censorship of any kind.

Sources and References

- ^{1, 10} [The Defender November 29, 2023](#)
- ^{2, 3, 5, 7} [Public Substack November 28, 2023](#)
- ⁴ [CSO April 23, 2020](#)
- ⁶ [Twitter Lee Fang October 31, 2022](#)
- ⁸ [Amazon The Indoctrinated Brain: How to Successfully Fend Off the Global Attack on Your Mental Freedom by Michael Nehls](#)
- ⁹ [Public Substack December 4, 2023](#)
- ¹¹ [The Weaponization of "Disinformation" Pseudo-Experts and Bureaucrats, Interim Staff Report, November 6, 2023](#)
- ¹² [Twitter Mike Benz August 1, 2023](#)