


Congress Targets Social Media Companies for Taking Bribes To Broadcast Chinese Propaganda

New investigation finds Twitter, Facebook, YouTube permitting communist misinformation in exchange for bribes to executives

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 social media
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[Adam Kredo](#) -

The country's largest social media companies are allowing the Chinese Communist Party to disseminate propaganda to American audiences with little oversight or warning, according to an ongoing congressional investigation into these companies' failure to police suspect content.

Investigators with the House Foreign Affairs Committee have been pressing Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to deplatform Chinese Communist Party officials and news outlets for disseminating propaganda, particularly related to the

coronavirus, but each of the sites has failed to take adequate action. In most cases, Communist Party propaganda freely circulates on these sites without labels identifying the information as questionable.

While each of these sites has begun aggressively policing conservative provocateurs and even President Donald Trump, they have been lax about applying the same standards to Chinese officials and state-controlled news outlets that regularly traffic in unfounded conspiracy theories, congressional officials with knowledge of the investigation told the *Washington Free Beacon*. In many cases, these websites allowed communist leaders and outlets to post outright lies about the coronavirus pandemic, including the claim that American military leaders created the coronavirus and planted it in China.

The investigation, run by House Foreign Affairs Committee leader Rep. Michael McCaul (R., Texas), is part of a broader effort by congressional leaders to crack down on China's influence operations in the United States.

The findings of the investigation were presented in the form of report cards grading each company on whether it has banned communist officials and news outlets, applied warning labels to their content, and fact-checked their claims for accuracy. All of the websites failed these tests: Twitter received a D-, Facebook a C+, and YouTube a C-, grades that imply each still permits the dissemination of anti-U.S. communist propaganda, often without warning labels for readers.

"The Chinese Communist Party has weaponized American social media platforms to push their disinformation and promote their propaganda. The solution is simple—deplatform CCP officials

and propagandists who consistently spread lies," McCaul told the *Free Beacon*. "Sadly, while we had some positive conversations and some steps have been taken, these companies have chosen to allow CCP officials to continue to operate on their sites instead of doing what's right."

McCaul's team first started [investigating](#) these sites in March, when he petitioned them to ban Communist Party officials and state-controlled news outlets for their dissemination of lies about the coronavirus pandemic.

Twitter emerged as the most abused platform and also the one with the least oversight. While the company cooperated with McCaul's probe, it did not remove any of the propaganda posts identified by the congressional investigators.

"Despite a willingness to discuss HFAC Minority staff concerns, Twitter does not appear to have removed any CCP disinformation from its platform nor made any meaningful policy changes in response to our concerns to prevent the CCP from spreading propaganda on its platform," according to the investigation. "Moreover, Twitter does not label or provide transparency about the nature and operations of CCP propaganda outlets. Rather, it legitimizes them by allowing them to operate as verified users."

While average Chinese citizens are blocked from accessing Twitter due to the country's strict censorship policies, Communist Party officials are often verified by the website, providing legitimacy to their claims. McCaul's team maintains this violates Twitter's own policies barring individuals and organizations guilty of gross human rights violations from operating accounts on the site.

Additionally, Twitter does not equally apply its rules. Prominent conservatives, including Trump, have had their content censored or removed in recent months. But Chinese officials and news outlets are not held to a similar standard.

"Of all the companies we engaged with, Twitter is the platform most heavily abused by the CCP," investigators found. "Twitter only applied a factcheck label to the Tweet about the virus originating with the U.S. military after it had been on the platform for more than a month. They are the most unwilling to do anything to stop the CCP from spreading harmful misinformation or provide transparency through labels that inform users they are viewing content from a state-funded or state-directed media outlet."

Twitter has said that it will only fact-check tweets from prominent voices, such as the president. Congressional investigators remain concerned that China does not rank as a top priority for the website.

Facebook also allows several Chinese state-controlled propaganda organs to freely post misinformation, potentially reaching millions of Americans. These outlets include *China Daily*, Xinhua, and CGTN, all of which are leading purveyors of Chinese government-approved propaganda.

Facebook received the highest grade awarded, a C+, due to its efforts to specifically inform readers they are consuming state-funded information. It still permits these outlets to freely post content on its site, however.

Facebook does not "currently plan to take down content flagged by the staff or take sufficient action to prevent the CCP from

using Facebook to spread propaganda and lies about COVID-19," according to the report.

YouTube demonstrated similar failures. It does not block communist officials and news outlets or remove their materials. YouTube does, however, attempt to fact-check and police this content for inaccuracies.

"YouTube does label videos by CCP propaganda outlets, but the labeling is inconsistent," according to the report.

In many cases, YouTube failed to label CCP content as propaganda and did not provide viewers with complete information about the biased nature of these videos.

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