

“FIGHT THE NET”: Pentagon Media Psyops and “Black Propaganda”

Pentagon Smears USA Today Reporters Investigating ... Wait for It ... Illegal
Pentagon Propaganda

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Government Smears Journalists Who Investigate Government Corruption

Government agencies are [monitoring social media for criticism](#).

They are also spying on U.S. journalists. See [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and this:

(If the draconian [Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act](#) (CISPA) bill passes, the spying on journalists will [only increase](#).)

They are also [actively manipulating social media](#) for propaganda purposes, to [crush dissent](#) (and see [this](#)), to [help the too big to fail businesses compete against smaller businesses](#) (and [here](#)), and to promote viewpoints which have [nothing to do with keeping us safe](#).

We [noted](#) in 2009:

The U.S. government long ago announced its intention to [“fight the net”](#).

As revealed by an official Pentagon report signed by Rumsfeld called “Information Operations Roadmap”:

The roadmap [contains an] acknowledgement that information put out as part of the military’s psychological operations, or Psyops, is finding its way onto the computer and television screens of ordinary Americans.

“Information intended for foreign audiences, including public diplomacy and Psyops, is increasingly consumed by our domestic audience,” it reads.

“Psyops messages will often be replayed by the news media for much larger audiences, including the American public,” it goes on.

“Strategy should be based on the premise that the Department

[of
Defense] will 'fight the net' as it would an enemy weapons
system".

Indeed, the Pentagon publicly [announced](#) years ago that it was considering using "black propaganda" - in other words, knowing lies.

That includes smear campaigns against virtually anyone - foreign or domestic - who criticizes the government or threatens to report on illegal government activity.

Many popular bloggers - [including Americans](#) - who criticize the government have experienced such smear campaigns.

Even more interestingly, the Pentagon has apparently launched a [massive smear campaign against USA Today reporters](#) investigating ... wait for it ... unlawful domestic propaganda by the Pentagon:

A USA Today reporter and editor investigating Pentagon propaganda contractors have themselves been subjected to a propaganda campaign of sorts, waged on the Internet through a series of bogus websites.

Fake Twitter and Facebook accounts have been created in their names, along with a Wikipedia entry and dozens of message board postings and blog comments. Websites were registered in their names.

The timeline of the activity tracks USA Today's reporting on the military's "information operations" program

For example, Internet domain registries show the website TomVandenBrook.com was created Jan. 7 — just days after Pentagon reporter Tom Vanden Brook first contacted Pentagon contractors involved in the program. Two weeks after his editor Ray Locker's byline appeared on a story, someone created a similar site, RayLocker.com, through the same company.

If the websites were created using federal funds, it could violate federal law prohibiting the production of propaganda for domestic consumption.

"I find it creepy and cowardly that somebody would hide behind my name and presumably make up other names in an attempt to undermine my credibility," Vanden Brook said.

The activity is the work of what online reputation expert Andy Beal calls a "determined detractor."

"It's like a machine gun approach. They're trying to generate as much online content as they can," he said. "The person who's behind this, we can give them a lot of credit here and assume they're very sophisticated about reputation attacks."

"This is the work of somebody who knows what they're doing. They have some experience of covering their tracks. This is probably not the first time they've done something like this," said Beal, CEO of Trackur, an online reputation

tracking service.

Some postings merely copied Vanden Brook's and Locker's previous reporting. Others accused them of being sponsored by the Taliban. "They disputed nothing factual in the story about information operations," Vanden Brook said.

On Feb. 8, as Vanden Brook continued to ask questions of contractors, a new Wikipedia user attempted to create an entry on him, alleging he "gained worldwide notoriety" for his "misreporting" of the 2006 Sago Mine disaster in West Virginia.

Early reports from the scene, relying on faulty information from the governor and mine operators — said 12 of 13 miners were found alive, when in fact only one was. Many news outlets, including the Associated Press, the New York Times and USA Today, conveyed the inaccurate reports in early editions.

[S]imilar comments started populating Internet message boards and blogs. In one case, the fake @Tomvandenbrook Twitter account defended his Sago reporting to another apparently fake account.

Vanden Brook said he's continuing to pursue the story. "If they thought it would deter me from writing about this, they're wrong."

"This is a clear attempt at intimidation that has failed," Locker said.

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