

Social Media “Tactical Intelligence Collection”: Spying and Propaganda using Facebook, Twitter

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A [new study](#) by the Mediterranean Council for Intelligence Studies' (MCIS) 2012 Intelligence Studies Yearbook points to the use of social media as “the new cutting edge in open-source tactical intelligence collection”. IntelNews.org’s Joseph Fitsanakis, who co-authored the study, reports:

We explain that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and a host of other social networking platforms are increasingly viewed by intelligence agencies as invaluable channels of information acquisition. We base our findings on three recent case studies, which we believe highlight the intelligence function of social networking. (Joseph Fitsanakis, [Research: Spies increasingly using Facebook, Twitter to gather data](#), intelNews.org, February 13, 2012)

What the study fails to mention, however, is the use of social media by intelligence agencies for other purposes. The study leads us to believe that social media is solely an intelligence gathering tool, when in fact, a number of reports have shown that it is used for propaganda including the creation of fake identities in support of covert operations. Those practices are discussed in [Army of Fake Social Media Friends to Promote Propaganda](#), [Social Media: Air Force ordered software to manage army of Fake Virtual People](#) and [Pentagon Seeks to Manipulate Social Media for Propaganda Purposes](#), published on Global Research in 2011.

The MCIS study is partly based on the “Arab Spring” framework which allegedly “prompted the US government to begin developing guidelines for culling intelligence from social media networks”. (*Ibid.*)

Again, this leaves out the fact that the U.S. Government provides “activist training” to foreign nationals to destabilize their country of origin. This tactic is detailed in Tony Cartalucci’s latest article, [Egypt: US-funded Agitators on Trial: US “Democracy Promotion” = Foreign-funded Sedition](#).

“Cyber dissidence” is sponsored among others by CIA-linked Freedom House. [The First of The Bush Institute’s Human Freedom Events, Co-Sponsored by Freedom House](#) was titled “The Conference on Cyber Dissidents: Global Successes and Challenges”.

The Conference on Cyber Dissidents highlighted the work, methods, courage and achievements of its eight dissident guest speakers, from seven nations. Five of these nations are places where freedom has been extinguished (all rated “not free” by Freedom House): China, Cuba, Iran, Syria, and Russia. Two others are places where freedom is in peril

(both rated “partly free” by Freedom House) because of an authoritarian government accumulating more power, as in Venezuela, or because of the threat of internal terrorist groups, as in Colombia. ([The Conference on Cyber Dissidents: Global Successes and Challenges](#), The George W. Bush Presidential Center)

Countries where “freedom has been extinguished” and which are U.S. allies, such as Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, are not listed above. The only U.S. ally listed is Colombia and its freedom is said to be threatened by terrorist groups, rather than by its government. It is worth noting that the Colombian government has been accused of spying on its journalists and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) says [freedom of expression ‘barely exists’ in Colombia](#).

The goal of “activist training” by U.S. NGOs is to destabilize America’s political enemies in the name of freedom. “Cyber dissidence” is in turn used by intelligence agencies for covert operations.

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