

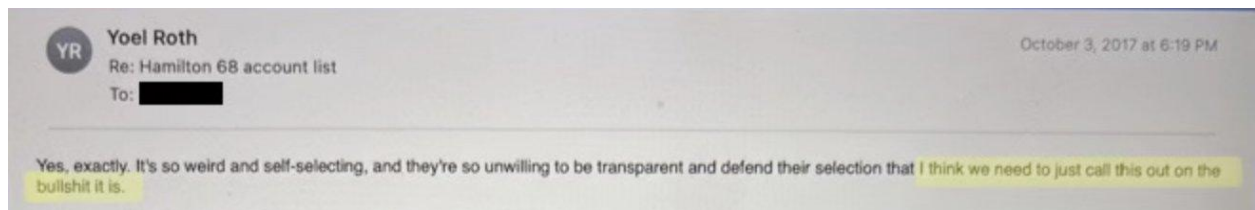
Matt Taibbi

@mtaibbi

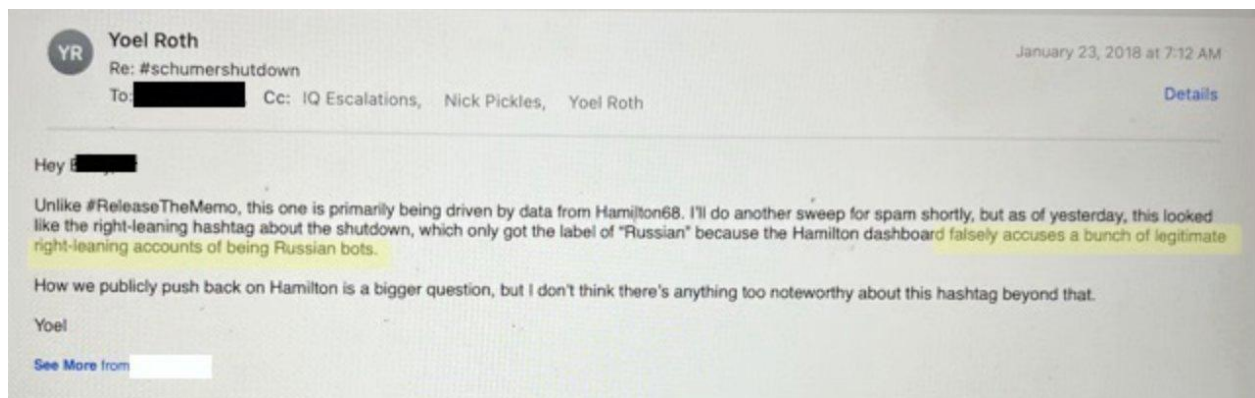
1.THREAD: Twitter Files #15 MOVE OVER, JAYSON BLAIR: TWITTER FILES EXPOSE NEXT GREAT MEDIA FRAUD

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1619029772977455105>

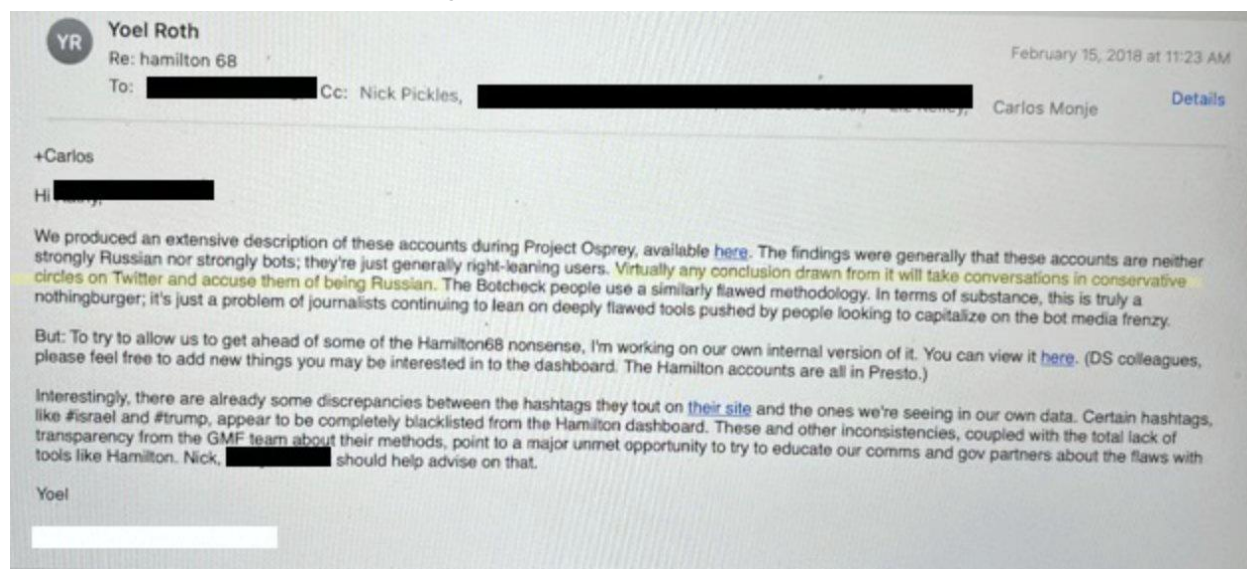
2.“I think we need to just call this out on the bullshit it is.”



3.“Falsely accuses a bunch of legitimate right-leaning accounts of being Russian bots.”



4. “Virtually any conclusion drawn from it will take conversations in conservative circles on Twitter and accuse them of being Russian.”



5. These are quotes by Twitter executives about Hamilton 68, a digital “dashboard” that claimed to track Russian influence and was the source of hundreds if not thousands of mainstream print and TV news stories in the Trump years.



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Alliance for Securing Democracy

Hamilton 68: A New Tool to Track Russian Disinformation on Twitter

August 2, 2017

6.The “dashboard” was headed by former FBI counterintelligence official (and current MSNBC contributor) Clint Watts, and funded by a neoliberal think tank, the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD).



7.The ASD advisory council includes neoconservative writer Bill Kristol, former Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, ex-Hillary for America chief John Podesta, and former heads or deputy heads of the CIA, NSA, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Advisory Council



MIKE CHERTOFF

Mike Chertoff was U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security from 2005 to 2009. There, he worked to strengthen U.S. borders, provide intelligence analysis, and protect infrastructure. He increased the Department's focus on preparedness ahead of disasters, and implemented enhanced security at airports and borders. Following Hurricane Katrina, Chertoff helped to transform FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) into an effective organization. He also served as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals from 2003–05. He co-founded the Chertoff Group, a risk-management and security consulting company, and works as senior of counsel at the Washington, DC law firm Covington & Burling.



TOOMAS ILVES

Toomas Hendrik Ilves was elected president of the Republic of Estonia in 2006 and in 2011. During his presidency, Ilves was appointed to serve in several high positions in the field of information and communication technology in the European Union. He previously served as minister of foreign affairs and as the ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the United States and Canada in Washington. Ilves was also a member of the Estonian Parliament, as well as a member of the European Parliament, where he was vice president of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He now co-chairs the World Economic Forum working group The Global Futures Council on Blockchain Technology. He is currently a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.



DAVID KRAMER

David J. Kramer joined Florida International University's Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs as a senior fellow in the Vaclav Havel Program for Human Rights and Diplomacy in May 2017. Before moving to Miami, Kramer had worked in Washington, DC for 24 years, most recently as senior director for Human Rights and Democracy with The McCain Institute for International Leadership. Before that, he served for four years as president of Freedom House. Prior to that, he was a senior transatlantic fellow at The German Marshall Fund of the United States. Kramer served eight years in the U.S. Department of State during the George W. Bush administration, including as assistant secretary of state for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs; professional staff member in the Secretary's Office of Policy Planning; and senior advisor to the undersecretary for Global Affairs. Kramer is a member of the board of directors of the Halifax International Security Forum and a member of the advisory council for the George W. Bush Presidential Center's Human Freedom Project.



BILL KRISTOL

William Kristol is the editor at large of the influential political journal, *The Weekly Standard*. Before starting that magazine in 1995, Kristol served in government, first as chief of staff to Secretary of Education William Bennett during the Reagan administration, and then as chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle in the George H. W. Bush administration. Kristol has also served on the board of the Project for the New American Century (1997–2005) and the Foreign Policy Initiative (2009–17). Before coming to Washington in 1985, Kristol taught government at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University.



MIKE MCFAUL

Michael McFaul served for five years in the Obama administration, first as special assistant to the president and senior director for Russian and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council at the White House from 2009 to 2012, and then as U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation from 2012–14. He is currently professor of political science, director, and senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and the Peter and Helen Bing senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. He joined the Stanford faculty in 1995. He is also an analyst for NBC News and a contributing columnist to *The Washington Post*.



MICHAEL MORELL

Michael Morell was acting director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2011 and again from 2012 to 2013, and had previously served as deputy director and director for Intelligence at the Agency. In his over thirty years at the CIA, Morell played a central role in the United States' fight against terrorism, its initiatives to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and its efforts to respond to trends that are altering the international landscape — including the Arab Spring, the rise of China, and the cyber threat. He was one of the leaders in the search for Osama bin Laden and participated in the deliberations that led to the raid that killed bin Laden in May 2011. He has been with Beacon Global Strategies as a senior counselor since November 2013.



ANA PALACIO

Ana Palacio is an international lawyer specializing in international and European Union law. Ms. Palacio is a Member of the Council of State of Spain and is the Founding Partner of the law and public affairs firm Palacio y Asociados.

Between 1994 and 2002, Ms. Palacio was a Member of the European Parliament, where she chaired the Legal Affairs and Internal Market Committee as well as the Citizens Rights, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. She participated as member of the Presidium of the Convention for the Future of Europe (2001-2003) in the debate and drafting of the European Constitution. In 2002, Ms. Palacio became the first woman to serve as Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain (2002-2004). She was a Member of the Spanish Parliament (2004 to 2006), where she chaired the Joint Committee of the Two Houses for European Union Affairs. She has been Senior Vice-President and General Counsel of the World Bank Group and Secretary General of ICSID (2006-2008), and she has been a member of the Executive Committee and Senior Vice-President for International Affairs of AREVA (2008-2009).

She is a member of the Board of Enagás (Spanish gas system), Pharmamar (biotechnology), and AEE Power (energy infrastructure). She is a member of the International Advisory Boards of Investcorp (a world-leading manager of alternative investments) and Office Chérifien des Phosphates – OCP – (fertilizers); and of the Governing Council of the Instituto de Empresa (business school). She is a member of the Board as well as of the Executive Committee of the Atlantic Council of the United States. Further, Ms. Palacio serves as member of the External Advisory Board of the US former Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz's Energy Futures Initiative, of the Advisory Board of the Sandra Day O'Connor Justice Prize and of the Board of Trustees of the Institute for Human Sciences. She has recently been appointed as member of the Global Leadership Foundation.

Ms. Palacio publishes regularly in periodicals and journals. In particular, she maintains a monthly column at Project Syndicate. She is a visiting professor at the Edmund E. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She is also a recurrent participant and speaker at international conferences and fora, most recently giving evidence on post-Brexit foreign and defense cooperation before the UK House of Lords' European Union External Affairs Sub-Committee.

In 2016, Ms. Palacio was presented with the Sandra Day O'Connor Justice Prize for extraordinary contributions to the rule of law, justice and human rights by the O'Connor School of Law at Arizona State University, and was awarded the insignia of *Officier* of the Order of the Legion of Honor of the French Republic.



JOHN PODESTA

John Podesta served as Chair of Hillary for America. Prior to joining Hillary Clinton's campaign he served as Counselor to President Barack Obama.

In 2008, he served as co-chair of President Obama's transition team, where he coordinated the priorities of the incoming administration's agenda, oversaw the development of its policies, and spearheaded its appointments of major cabinet secretaries and political appointees.

He is the former Chair of the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Center for American Progress and the Center for American Progress Action Fund. Prior to founding the Center in 2003, Podesta served as White House Chief of Staff to President William J. Clinton.

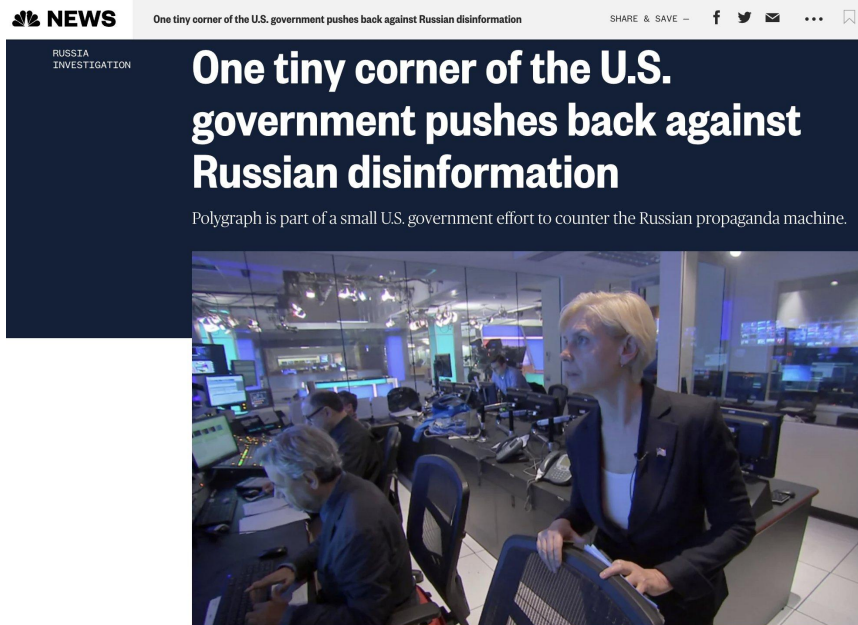
He also recently served on the President's Global Development Council and the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Additionally, Podesta has held numerous positions on Capitol Hill, including counselor to Democratic Leader Sen. Thomas A. Daschle (1995-1996).

A Chicago native, Podesta is a graduate of Knox College and the Georgetown University Law Center, where he is currently a visiting professor of law.

He is the author of *The Power of Progress: How America's Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate and Our Country*.

[8.News](#) outlets for years cited Watts and Hamilton 68 when claiming Russian bots were “amplifying” an endless parade of social media causes – against strikes in Syria, in support of Fox host Laura Ingraham, the campaigns of both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders.

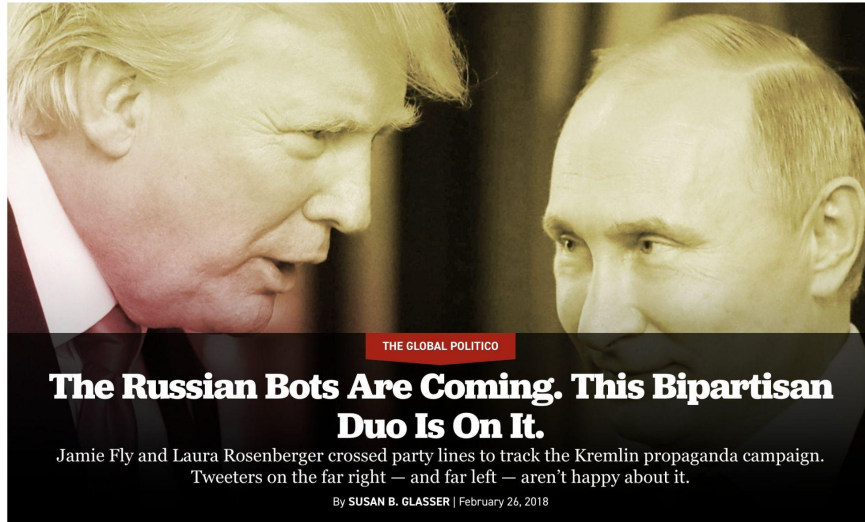


Russia-linked accounts are tweeting their support of embattled Fox News host Laura Ingraham



By [Amanda Erickson](#)

April 2, 2018 at 11:22 a.m. EDT



Securing Democracy Dispatch

February 20, 2018



ASD Team

Special Edition: Mueller Indictment

Mueller indicts Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA), 13 Russians and 3 other entities for meddling in 2016 presidential election: Special Counsel Mueller's indictment on Friday recounted facts about Russia's information operation that are familiar to researchers, it included important details confirming independent research and adding additional facts.

- "Mueller describes a sweeping, years-long, multimillion-dollar conspiracy by hundreds of Russians aimed at criticizing Hillary Clinton and supporting Senator Bernie Sanders and Trump," Bloomberg summarizes, indicating the conspiracy started in 2014 "when the Russians began monitoring groups that use social media sites to influence U.S. politics and social issues, tracking the size of groups and how popular they were with their audiences," with some IRA employees even traveling to the United States to gather intelligence on U.S. political and social issues. This supports the findings of Clint Watts, senior fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy, who charted the timeline of Russian interference dating back to 2014.

- As the IRA trolls worked to oppose all candidates except Sanders and Trump, the indictment also uncovered how "In or around August 2016, defendants and their co-conspirators used false U.S. personas to communicate with Trump campaign staff involved in local community outreach" in purple states where "Russians also helped organize some of the most recognizable anti-Hillary Clinton displays of the election cycle."

9. Hamilton 68 was the source for stories claiming Russian bots pushed terms like “deep state” or hashtags like [#FireMcMaster](#), [#SchumerShutdown](#), [#WalkAway](#), [#ReleaseTheMemo](#), [#AlabamaSenateRace](#), and [#ParklandShooting](#), among many others.



08-10-17 | ROBOT REVOLUTION

#FireMcMaster, Not Damore: Twitter Bots Are Thriving, And They're More Lethal Than Ever

Political Twitter bots, many with ties to Russia, didn't go away after the election, and experts say they're getting more sophisticated.

POLITICO

CONNECTING MORE PEOPLE IN MORE PLACES

Charter | Spectrum

TECHNOLOGY

Russia pushes more 'deep state' hashtags



A woman speaks on a phone as she walks past a graffiti-covered wall with a giant hashtag sign near Moscow's Kursky railway station on Nov. 17, 2017. | Mladen Antonov/Getty Images

Mother Jones

Smart, Fearless Journalism

POLITICS ENVIRONMENT CRIME AND JUSTICE FOOD MEDIA INVE

POLITICS DECEMBER 11, 2017

Russian Propagandists Are Pushing for Roy Moore to Win

Kremlin-linked trolls have also joined Trump and Fox News in targeting the FBI.

10. The secret ingredient to Hamilton 68's analytical method? A list: "Our analysis has linked 600 Twitter accounts to Russian influence activities online," was how the site put it at launch.

Hamilton 68 Dashboard Launches Today

MEDIA
ADVISORY
August 2,
2017

A New Tool to Track Russian Disinformation on Twitter



HAMILTON 68
A DASHBOARD TRACKING RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA ON TWITTER
<http://dashboard.securingsdemocracy.org/>

asd

So, What is This Tool Exactly? | J.M. Berger, Laura Rosenberger
In the Federalist Papers No. 68, Alexander Hamilton wrote of protecting America's electoral process from foreign meddling. Today, we face foreign interference of a type Hamilton could scarcely have imagined. The **Hamilton 68** dashboard, a project with the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, seeks to expose the effects of online influence networks and inform the public of themes and content being promoted to Americans through a near real-time look at Russian propaganda and disinformation efforts online.

READ MORE

What is the Hamilton 68 Dashboard Monitoring?



The top of the dashboard shows tweets from Russia's overt propaganda outlets in English, and a short post discussing the themes of the day. But these disinformation networks also include bots and trolls, and our analysis has linked 600 Twitter accounts to Russian influence activities online. The lower section of the dashboard features topics, hashtags, and links currently promoted by this network.

How Current is the Hamilton 68 Dashboard?



The automated monitoring updates continuously throughout the day, with a five minute lag to real time. The "top themes" will update in the morning, and case studies, infographics, and other materials will be added in the coming weeks and months. You can sign up for alerts and emails about **Hamilton 68** dashboard updates (and other updates on the Alliance for Securing Democracy) [here](#).

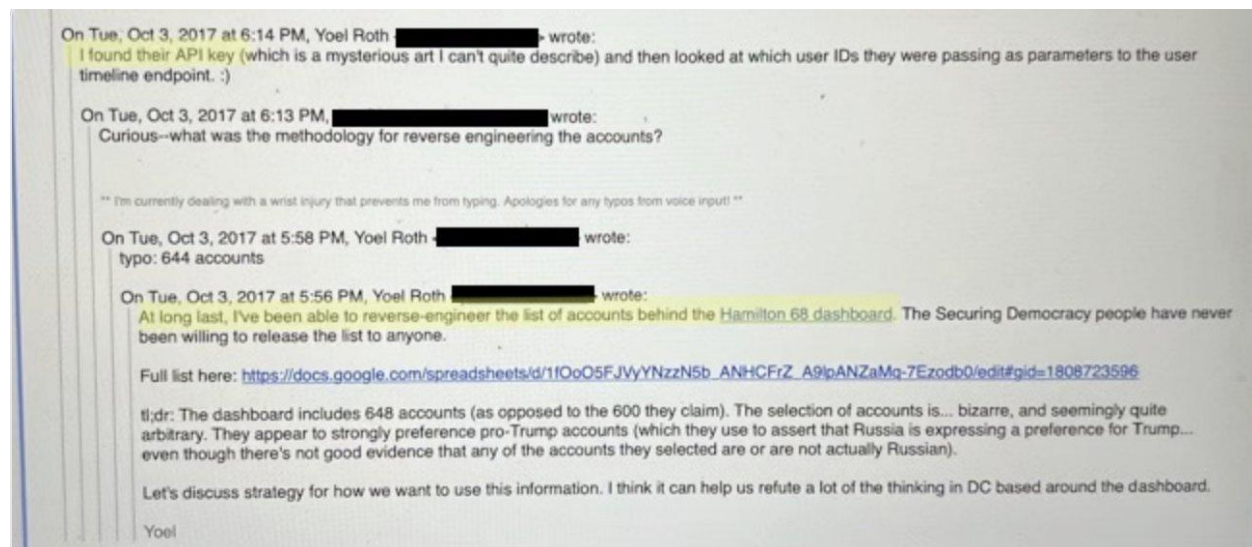
READ MORE

11. Hamilton 68 never released the list, claiming "the Russians will simply shut [the accounts] down." All those reporters and TV personalities making claims about "Russian bots" never really knew what they were describing.

For what it's worth, Rosenberger and Fly disclose their [methodology](#) on their website and say they can't reveal the list of the 600 accounts they are following or the Russians will simply shut them down. Other researchers with whom I've spoken say the tweets and messages found by Hamilton 68 certainly are consistent with what they've seen from Russian-linked accounts. Rosenberger, who spent years in the Obama White House and State Department, laughs at the idea she's a neocon plant, though it is true that their advisory board contains both liberal Russia experts like former Obama Ambassador to Moscow Mike McFaul as well as a favorite Greenwald *bête noire*, the original neocon Bill Kristol.

12. Twitter executives were in a unique position to recreate Hamilton's list, reverse-engineering it from the site's requests for Twitter data.

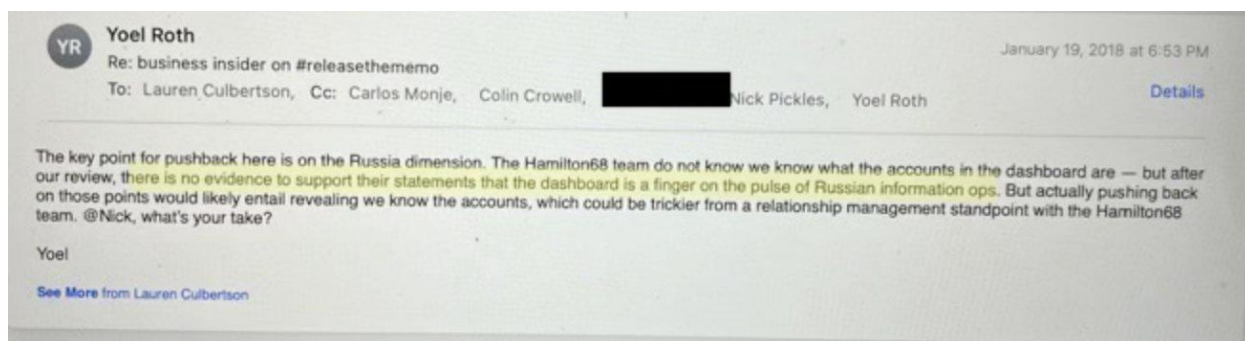
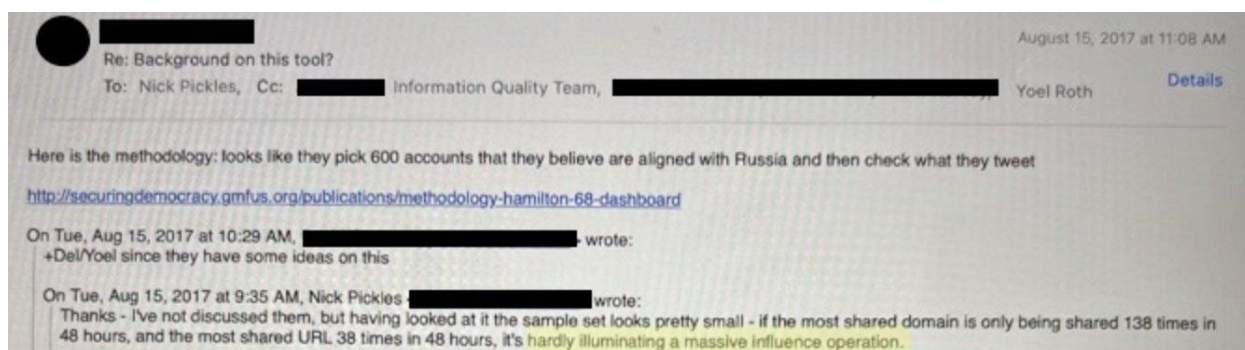
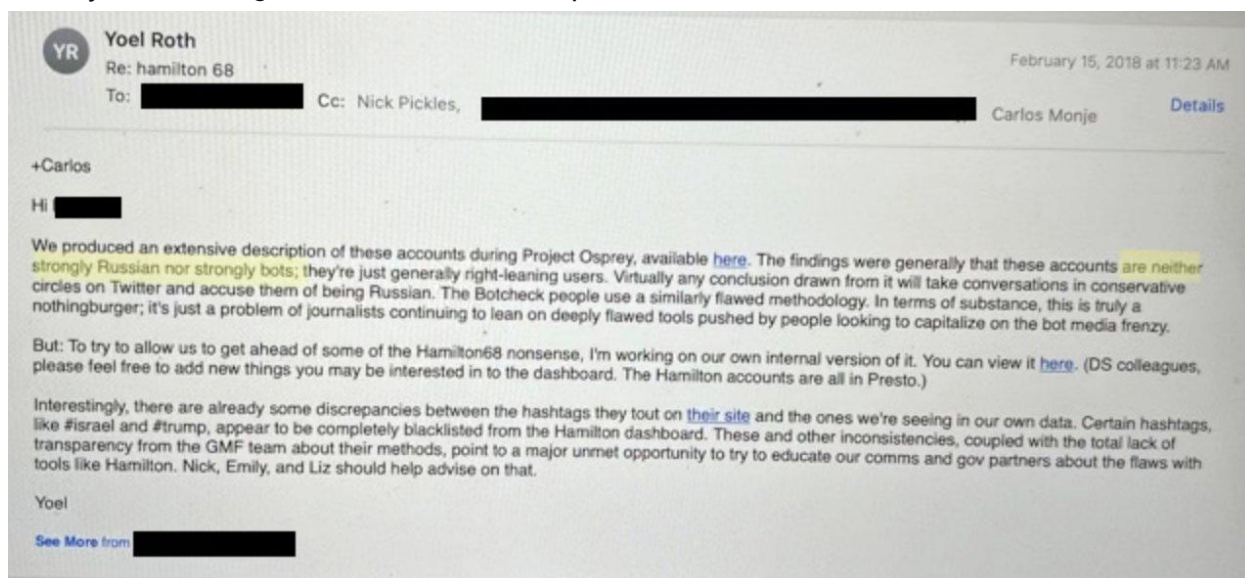
Concerned about the deluge of Hamilton-based news stories, they did so – and what they found shocked them.



13. "These accounts," they concluded, "are neither strongly Russian nor strongly bots."

"No evidence to support the statement that the dashboard is a finger on the pulse of Russian information ops."

"Hardly illuminating a massive influence operation."



14. In layman's terms, the Hamilton 68 barely had any Russians. In fact, apart from a few RT accounts, it's mostly full of ordinary Americans, Canadians, and British.

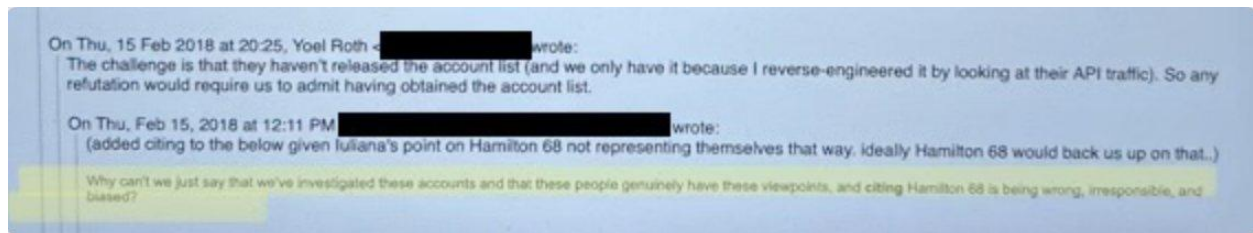
15. It was a scam. Instead of tracking how "Russia" influenced American attitudes, Hamilton 68 simply collected a handful of mostly real, mostly American accounts, and described their organic conversations as Russian scheming.

16. Twitter immediately recognized these Hamilton-driven news stories posed a major ethical problem, potentially implicating them.

"Real people need to know they've been unilaterally labeled Russian stooges without evidence or recourse," Roth wrote.

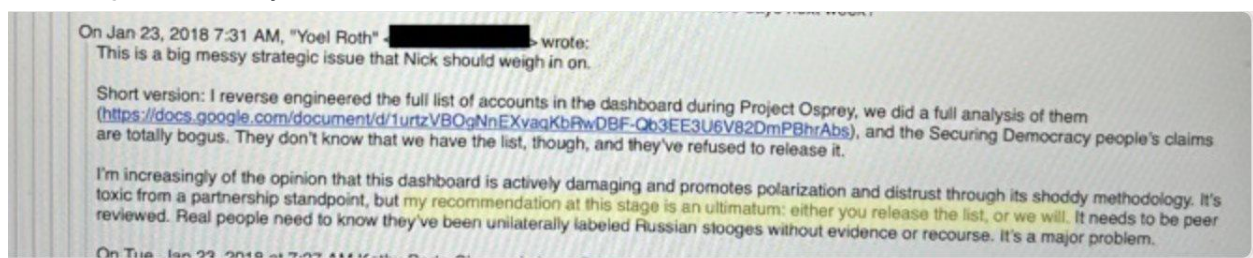
17. Some Twitter execs badly wanted to out Hamilton 68. After Russians were blamed for hyping the [#ParklandShooting](#) hashtag, one wrote:

"Why can't we say we've investigated... and citing Hamilton 68 is being wrong, irresponsible, and biased?"

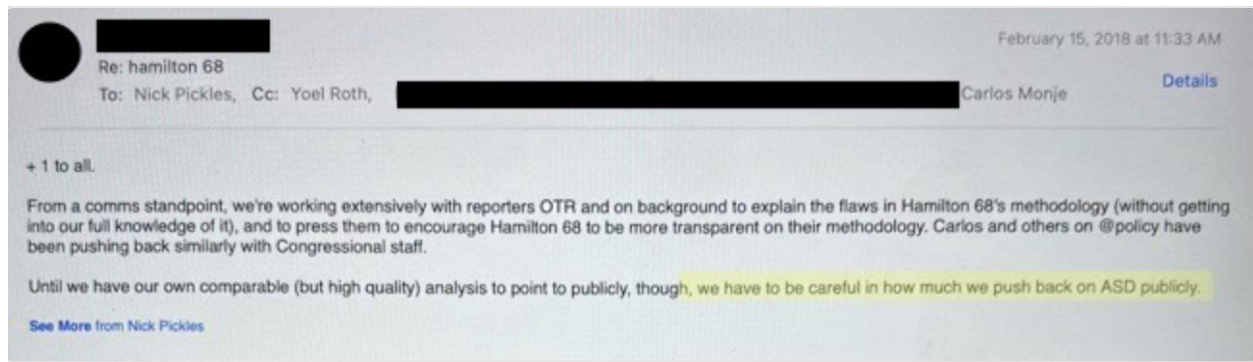


18. Yoel Roth wanted a confrontation. "My recommendation at this stage is an ultimatum: you release the list or we do," he wrote.

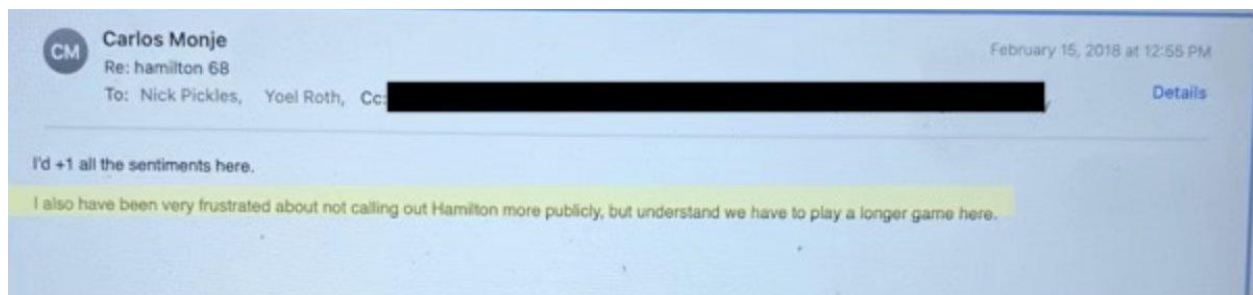
However, there were internal concerns about taking on the politically connected Alliance for Securing Democracy.



19. “We have to be careful in how much we push back on ASD publicly,” said future White House and NSC spokesperson Emily Horne.



20. “I also have been very frustrated in not calling out Hamilton 68 more publicly, but understand we have to play a longer game here,” wrote Carlos Monje, the future senior advisor to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.



21. So the “legitimate people,” as one Twitter exec called them, never found out they’d been used as fodder for mountains of news stories about “Russian influence.” Because the [#TwitterFiles](#) contain the list, they’ve begun finding out.

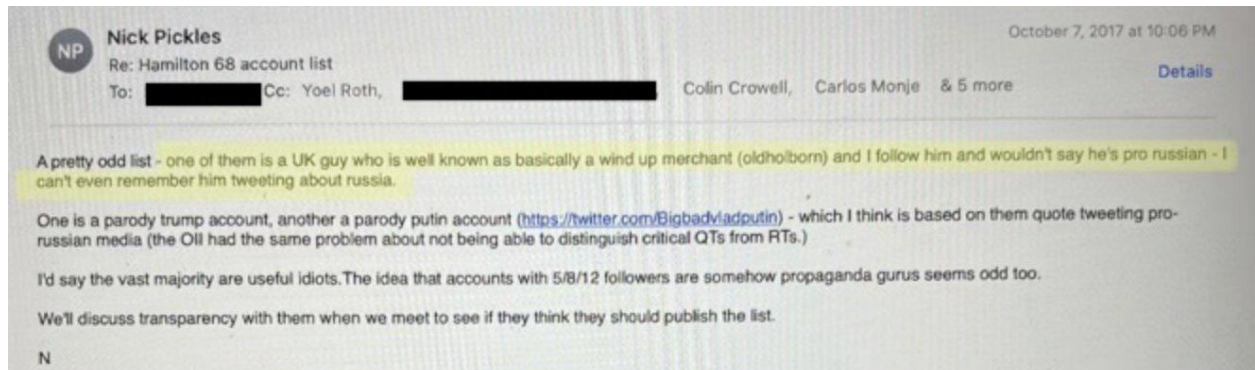
22. “I’m shocked,” says Sonia Monsour, who as a child lived through civil war in Lebanon. “Supposedly in a free world, we are being watched at many levels, by what we say online.”

23. "I've written a book about the U.S. Constitution," says Chicago-based lawyer Dave Shestokas. "How I made a list like this is incredible to me."



24. "When I was growing up, my father told me about the McCarthyite blacklist," says Oregon native Jacob Levich. "As a child it would never have occurred to me that this would come back, in force and broadly, in a way... designed to undermine rights we hold dear."

25. Even Twitter execs were stunned to read who was on the list. Wrote policy chief Nick Pickles about British comic [@Holbornlolz](#): “A wind-up merchant... I follow him and wouldn’t say he’s pro-Russian... I can’t even remember him tweeting about Russia.”



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1,803 Following **77.6K** Followers



Followed by too stupid for democracy, Bitcoin is Forever, and 8 others you follow

26. I'm listed as a foreign bot?" said conservative media figure Dennis Michael Lynch. "As a proud taxpaying citizen, charitable family man, and honest son of a U.S. Marine, I deserve better. We all do!"



The image shows a promotional graphic for the DML News App. At the top, it says "DOWNLOAD THE DML NEWS APP" with five stars. Below this are buttons for "Download on the App Store" and "GET IT ON Google Play". To the left is a circular profile picture of Dennis Michael Lynch and a smartphone displaying the app. Below the app promotion is a Twitter profile card for Dennis Michael Lynch (@realDennisLynch). The profile card includes a bio: "Host, Dennis Michael Lynch Podcast; Creator, DML News APP; Producer, films on Amazon Prime; Former #1 show host on NewsmaxTV, & Fox News guest." It also lists "Media & News Company" in Florida, the website "DennisMichaelLynch.com", and "Born August 28". The profile shows "163 Following" and "36.4K Followers". At the bottom, it says "Followed by Dr. Eric Grabowsky, Twitter Verified, and 4 others you follow".

DOWNLOAD THE DML NEWS APP

★★★★★

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Dennis Michael Lynch ✓
@realDennisLynch Follows you

Host, Dennis Michael Lynch Podcast; Creator, DML News APP; Producer, films on Amazon Prime; Former #1 show host on NewsmaxTV, & Fox News guest.

Media & News Company ⓘ Florida
DennisMichaelLynch.com ⓘ Born August 28
Joined November 2015

163 Following 36.4K Followers

Followed by Dr. Eric Grabowsky, Twitter Verified, and 4 others you follow

27. Consortium editor Joe Lauria too was angered to find he was on the list, which targeted voices across the spectrum: "Organizations like Hamilton 68 are in business to enforce an official narrative, which means excising inconvenient facts, which they call 'misinformation.'"



The image shows a Twitter profile card for Joe Lauria (@unjoe). The profile card includes a bio: "Editor-in-Chief Consortium News, author 'A Political Odyssey' w/ Sen. Mike Gravel, former @BostonGlobe, @WSJ, @thesundaytimes correspondent, co-host #CNLive!". It also lists "Alexandria, Virginia" and the website "consortiumnews.com". The profile shows "2,509 Following" and "12.7K Followers". The profile picture is a circular image of Joe Lauria. To the right of the profile picture is a "Follow" button.

Joe Lauria ✓
@unjoe Follows you

Editor-in-Chief Consortium News, author "A Political Odyssey" w/ Sen. Mike Gravel, former @BostonGlobe, @WSJ, @thesundaytimes correspondent, co-host #CNLive!

Alexandria, Virginia ⓘ consortiumnews.com
Joined July 2009

2,509 Following 12.7K Followers

[illegible]

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Russia is attempting to influence Mueller investigation in an ‘ongoing attack,’ Democrats say

PUBLISHED TUE, JAN 23 2018-1:11 PM EST | UPDATED WED, JAN 24 2018-10:17 AM EST

Kevin Breuninger
@KEVINWILLIAMB

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KEY POINTS

- California Democrats Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Adam Schiff released a letter to the CEOs of Twitter and Facebook warning of possible Russian influence on the special counsel's investigation.
- A website monitoring Russia-linked Twitter accounts found that their use of #releasethememo increased nearly 300,000 percent in just a few days.

Closing Bell: Overtime
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POLITICS

Russian Propagandists Seize Kavanaugh Controversy to Sow Division Online

The New York Times

After Florida School Shooting, Russian 'Bot' Army Pounced



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996

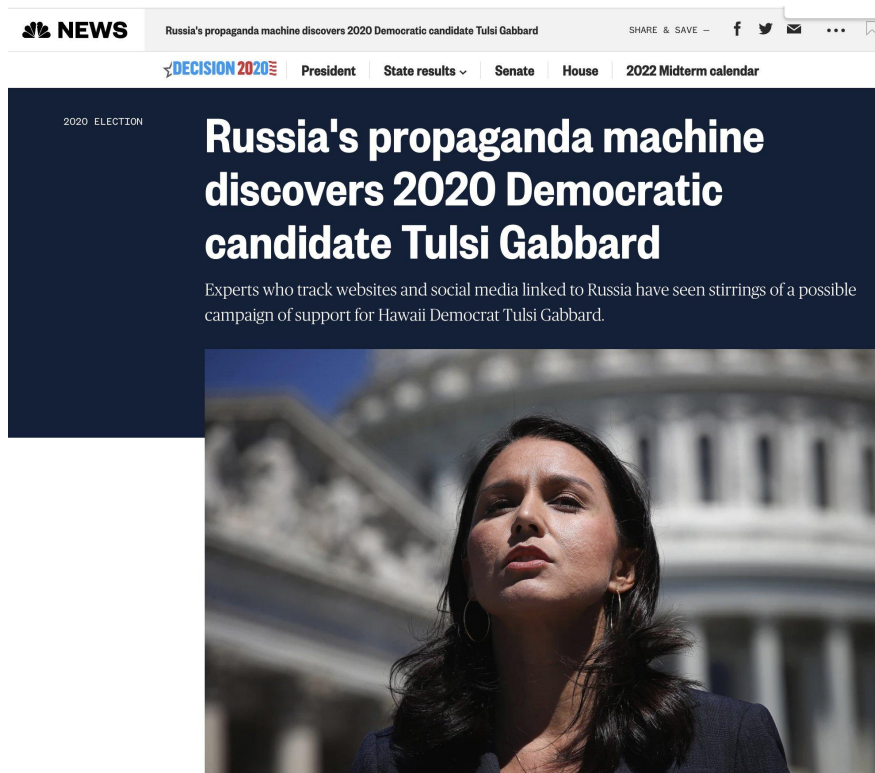
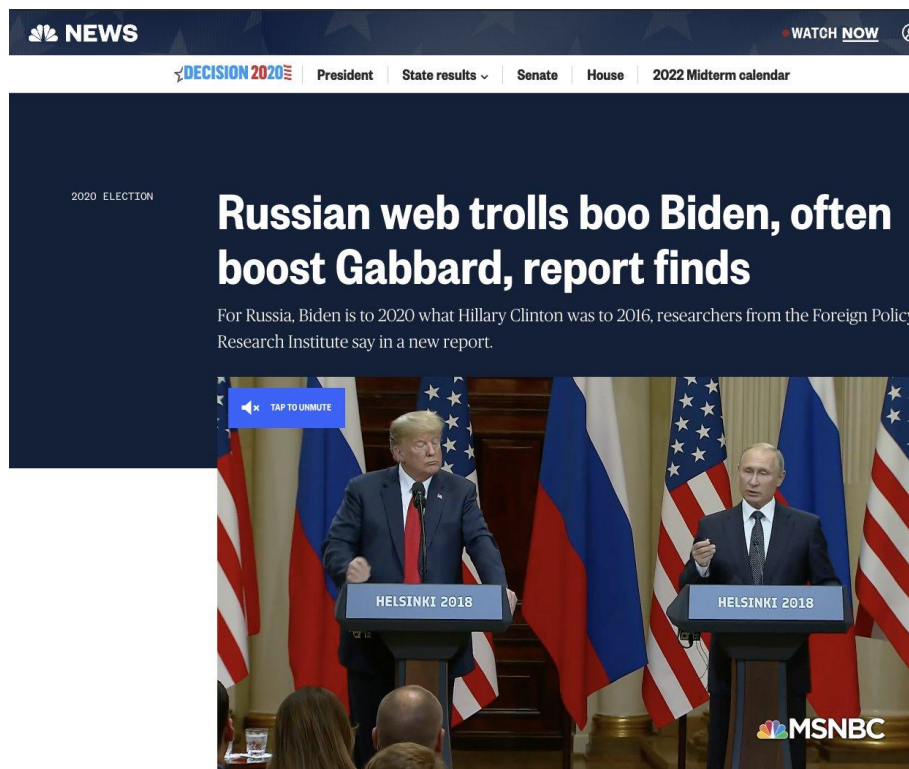


A weekend gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. One hour after news of the school shooting in nearby Parkland spread, Twitter accounts that researchers have linked to Russia shifted their focus to the gun control debate. Saul Martinez for The New York Times

Hamilton 68 dashboard

Accounts tracked by the Hamilton 68 dashboard seized on key partisan issues ahead of the U.S. midterms. Early in the week, accounts promoted the "Blexit" movement encouraging black voters to leave the Democratic Party, spreading several articles that falsely claimed Kanye West designed merchandise for the movement. "Blexit" remained one of the top hashtags on the dashboard for the duration of the week. Pro-Kremlin accounts also sought to inflame the immigration debate by promoting articles falsely alleging that a second, heavily armed migrant caravan was headed towards the U.S. border.

30. These stories raised fears in the population, and most insidious of all, were used to smear people like Tulsi Gabbard as foreign “assets,” and drum up sympathy for political causes like Joe Biden’s campaign by describing critics as Russian-aligned.



31. Incredibly, and ironically, these stories were also frequently used as evidence of the spread of “fake news” on sites like Twitter:

Mother Jones

Smart, Fearless Journalism

POLITICS ENVIRONMENT CRIME AND JUSTICE FOOD MEDIA INVESTIGATIONS

POLITICS FEBRUARY 6, 2018

Trump Supporters Spread the Majority of Phony News on Social Media

A new study finds that “junk news” is a staple of the #MAGA crowd.

32. It was a lie. The illusion of Russian support was created by tracking people like Joe Lauria, Sonia Monsour, and Dave Shestokas. Virtually every major American news organization cited these fake tales— even fact-checking sites like Snopes and Politifact.

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The Poynter Institute

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Russia's social media efforts in 2016 were not just false but inflammatory

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Trolls, Bots, 'Useful Idiots' Attack New Committee Aimed at Exposing Russian Propaganda Campaigns

33. Twitter didn't have the guts to out Hamilton 68 publicly but did try to speak to reporters off the record. "Reporters are chafing," said Horne. "It's like shouting into a void."

The image shows two screenshots from a computer screen. The top screenshot is an email thread with a header showing 'EH' in a circle, 'Re: Hamilton 68 sync next week', and 'To: Nick Pickles, Cc: Carlos Monje, Yoel Roth' dated 'February 16, 2018 at 1:49 PM'. The email body contains a conversation where Nick Pickles and others discuss scheduling a sync for Hamilton 68. The bottom screenshot shows a social media post with a toolbar at the top and a single line of text: 'I'm reaching out to individual reporters who are covering this to try to shape, but at this point it's shouting into the void.'

EH

Re: Hamilton 68 sync next week

To: Nick Pickles, Cc: Carlos Monje, Yoel Roth

February 16, 2018 at 1:49 PM

Details

On Fri, Feb 16, 2018 at 4:48 PM, Nick Pickles <[REDACTED]> wrote:
For now I think we can cope - but if we consider sharing info / publishing anything we should loop them in.

On Fri, 16 Feb 2018 at 21:47, [REDACTED] wrote:
Perfect. Do we need anyone from @legal to join too?

On Fri, Feb 16, 2018 at 4:46 PM, Nick Pickles <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Yeah, let's loop lauren in aswell.

Around 2pm EST?

On Fri, 16 Feb 2018 at 21:31, Yoel Roth <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Yes please. I'll be in Boulder, but feel free to schedule any time. Time zones have no meaning for me...

On Fri, Feb 16, 2018 at 1:20 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:
Discussed a bit with Carlos today, and would love for us to sync early next week to review some possible steps forward re: Hamilton 68. Given both the internal and external pressure we're under, I think we need to huddle on the best way forward. Reporters are chafing at our off-the-record cautions on methodology, and the Florida stuff this week really drives home for me that H68 is going to keep being fast, sloppy, and their damage won't just be restricted to Russia stuff.

Nick, know this is more your lane-- I'm happy to schedule something but defer to you.

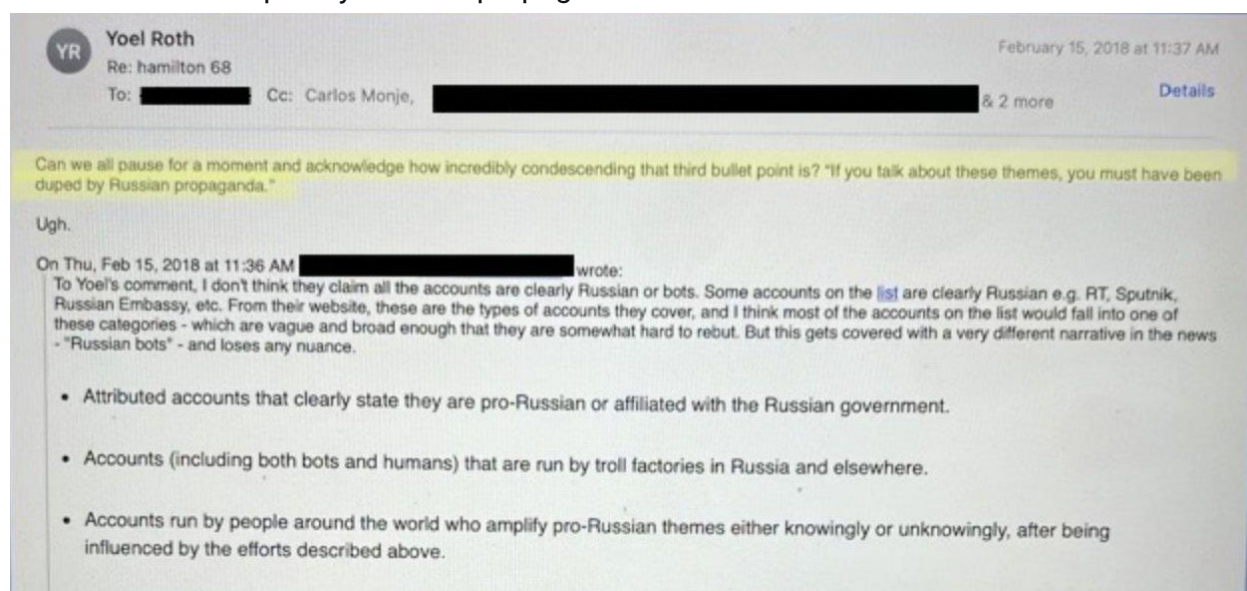
@nickpickles

@nickpickles

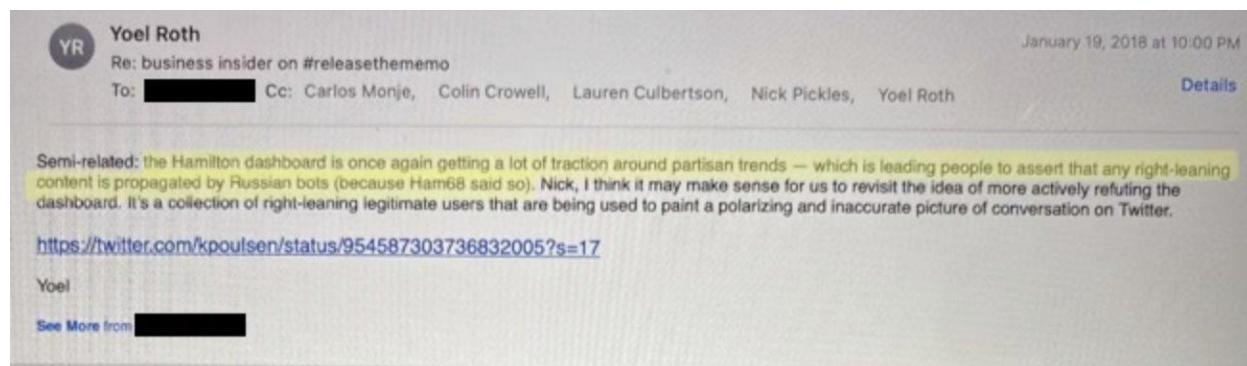
✉ ✎ 🗑 🗑 🗑 🔄 🔄 🔄 🚩 🔔 📁 GEC_Request--... 🔍 Search

I'm reaching out to individual reporters who are covering this to try to shape, but at this point it's shouting into the void.

34. Roth was offended by the idea that tweets on certain themes suggested subversion. "Can we talk about how incredibly condescending...? If you talk about these themes, you must have been duped by Russian propaganda."



35. Again, even Roth, like most Twitter execs an ardent Democratic partisan, saw that the Hamilton scheme would lead people "to assert that any right-leaning content is propagated by Russian bots."



36. At least two other research institutions that used similar methodologies – and were cited as sources in news stories – were also criticized in Twitter email correspondence.

37.MSNBC, Watts, the Washington Post, Politico, Mother Jones (which did at least 14 Hamilton 68 stories), the Alliance for Securing Democracy, and the offices of politicians like Dianne Feinstein all refused comment, unless this counts:



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“The Russian disinformation attack in 2016 caught the U.S. unprepared. No single government agency understood the entirety of what was going on or assumed responsibility for addressing it. The major social media platforms minimized the severity of the onslaught until that strategy became infeasible.”

While Russia shows no appetite for confronting the U.S. on the conventional battlefield, it has demonstrated its intention to apply digital aspects of the Gerasimov doctrine in the West. Beginning in 2015, Russian hackers targeted American and European nuclear power plants and water and electric systems, according to U.S. officials. By 2017, the intruders potentially could have sabotaged vital infrastructure in the West, although they did not do so—this time.¹²

It is in this context of the Russian drive for greater global influence that the Internet platform and the U.S. and its allies ought to consider Moscow's disinformation campaigns. The 2016 U.S. election story is worth briefly reviewing here to underscore the Russians' ambition and dexterity in this regard. As Clint Watts, a disinformation expert affiliated with the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security at George Washington University, has put it: “Within the Kremlin's playbook, each social media platform serves a function,

a role in an interlocking social media ecosystem where Russia infiltrates, engages, influences, and manipulates targeted American audiences.”¹³

In one of Russia's main coups in 2016, hackers penetrated email accounts of the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, John Podesta. WikiLeaks and a Russian-affiliated site called DCLeaks then publicly posted the stolen emails, which divided and distracted the Clinton camp. A suspected Russian GRU front persona known as Guccifer 2.0 used Twitter to draw the mainstream media's attention to the stolen messages.¹⁴

On another track, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), which employed hundreds of people in St. Petersburg, Russia, carried out a malign social media operation allegedly financed by a Putin crony and oligarch named Yevgeny Prigozhin. IRA employees used fake personas to set up accounts on Facebook, Instagram (which Facebook owns), Twitter, and YouTube (which Google owns). The IRA operatives favored Facebook and Instagram for establishing sham activist accounts meant to heighten divisions over immigration, Islam, and police treatment of African Americans. In some cases, IRA employees bought Facebook and Google advertisements to target particular users for incendiary messages. “Ohio Wants Hillary A Prison,” one ad stated. “Hillary is a Satan,” said another. The Russians also purchased Facebook ads to promote anti-Clinton and pro-Donald Trump rallies they organized in Florida, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. Internally, IRA operatives described their mission as conducting “information warfare against the United States of America.”¹⁵

The attack caught the U.S. unprepared. No single government agency understood the entirety of what was going on or assumed responsibility for addressing it. Out of fear of appearing to try to influence the election, the Obama administration hesitated to unilaterally

disclose what it knew. And Republicans in Congress refused to cooperate with a White House proposal to release information on a bipartisan basis.¹⁶ In Silicon Valley, the major social media platforms minimized the severity of the onslaught until that strategy became infeasible.¹⁷

Various Platforms, Diverse Purposes

Between just Facebook and Instagram, nearly 150 million Americans were exposed to Russian disinformation, both via purchased ads and non-paid “organic” traffic. That number comes from Facebook, and it may understate the problem. Content from just six IRA-created Facebook pages—Blacklives, United Muslims of America, Being Patriotic, Heart of Texas, Secured Borders, and LGBT United—was widely shared online, potentially exposing millions of additional users, according to a study by Jonathan Albright, research director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University.¹⁸

The IRA used various platforms for diverse purposes. It exploited Instagram, a photo- and video-sharing site that boasts 800 million monthly users, for some patently offensive stratagems. The fake Instagram account Woke Blacks, for example, posted a voter-suppression message aimed at African Americans: “Hype and hatred of Trump is misleading the people and forcing Blacks to vote Hillary. We cannot resort to the lesser of two evils. Then we'd surely be better off without voting AT ALL.”¹⁹ Albright has called Instagram “a major distributor and redistributor of IRA propaganda that's at the very least on par with Twitter.”²⁰

Twitter indicated the extent to which the Russians manipulated its site when it reported that it had shut down more than 3,800 IRA-linked trolling accounts and another 50,300 automated bot accounts. Today, Russian disinformation continues to circulate on Twitter, according to the Alliance for Securing Democracy, an initiative housed at the German Marshall Fund.

The Alliance tracks some 600 Twitter accounts with Russian ties and displays their activity on a dashboard called Hamilton 68—a reference to one of the Federalist Papers attributed to Alexander Hamilton, who discussed the danger of foreign interference in elections. We have relied on Hamilton 68 findings in this report. The content in which the Hamilton 68 network of trolls and bots traffics “is not necessarily produced or created by Russian government operatives, although that is sometimes the case,” the Alliance explains on its website. “Instead, the network often opportunistically amplifies content created by third parties not directly linked to Russia. Common themes include attacks on the U.S. and Europe, conspiracy theories, and disinformation.”²¹ The accounts monitored by Hamilton 68 illustrate how Twitter empowers Russian-linked trolls and bots to react swiftly to controversies chronicled by traditional media. And information flows in both directions: During the 2016 campaign, many mainstream media organizations, including USA Today, The Washington Post, and The New York Times, on occasion cited Twitter accounts operated by the IRA as evidence of partisan polarization—and thereby inadvertently carried water for Russian disinformation artists.²²

YouTube has served yet another function for the Russians. The Internet's top site for video sharing, with 1.5 billion users, it has offered RT and Sputnik a ready platform for their Kremlin-financed propaganda. RT has 2.7 million subscribers on YouTube—more than BBC News, MSNBC, and Fox News.²³ By means of video packaged for YouTube, the government-funded news service overtly participated in the 2016 denigration of Hillary Clinton. RT illustrates how Russian sources of disinformation exploit the designs and business models of the platforms. It uploads videos to YouTube frequently, sprinkling in depictions of disaster—plane crashes, tsunamis, a meteor strike—to earn numerous “likes” and longer watch times from viewers. These

indications of viewer engagement help YouTube sell advertising. At the same time, YouTube automatically rewards RT with better placement among search results and recommendations.²⁴

The Russians have surfaced on other sites, as well. Tumblr, a popular multi-media blogging platform, announced in March 2018 that it had deleted 84 IRA-linked accounts that targeted

specific audiences, including minority groups. Accounts with names such as Ghetta Blasta and Hustle in a Trap tried to attract black users, who were fed anti-Clinton conspiracy theories and invited to phony protests.²⁵ Reddit, another heavily trafficked site that hosts often-contentious forums, said in April 2018 that it purged nearly 1,000 accounts tied to the IRA.

Profile of a Russian Troll Factory

The Internet Research Agency

Special Counsel Robert Mueller has alleged that IRA operatives described their mission as conducting “information warfare against the United States of America.” Here are some basic facts and figures about the organization:	
Founded	In St. Petersburg in 2014
Financing	Yevgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch and Putin crony
Number of employees	Hundreds, of whom more than 80 worked on U.S. interference
Preferred social media platforms for disinformation	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter
Selected phony Facebook pages designed to sow social discord	Being Patriotic, Blacklives, United Muslims of America, Army of Jesus, Heart of Texas, LGBT United
Favored presidential candidates	Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders
Disfavored presidential candidates	Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio
Sample online advertisement	“Donald wants to defeat terrorism... Hillary wants to sponsor it”
Wrapped up operations	Late 2016
Names of possible successor troll factories	Glasnost and Teku

Sources: Mueller indictment United States of America v. Internet Research Agency LLC et al., filed February 16, 2018; WIRE2; and The Guardian.



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The Hamilton 68 dashboard, a project with the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, seeks to expose the effects of online influence networks and inform the public of themes and content being promoted to Americans by foreign powers.



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39. Perhaps most embarrassingly, elected officials promoted the site, and invited Hamilton “experts” to testify. Dianne Feinstein, James Lankford, Richard Blumenthal, Adam Schiff, and Mark Warner were among the offenders.

United States Senator for California



DIANNE FEINSTEIN

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Feinstein, Schiff Send Follow Up Letter to Twitter and Facebook on #ReleaseTheMemo Campaign

Jan 31 2018

Washington — Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), Ranking Member of the House Intelligence Committee, today sent a follow up [letter](#) to Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg after the companies provided an incomplete response to their initial questions about the online #ReleaseTheMemo campaign. Late last week, Facebook and Twitter responded to Feinstein and Schiff's initial letter — those responses can be found [here](#) and [here](#)).

In the initial letter, Feinstein and Schiff requested that Twitter and Facebook immediately conduct an in-depth forensic examination of the reported actions by Russian bots and trolls surrounding the #ReleaseTheMemo online campaign and how users were exposed to this campaign as a result of Russian efforts. [According to the German Marshall Fund's Alliance for Securing Democracy](#), this effort gained the instant attention and assistance of social media accounts linked to Russian influence operations. In this follow up letter, Feinstein and Schiff asked additional questions of Facebook and Twitter, and provided additional information to follow up on for the requested analysis.

Former FBI agent says 'follow the dead bodies' on Russia probe

Clint Watts also said he fears for his safety after speaking with the Senate intelligence committee.

BY DEB RIECHMANN ASSOCIATED PRESS

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40. The mix of digital McCarthyism and fraud did great damage to American politics and culture. News outlets that don't disavow these stories, or still pay Hamilton vets as analysts, shouldn't be trusted. Every subscriber to those outlets to write to editors about the issue.

41. For more from the [#TwitterFiles](#), follow [@BariWeiss](#), [@LHFang](#), [@ShellenbergerMD](#), [@TheFP](#), and others. Twitter had no input into this story. Searches were conducted by a third party, so material may have been left out.

42. For more on this story, read the detailed new story at [...racket.news](#)

And a special thanks to [@Orf](#) for putting together video for this segment - much more to come.