

Covert Pentagon Propagandists and “Influencers” Are Tracking Anti-war Americans, Skirting the Law

The Pentagon's “Special Government Employees”

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In mid-August, a conservative activist using the digital moniker “DataRepublican” quietly admitted she was employed by the Pentagon as a “special government employee.” For months, she’d been pocketing a government paycheck while intensely lobbying for President Trump’s imperialist misadventures online and tracking their most vocal critics in a digital database.

DataRepublican was identified in 2025 as **Jennica Pounds**, a Utah-based mother with nearly a million followers whose [stated raison d’etre](#) is “fighting communists” – a moniker she applies liberally to anyone perceptibly to the

left of Barry Goldwater.

And she’s not alone. Pounds has emerged as the face of a new wave of right-wing influencers who are being covertly employed by the US Department of War to spread pro-government propaganda. On August 29th, Washington Post reporters revealed at least three more digital activists are surreptitiously working for the Pentagon, which designates them as either special government employees (SGEs) or as what the US military calls “highly qualified experts” (HQEs).

Named in the Pentagon’s army of influencers were retired Air Force colonel **Rob Maness**, and retired Army colonels **Kurt Schlichter** and **Thomas Anderson**. Like Pounds, Anderson also operated in relative anonymity until recently, posting under the Twitter handle “Cynical Publius.” Schlichter, for his part, is a prolific right-wing troll who has [frequently fantasized](#) about the ethnic cleansing and extermination of Palestinians.

The operation appears to be in breach of two federal laws, the Hatch Act and the Smith-Mundt Act, which prohibit government employees from engaging in political activities while on the clock, and forbid them from directing their propaganda efforts at the US population, respectively.

The aforementioned right-wing activists are the only ones known to have been working secretly for the Department of War. But the revelations about paid Pentagon propaganda posters come as the US military pursues a flurry of murky partnerships with prominent conservative influencers like top TPUSA widow Erika Kirk, who was [appointed](#) to the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors by Trump in March in an effort to further slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk’s “legacy.”

Then there’s **Laura Loomer**, the obsessively anti-Muslim Trump ally, who is producing de facto press releases for self-proclaimed “**Secretary of War**” **Pete Hegseth**, enjoying Pentagon press credentials, and earning references as an “informal advisor to the Department of War.”

A Propagandist Accidentally Outs Herself as Secret Pentagon Employee

Like [previous unflattering military disclosures](#), an apparently disgruntled employee was responsible for the revelation that Hegseth’s Department of War has quietly begun paying off online influencers.

In a [since-deleted thread](#) originally published on Twitter/X, Pounds – posting under the pseudonym DataRepublican – claimed that Trump’s undersecretary for public diplomacy at the State Department, **Sarah B. Rogers**, attempted to “set [her] up” by leaking documents to her in what she described as an effort to induce her to carry out a criminal act.

“It’s not okay when the Deep State sets you up to commit a crime,” DataRepublican fumed, adding, “I have never been more angry in my life.”

Pounds, posting as DataRepublican, [complained bitterly](#):

“I consulted people and if this were a sanctioned leak – they would have just sent over email. They tried to entrap me.”

An hour and a half later, the source mentioned by Pounds revealed herself as Trump’s Undersecretary of State, writing “lol, these are my text messages and documents.” Rogers had decided to reward Pounds by giving her exclusive access to the files, she explained: “I wanted to give you the option of ‘breaking’ the story as sort of a gift.” But since Pounds rejected the gift horse in a fit of paranoia, Rogers announced, “I will happily disclose the documents myself.”

The documents in question related to the Global Engagement Center (GEC), an Obama-era agency at the State Department officially meant to counter foreign “propaganda and disinformation efforts” aimed at Americans. Critics say that the GEC violated the spirit – if not the letter – of the Smith-Mundt Act, because it openly targeted American audiences, and merely offloaded its domestic ‘counter-disinformation’ efforts onto a variety of outside NGOs and data platforms.

As the State Department’s Rogers explained, the files showed the GEC effectively blaming foreign powers for the dissolution of Biden’s short-lived Disinformation Governance Board (DGB), claiming that the resignation of the board’s erstwhile director, **Nina Jankowicz**, was an instance in which “gendered disinformation” had a “substantial direct impact in the United States.” When it was unveiled in 2022, the DGB, a subsidiary of the Department of Homeland Security, was roundly mocked on social media, where it quickly earned the nickname “Ministry of Truth.”

Jankowicz, an overgrown theater kid who publicly targeted this outlet on multiple occasions, baselessly accusing The Grayzone of spreading “incredibly damaging disinformation,” was pilloried as the “Mary Poppins of Disinformation” after publishing a cringe-worthy, pro-censorship parody of the classic film’s most memorable song, “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.”

The DGB was shut down just months after its creation in 2022 amid widespread censorship concerns, Rogers wrote, and the GEC wasn’t far behind. The State Department agency was effectively defunded in late 2024 when Congress declined to reauthorize funds for the GEC, and its closure was made permanent when Trump’s Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, fully disassembled the office in April 2025.

As the heated confrontation between the two right-wing women simmered, the far-right AF Post advanced the theory that Pounds was secretly working for the Pentagon, describing her as a “Department of War employee” in an August 21 post on Twitter. Three days later, the US military corroborated that hypothesis, confirming to a Pentagon reporter that “Ms. Pounds serves at the Department of War as a Special Government Employee.”

SGEs for a Hiring Freeze

Prior to the current administration, the Special Government Employee designation was used primarily to hire temporary specialized workers who served the government in limited, short-term advisory roles while still employed by another party. But under Trump, who instituted a federal hiring freeze immediately upon taking office in January 2025, the federal government has effectively stopped accepting applications from normal would-be government workers. Now, watchdogs have warned of an “unprecedented” shift away from hiring formal government employees and towards SGEs to sidestep federal regulations on conflicts of interest.

That strategy was first tested with **Elon Musk**, who was designated a Special Government Employee when he pursued spending cuts as head of the newly-formed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Around that time, Pounds emerged from the right-wing media ecosystem as a vocal supporter of Musk’s efforts.

When Pounds was finally exposed as a Special Government Employee in August, her proximity to the Pentagon had been hinted at for several months, beginning in April 2026, when she took to Twitter to boast that she’d become an “officially credentialed Pentagon press corps” member. This arrangement was made possible by **Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Joel Valdez**, whom she credited with having “[moved] mountains to make this unique arrangement possible.”

Months later, when outrage grew following Pounds’ exposure as a government-paid propagandist, The Pentagon attempted to douse the flames by pointing out that Pounds’ press credential “expired in June 2026, and she did not seek a renewal.” Instead, she simply “began working for the Department in July 2026.”

Left unaddressed was the fact that this incredibly unusual arrangement saw a Trump advocate being given credentials to cover Pentagon affairs up close as a nominally-independent reporter, before being brought on board to defend US military conduct as an official government employee just one month later.

A flattering piece by Deseret News suggested that Pounds’ shift to government employment was not an aberration, however. Instead, her new gig was apparently in the works since at least early 2025:

“Pounds said she is unable to “discuss details about potential employers,” but she hinted at a future “working within the government,” and previously said she is waiting on a federal “background check,” the outlet stated in an article dated March 11, 2025.

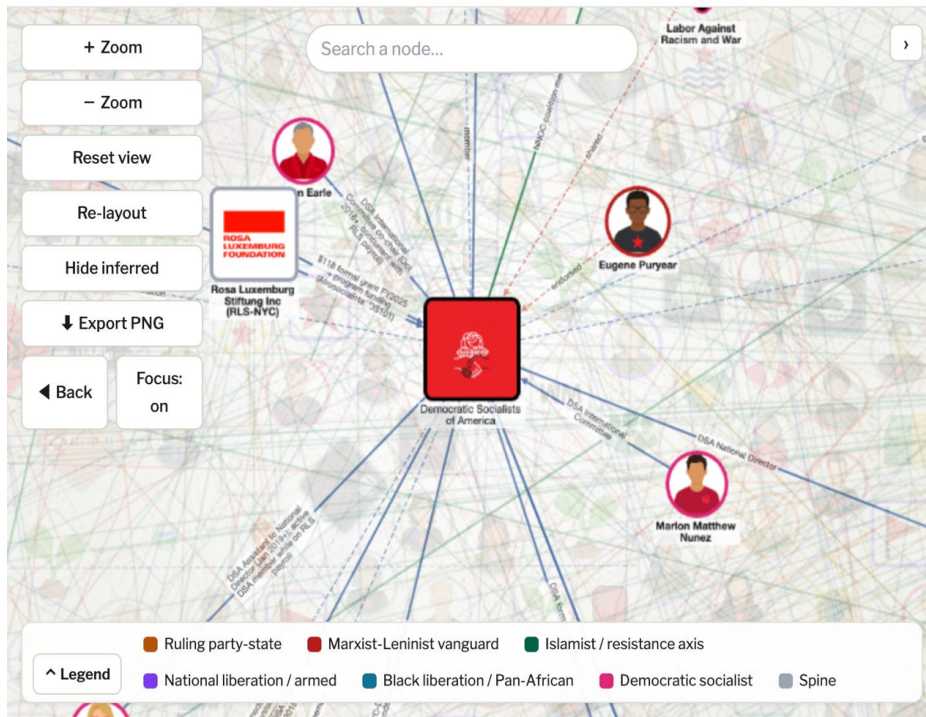
After Pounds was outed as an employee of the federal government, her relatives and coworkers took to social media to defend her honor.

“Being a “fed” used to be a negative thing only to law breakers,” Pounds’ mother fumed on Twitter, complaining that “now people are using it as a slur” against her daughter. The post has since been deleted.

Others sought to defend their part-time Pentagon gigs by turning the tables on their accusers. Writing as “Cynical Publius,” Anderson embraced classic DARVO tactic and immediately went on the offensive, accusing “some federal employee” of having “committed a criminal misdemeanor in violation of the Privacy Act of 1974 by leaking my Personally Identifiable Information” to the Washington Post.

In the end, though, being exposed as a government employee has done little to impede the Pentagon propagandists from their regularly-scheduled posting. Apparently unconcerned with the optics, all four have continued using social media to advocate for imperial aggression in the Middle East. For most, the workload appears to consist largely of posting comments praising Trump and Hegseth and belittling their detractors.

In the case of Pounds, however, her online activity has proven significantly more disturbing, raising further questions about legality.



Special Pentagon Employee Jennica Pounds' "DSA Explorer" tracks and demonizes American activists, often with faulty data

Tracking Antiwar Activists, Raising Further Questions About Legality

On August 28, the Pentagon special government employee unveiled a new digital database tracking those she accused of "orbiting the anti-imperialist spine," called "DSA Explorer."

Alongside the Democratic Socialists of America, the page displays a vast, near-impenetrable web of connections between groups like Black Lives Matter, CODEPINK, Pastors for Peace, Greek's Syriza Party, and the NAACP. The site, [Pounds wrote](#), catalogues the people and organizations comprising "the wider anti-imperialist solidarity network."

Individuals listed include such disparate figures as the British Labour Party's **Dianne Abbott**, former Colombian President **Gustavo Petro**, and conscious rapper **Talib Kweli**. Clearly hoping to prompt investigation by federal authorities, Pounds accuses dozens of those listed of operating as "potential unregistered foreign agents."

In an ironic twist of fate, Pounds' efforts to censor and blacklist her opponents closely mirror those of the former disinformation czar **Nina Jankowicz**, who was also officially empowered by the US government to target the perceived political enemies of the regime. Desperate to criminalize leftists for imagined crimes, Pounds is now emulating the Deep State censors she once railed against.

But in pursuing American citizens by name with a McCarthyite surveillance scheme, Pounds could be opening herself up to litigation by her targets. Perhaps sensing the legal delicacy of her clumsy name-and shame project, she placed a fine-print legalese "disclaimer" on the page, claiming the material was for "research, educational, and journalistic purposes only."

Her blacklist, Pounds wrote, was "offered "as is" without warranty of any kind" because it "may contain errors or omissions and is not represented as complete, current, or 100% accurate." The connections she alleges are a work of creative fiction, the text suggests: "Inferred, ideological, and patron/sphere associations are analytical interpretations, not statements of fact."

Despite claiming many of her targets were "potential unregistered foreign agents," Pounds' disclaimer insists that "nothing here alleges unlawful conduct by any named person or organization." To drive the point home, the text concludes, "The author disclaims all liability for any use of, or reliance on, its contents."

While such a waiver might hold water when issued by a private citizen, it's unclear whether the same standards apply to government employees. But Pounds was seemingly unconcerned with the prospect of facing consequences for her actions.

Days after launching "DSA Explorer," Pounds published a nearly-identical database focusing on anarchists and antifascist activists in the Americas and Europe who'd been using the "NoBlogs" platform, showcasing information which appeared to have been stolen and handed to her by the US government.

The "NoBlogs" files were seized from the Italian anarchist collective Autistici Inventati, or A/I, which provided email and hosting services to thousands of leftist web pages on both sides of the Atlantic before it was hacked by a US government faction – just days after the State Department [declared](#) A/I a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist group." When it was overtaken on August 26, the page was defaced with a message telling users that all their information had been "saved and given to the United States government."

That claim was immediately [validated](#) by Pounds, who stated that she had inside information about the hack: "Can confirm the authorities have everything that was on the NoBlogs servers." The statement strongly suggests she was using her government access to draw up her blacklists, and implies that Washington is at least tacitly supporting the surveillance project.



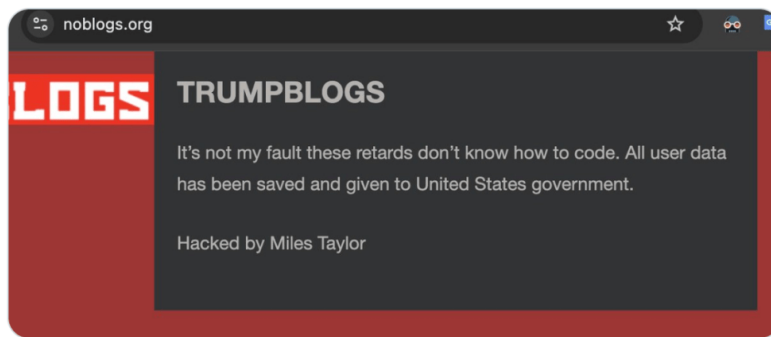
DataRepublican (small r) ✓
@DataRepublican

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For those not in the know, NoBlogs is a platform shared by antifa and far-left Marxists worldwide, ran by Autistici Inventati. The State Department designed them as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group yesterday.

And now ... they're TrumpBlogs.



Who is Else Secretly Working for the Pentagon?

While Pounds, Maness, Schlichter, and Anderson have been forced to admit to having partnered with the Pentagon without prior public disclosure, It's still unknown whether the Department of War is employing other special employees, or whether Pentagon may be paying others through third parties. But one extremely influential MAGA personality who appears to be close to the Pentagon – so close she hitched a ride to Guantanamo Bay with War Secretary Pete Hegseth – is **Laura Loomer**.

In addition to making headlines for accusing lawmakers of African descent of being "[ghetto Black bitches](#)," Loomer has also recently launched a crusade against The Grayzone and its editor-in-chief, Max Blumenthal. While Blumenthal was reporting from Iran on the funeral of slain Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, Loomer demanded his arrest, writing on social media:

"If Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin is worth anything, he will order that Blumenthal be taken off the plane [upon return to the

U.S.], detained, and revoke his passport.”

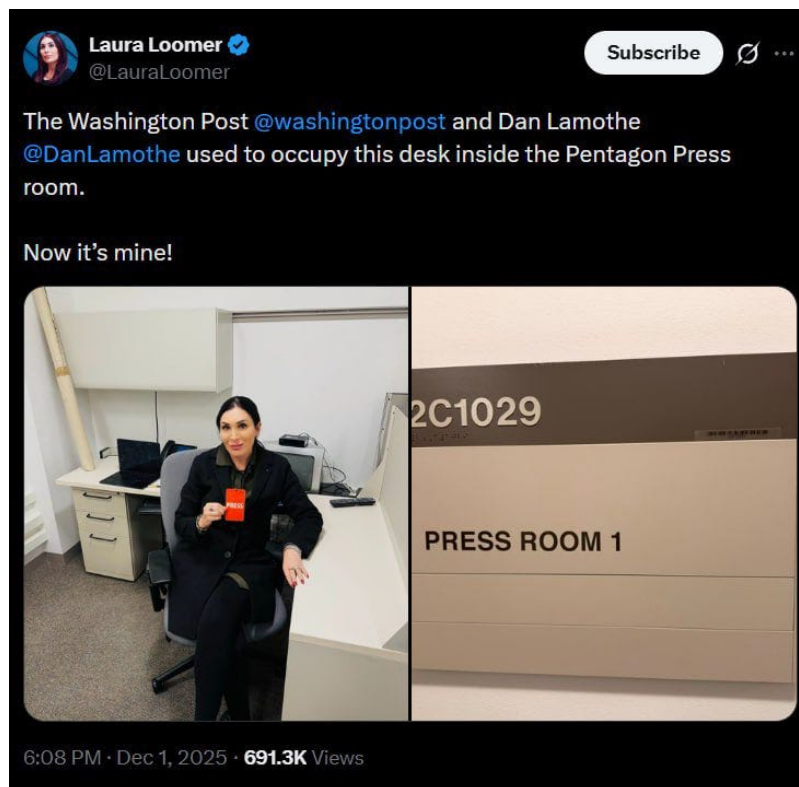
Five days after her post, Blumenthal was stripped of his electronic devices by Customs and Border Patrol agents at Dulles International Airport after an interrogation which hewed closely to the deranged narrative outlined by Loomer. Loomer immediately took credit for the incident, [boasting](#) that she had “reported him to the authorities,” and [declaring](#) to Blumenthal:

“You are subhuman to me. I look at you as a piece of political taxidermy that I can put on my wall.”

Jenin Younes, the President of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee – which is representing Blumenthal in an ongoing lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security – [later summarized](#) the incident:

“In Max’s case, Laura Loomer, a close ally of President Trump, called for Max to be arrested while he was still abroad because of his journalism and viewpoints. Loomer boasted about reporting Max to federal authorities, and effectively took credit for the seizure of his phones. Given Loomer’s well-documented influence over President Trump, there is a strong likelihood that her targeting led to the unlawful search and seizure.”

When Hegseth tried to force longtime Pentagon correspondents to sign draconian loyalty oaths in October 2025, prompting a mass walkout by military reporters, Loomer immediately stepped in to fill the void. Just days after the media offices were vacated, she was among a hodgepodge of conservative influencers who were issued press passes. When the group sat down for its first press briefing in December, Loomer was one of the first to be [called on](#).



Months later, Loomer hit a new low when she publicly declared that [Americans may “need another 9/11”](#) so they understand that “it’s not such a great idea to allow for Muslims to be involved in our political process in America.” This remark apparently caused no concerns for Hegseth or his

Department of War, which invited Loomer to tour the US military’s concentration camp on occupied Cuban territory in Guantanamo Bay just days later.

In an October 2025 interview with **former Rep. Majorie Taylor Greene**, who’s been targeted with vitriolic attacks by Loomer, **Tucker Carlson** [referred to Loomer](#) as “some kind of informal advisor to the Defense Department, wandering around the Pentagon.”

To this day, Loomer’s proximity to Pentagon leadership remains on full display, surfacing most recently when the self-styled “[White advocate](#)” claimed in early September to have the inside story about Hegseth’s recent disappearance from the airwaves at Fox News, where he worked prior to the Department of War. [Citing](#) an unnamed “senior Department of War source,” Loomer dutifully reported Hegseth’s side of the story, claiming that Fox was angered by his refusal to give the outlet special treatment when assigning press passes.

So far, there’s no concrete proof that Loomer is working as a Special Government Employee of the Pentagon. But her activities strongly resemble those seemingly assigned to SGEs/HQEs like Pounds, Maness, Schlichter, and Anderson.

Today, Loomer is calling for a government investigation of Max Blumenthal and demanding he be criminalized for his journalism. The question

must be asked: who is she actually working for?

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Wyatt Reed, *Correspondent covering the end of empire*

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