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TRUMP ON TELEGRAM REBUILDING HIS “BIG LIE” SOCIAL MEDIA FOOTPRINT

***TRUMP’S AUGUST REINSTATEMENT BOAST INCITING HIS
FOLLOWERS AS DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WARNS OF A
SUMMER OF DOMESTIC EXTREMISM***

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Since being banned by Facebook and Twitter from their platforms, Donald Trump has migrated his social media messaging to the encrypted mobile APP known as “TELEGRAM” to perpetuate his "Big Lie" election fraud caper. Trump’s objective is to mobilize his supporters to support state election audits which Trump claims (without any foundation) will reverse the outcome of the 2020 presidential election and lead to his reinstatement in August.

In recent months, Trump’s TELEGRAM following has grown exponentially in tandem with Trump’s disinformation campaign and his incendiary condemnation of Republicans who are opposing election “audits” in Arizona and Georgia. His followers have poured money into his coffers to perpetuate the delusion and continue to inflame resentment against state authorities opposing these sham audits.

Additionally, QAnon crackpots are pouring more and more venomous conspiracy theories onto TELEGRAM, and from there being pushed out onto mainstream platforms to buttress Trump’s claims. CSW has uncovered white nationalist militarized social media militia groups – such as Proud Boys and Boogaloo Bois chapters in election audit states -- picking up Trump’s calls off of TELEGRAM accounts and hashtags to overturn election results.

Coincidentally, the growing threat of domestic extremist violence was confirmed just this morning in a bulletin issued by the Department of Homeland Security:

"In recent weeks, domestic violent extremists (DVEs) motivated by various violent ideologies have continued to advocate violence and plan attacks," the bulletin said. "As of 16 June, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist-white supremacists (RMVE-WSs) were

sharing downloadable links to a publication discussing targeting mass gatherings, critical infrastructure, and law enforcement officers."

Although Trump's TELEGRAM following is minuscule compared to his once-mighty following on Twitter and Facebook, think of TELEGRAM as a massive Trump rally. TELEGRAM enables every extremist, white nationalist, neo-Nazi, foreign provocateur, and QAnon conspiracists to congregate on Trump's personal and collateral Trumpian-supporting accounts.

Mapping out this constellation of extremists, CSW has uncovered a direct link between Trump's posts and the amplification of his messaging back to the very platforms from which he was booted off: Facebook/Instagram and Twitter.

For example, CSW traced Trump's TELEGRAM posts back to Facebook via camouflaged QAnon hashtags such as #PatriotsInControl, #PatriotsUprising, #PatriotsUnited. Such QAnon accounts were supposed to have been banned by Facebook last October. This indicates that Trump and his band of audit provocateurs have intentionally or unintentionally located a backdoor to enable Trump to spread his Big Lie back onto mainstream social media platforms.

Why Trump & His Team Gravitated to TELEGRAM?

TELEGRAM's technology makes it a perfect refuge for Trump and his core extremist believers. Its encrypted features prevent penetration by law enforcement -- making it exceedingly hard to detect plots and plans to promote political extremist machinations.

Moreover, extremists can coordinate group meetings and mobilize through its channels and feed off of Trump's Big Lie accusations. TELEGRAM also facilitates extremist funding via sales of illicit drugs and neo-Nazi paraphernalia as previously documented by CSW in March 2021 ("Digital Weeds") and in November 2020 ("Hatebook" Facebook's Neo-Nazi Storefronts). Trump's dead-enders have found a hospitable safe-haven on TELEGRAM on which to plot and plan further political turmoil.

TELEGRAM is owned by Russian-born Pavel Durov, an international "man on the lamb" with no U.S. organizational presence, no known headquarters, and a camouflaged managerial team. He and his senior staff move from place to place to avoid regulation. Durov knows quite well that TELEGRAM to become a one-stop social media marketplace for global neo-Nazis, anti-Semitic groups, QAnon crackpot believers, and extremists on both sides of the political spectrum, but refuses to do anything about it - all in the name of free speech.

After the January 6 Insurrection against the Capitol, TELEGRAM became the most downloaded APP...adding over 25 million new subscribers, most of whom belonged to far-right extremist groups.

According to WIRED magazine, which retained web analytics firm Tgstat, Trump-focused channels – group chats with an unlimited number of subscribers –experienced unprecedented growth. Since January, many new users have published content promoting Trump on five of the top ten channels, including TELEGRAM QAnon channels, and channels directly traceable back to domestic militia groups, including Proud Boys, Three Percenters, Oath Keepers, and Patriots Front.

Today, the fastest growing Trump TELEGRAM channel has over one million subscribers, with a reach of @ 40-45 million (defined as the number of users who see at least one of the Trump TELEGRAM channel posts). Nevertheless, this TELEGRAM following is a far cry from Trump's combined following of 35 million on Facebook and close to 89 million followers on Twitter.

Although TELEGRAM's posted Terms of Service prohibit public calls to violence Trump's presence on TELEGRAM has provided QAnon believers and white supremacists a safe harbor to re-congregate around Trump with impunity.

A Labor Day Reinstatement Fantasy

Whenever the state election audits are completed and whatever their results, Trump is riling up his base to perpetuate the delusion that he will be back in the White House by Labor Day (without any credible explanation). And as January 6 proved, Trump inciting his core base of dead-enders must not be ignored.

Avoiding the Jan 6 Social Media Intel Breakdown

To avoid a repeat of the intelligence failures leading up to January 6, CSW proposed in January the creation of a nationwide public/private Social Media Early Warning Center to provide federal, state, and local authorities access to social media trends pointing to potential violence. An early concerted focus by authorities and social media watchdog groups on TELEGRAM's Trumpian output is one reason why such a Center is critical.

Although there is no direct evidence that Trump's growing volume of "Big Lie" social messaging has triggered actual plotting and planning of incitement, the next few weeks spent monitoring Trump's social media will indicate whether his barrage of reinstatement disinformation escalates into something more alarming.

Needed: A Transnational Effort to Regulate TELEGRAM

TELEGRAM's role as THE most dangerous social media platform thru which extremists plot, plan, and execute acts of domestic extremism warrants a far more concerted effort by U.S., European and Middle East authorities to rein it in.

Could it be a mere coincidence that Trump selected TELEGRAM as his new social media home where many of his most extremist supporters congregate and operate?

Until we acknowledge and deal with TELEGRAM's concierge terrorist services the very danger we are trying to prevent will continue unhindered.

That is why earlier this year CSW launched a national multi-pronged campaign against TELEGRAM, including filing lawsuits against Apple and Google for enabling this terrorist-supporting mobile application to operate in their APP stores.

Amb. Marc Ginsberg, President of CSW stated:

"As Trump perpetuates his weapons-grade Big Lie on TELEGRAM, his frenzied followers are superspreading it back to Facebook and Twitter. The election audits in Arizona and Georgia and in other locales are springboards for replicating the organized and well-funded social media incitement that helped foment violence on Jan. 6 at the Capitol - with state capitals and state officials serving as potential targets of extremist incitement. The warning signs are there to see on Trump's TELEGRAM channel and on the subterranean social media exchanges of his followers."

The following screengrab represents a CSW intercept from today of a Facebook tactical QAnon account showing QAnon followers how to avoid Facebook restrictions against posting QAnon identified messages:

"You can go to your fb settings and choose to not be tagged and you won't come up anywhere on all of FB to be tagged but just know it is one of the most effective ways to get around all the censorship and throttling. When you use tags you go from a handful of people seeing your information to literally thousands, especially when other people also tag and share too. USING THE RIGHT HASHTAGS WILL ELEVATE THOSE NUMBERS EXPONENTIALLY"

