An Investigation Into Foreign Entities Who Are Targeting Servicemembers and Veterans Online

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An Investigation Into Foreign Entities Who Are Targeting Servicemembers and Veterans Online

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vietnam Veterans of America's (VVA) two-year investigation, beginning in August 2017, has documented persistent, pervasive, and coordinated online targeting of American servicemembers, veterans, and their families by foreign entities who seek to disrupt American democracy. American veterans and the social-media followers of several congressionally chartered veterans service organizations were specifically targeted by the Russian Internet Research Agency with at least 113 ads during and after the 2016 election. However, this represents but a tiny fraction of the Russian activity that targeted this community with divisive propaganda: The organic politically divisive content (organic meaning not having to do with ads, rather unpaid posts and comments) created by Russians have a far greater reach than the known paid ads; for even though many of the original sources have been removed from social-media platforms, their posts and comments continue to be propagated and disseminated by foreign administrators (aka admins, who maintain and manage online sites) to spread hateful and politically divisive messages.

In 2018, Facebook released a tool to reveal the countries of origin of Facebook-page admins for pages that have more than 110,000 followers or have purchased ads of a political nature. This tool has not inhibited the creation, rapid growth, and influence of foreign-born Facebook pages. This measure has, however, revealed that known Russian propaganda and similar politically divisive content that targets servicemembers and veterans is being spread by admins from at least 30 foreign countries, with concentrations in Eastern Europe and Vietnam. The tool has also revealed that these pages often have admins in multiple countries, including suspicious combinations of countries with native language barriers and no geographic commonalities: For example, the American-focused Facebook page "Veterans Nation" has spread Russian-generated content and had admins only in Vietnam, Brazil, and Ukraine. A second example is the "Honoring our American Heroes" Facebook page, which has four admins in the US, one in Indonesia, one in Iran, one in Malaysia, one in the Philippines, and one in Vietnam. This cross-border cooperation suggests an international conspiracy possibly related to and larger than the previously reported Russian disinformation campaign.

Fake Veteran Accounts

These foreign admins have created individual social-media accounts that purport to belong to American veterans working at reputable veterans organizations. They use these fake-veteran accounts to send friend requests to the relatively small community of veteran advocates and connect with its prominent members who work to shape federal policy. These fake-veteran accounts infiltrate both public Facebook pages and private Facebook groups, where they can spread propaganda and false news, while shaping and moderating/censoring the conversations of the unsuspecting community of American veterans who follow or join these groups and pages. These admins also recruit Americans who have an interest in veterans and other foreign nationals to help moderate the groups and pages and make them appear more legitimate.

One such page, "Veterans of Vietnam," with nearly 160,000 followers, has had admins in Russia, Ukraine, and Italy. This page has been bolstered by at least three dedicated Russian-generated Vietnam-veteran-focused websites that were created to build the Facebook page's credibility by sharing information about the Vietnam War and veterans' benefits. These admins also control a closed Facebook group, "American Veterans of Vietnam," which solicits information from Vietnam veterans regarding their military experience.

Fake accounts are also being utilized by hostile Chinese intelligence services to connect with high-ranking and influential members of the intelligence and defense communities centered in and around Washington, DC. Chinese officials are seeking to exploit financially vulnerable members of these communities and leverage debts to recruit spies.

Using Established Names and Logos

Foreign admins have been using VVA's logo and name, and the logos of several other congressionally chartered veterans service organizations (in addition to introducing almost identically named organizations: such as Vietnam Veterans of America versus Veterans of America), to establish influential social-media presences. These foreign admins then exploit the reputations of these established and legitimate veterans organizations to spread false, politically divisive, and hateful content while peddling counterfeit merchandise, both creating income for these criminal organizations and introducing inflammatory political content into the physical world from an online environment.

Separately, individual Snapchat and Instagram accounts have been persistently using VVA's name and logo to lure its supporters into participating in fraudulent fundraising. These foreign admins ask veterans to supply their personal banking information, claiming that if they solicit money by pretending to be doing fundraising for the VVA, they will then receive a share of the funds themselves, which will be deposited into their personal accounts.

Identity Theft

Foreign entities, primarily individuals from West Africa, have been stealing the identities of servicemembers and veterans, including those who have been killed in action, to target Americans with romance scams. The primary targets of these insidious and cruel scams are older, lonely Americans who are relatively new to social media and the internet. The ploy of posing as a servicemember or veteran for financial gain has serious consequences for both those whose identities are stolen and those who are duped into giving money. The FBI received nearly 18,500 complaints from victims of romance or similar internet scams last year, with reported losses exceeding $362 million, up 71 percent from 2017, according to a recent article published by the *New York Times*.[1]

Interference in Presidential Campaign

VVA has discovered foreign entities targeting veterans for the purpose of interference in the 2020 presidential campaign.

Admins from Macedonia and the United Kingdom controlled the page "Vets for Trump," from April 2019 to August 2019,[2] which has amassed over 131,000 followers. This page posts explicitly pro-Trump and anti-Democratic-candidate messages and memes. The page also posts pro-Russia/Putin, pro-Assange/WikiLeaks, as well as anti-Robert-Mueller and anti-FBI content. In terms of anti-Democrat content, the page has been primarily focused on attacking the top Democratic presidential candidates: Vice President Joe Biden, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Senator Bernie Sanders, while also going after Congressman Beto O'Rourke, Senator Kamala Harris, Senator Cory Booker, and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. While previous reporting revealed in hearings held by committees such as the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) have focused primarily on paid ads by foreign elements — the unpaid, organic posts and comments that appear on pages like this have mostly escaped scrutiny, despite the fact that they have far greater influence because of their tendency to be copied and shared.

While under the control of foreign admins, "Vets for Trump" has also focused on fomenting hatred by using xenophobic and Islamophobic propaganda against the Democratic women of color who are freshmen in Congress. After creating incendiary posts about Representatives Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, these foreign admins then connect them with propaganda to the 2020 Democratic candidates. These insidious tactics sow discord among Americans, providing fuel for conflict on a public forum between veterans sympathetic to the damaging, false message planted and Americans of other political persuasions.

The foreign admins are skilled and sophisticated enough to operate undetected by not only laypersons but those in political life as well: Followers of the "Vets for Trump" page include at least one elected Republican official who was a campaign surrogate of the

Trump campaign during the 2016 election, as well as an individual who was the inaugural chairman of a veteran-centric GOP PAC closely tied to the White House.

This page had coordinated its behavior with a similarly named Facebook page, "Veterans for Donald Trump," with identical content that was frequently posted at the same time from a mobile phone through at least April 3, 2019. Identical content was again posted on August 22. The "Veterans for Donald Trump" page currently has 14 domestic admins (with no foreign admins able to be seen).

Combatting Foreign Predators

Vietnam Veterans of America is presenting this report to the general public so that Americans and Congress can be aware of and have a better understanding of how these foreign admins operate. We are urging the White House, Congress, and the private sector to act quickly to combat this predatory behavior in cyber-environments and to ensure that the exploitation of and attacks against servicemembers, veterans, and our families do not go unpunished.

Although social-media companies have been the primary focus of condemnation for these attacks against Americans — and they are absolutely responsible for their vulnerabilities — our citizens and the politicians who represent us must recognize that these attacks are by foreign enemies. While social-media companies, the US government, and the American public must make efforts to harden our current vulnerabilities, we must also prioritize the endeavor of disincentivizing attacks by punishing foreign adversaries.

Recommended Action

White House

The White House must elevate American cybersecurity to the Cabinet level by Executive Order (EO), thereby prioritizing and centralizing our response and safeguards to risks from bad actors. A Director of Cybersecurity's role would be to ensure that American cybersecurity is a priority in every aspect of modern government. This EO should create a Civilian Cybersecurity Advisory Board consisting of Chief Internet Security Officers (CISOs) from the American companies that are the most important stakeholders in American internet infrastructure and cybersecurity.

In recognition of the fact that military service results in increased likelihood of targeting by foreign adversaries, the EO should be used to appoint a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health would report directly to the VA's Under Secretary of Health and be charged with the responsibility of developing and prioritizing programs at the VA to improve cyber-hygiene — the practice of taking steps and the precautions necessary to keep data secure from outside attacks.

The President should make permanent and expand the identity-theft insurance and credit-monitoring currently provided to victims of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data breach of 2015 to include all servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The EO should also provide complimentary antivirus software to servicemembers, veterans, and their families, which would be a preventive measure against cybercrime and furthermore would reduce the reliance on programs that repair damage after a cybercrime has been committed.

Department of Veterans Affairs

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should immediately develop plans to make the cyber-hygiene of veterans an urgent priority within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA must educate and train veterans on personal cybersecurity: how to mitigate vulnerabilities, vigilantly maintain safe practices, and recognize threats, including how to identify instances of online manipulation.

Department of Defense

The Secretary of Defense should create a working group to study the security risks inherent in the use of common personal electronic devices and apps at home and abroad by servicemembers. The Secretary must also direct commanders to include personal cybersecurity training and regular cyber-hygiene checks for all servicemembers.

Department of State

The Secretary of State should instruct the State Department to take all possible diplomatic efforts to ensure that countries around the world prioritize the apprehension of cybercriminals who target Americans. The Secretary should draft strong, diplomatic punitive measures against countries that shield or refuse to prosecute cybercriminals from their countries who target Americans.

Department of Justice

The Attorney General must ensure that companies that do business on the internet maintain evidence of and report all cybercrimes and propaganda campaigns suspected to have been committed against Americans by foreign entities.

Congress

Congress should update laws regarding internet privacy and fraud protection, in addition to granting federal law enforcement the jurisdiction to respond to and prevent cybercrimes. Congress should guarantee that law enforcement has the personnel and funding needed so that it can prioritize interdiction of networks of foreign cybercriminals who target Americans for financial fraud. It is essential to have laws that make certain all evidence of cybercrimes and foreign disinformation campaigns are preserved and that statutes of limitation are extended appropriately so that law enforcement and independent researchers can ensure that victims see their perpetrators brought to justice.

Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs

The Committees on Armed Services must commission studies to evaluate the risk to force readiness presented by cybercrime and foreign-born propaganda campaigns and determine how many servicemembers have already been impacted, as well as what security risks are presented by servicemembers' use of personal devices and apps at home and abroad. The Committees should pass legislation to offer all servicemembers and their families complimentary antivirus software, in addition to make permanent the offer of lifetime credit-monitoring and identity-theft insurance. This legislation should instruct the Department of Defense (DoD) to make personal cyber-health a priority and require training of all servicemembers in cyber-hygiene.

Social-Media and Internet Companies

Social-media companies, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, must maintain all evidence of foreign interference for examination by law enforcement and independent researchers. If current laws or regulations prevent this, these companies should actively petition the government for the appropriate changes. Evidence approved for release should be watermarked, which will verify its authenticity, and maintained in public repository of known propaganda.

Social-media companies should proactively and continually screen military and veterans groups and pages for inauthentic behavior. Furthermore, they should verify military service of those who claim it (especially LinkedIn) — use a "green" checkmark or verification badge, display a clear warning for claimed but unverified military status, or prohibit military/vet status from being claimed/visible unless internally verified.

In addition to screening military and veterans groups and pages, social-media companies should aggressively hunt for criminals using these platforms and report suspicious activity to law enforcement rather than simply rely on reports submitted by users.

Social-media and internet companies must also empower reliable individuals and organizations with tools to assist them in discovering foreign “trolls” — those who deliberately post provocative, incendiary, or false content with the intent to cause harm. The “troll hunters” who produce reliable reporting should be well compensated.

Facebook

Include locations of all current and past admins in page history — and make the country of origin more prominent so that average users can see this information without a click-through.

Scan for confirmed political propaganda of Russian/foreign origin using artificial intelligence (AI) and notify users/pages; auto-watermark content to identify as propaganda from Russian/foreign source.

Develop AI to detect romance scammers — zero in on suspicious connections between military-affiliated West Africa and the United States, a common link.

Twitter

Seek out and verify legitimate veterans and veterans organizations who are engaged in politics and policy, and suspend predatory, false ones.

LinkedIn

Verify claimed military affiliations, and hide those that are unverified.

INTRODUCTION

American servicemembers, veterans, and the organizations that represent them have been persistently targeted by hostile foreign entities in online environments for nefarious purposes. These entities include but are not limited to Russian intelligence services.[3] Their goals are to perpetrate financial fraud,[4] spread anti-American propaganda,[5] and manipulate the online public community spaces and sow discord by exploiting and inflaming national divisions.[6,7] While their objectives also include election interference,[8] their activities and their effects continue without interruption year-round and are not limited to political elections.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), a congressionally chartered veterans service organization (VSO), has endured persistent and pervasive foreign-born online campaigns that have targeted our membership and organization since at least 2014. VVA first became aware of these cyberattacks in August 2017 with the discovery of an impostor Facebook page using VVA's trademarked name and logo that was found to be linked to a suspicious Europe-based website. The page was spreading falsified news — changing dates on true stories and sensationalizing and exaggerating otherwise benign reporting — on issues that are closely associated with this specific population. Early results of VVA's investigation were shared with various federal agencies and congressional committees in March and April 2018. This preliminary report identified an entity in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, as responsible for the creation of impostor social-media accounts meant to mislead Americans into believing that they represented VVA.[9] That analysis sparked an ongoing investigation, which has over the course of thousands of hours led to the discovery of foreign entities from at least 32 countries targeting members of the military and veterans (MilVets) community on social media by impersonating servicemembers and MilVets organizations. The list of host nations includes Russia and concentrations of countries in Eastern Europe and the Asian-Pacific.

Foreign adversaries have many motivations for targeting members of the MilVets community. This population has a higher propensity than other subgroups of Americans who are politically engaged — they are more likely to vote and serve in public office — and they tend to wield greater political influence on those around them.[10] Additionally, nearly one-third of the federal workforce is composed of veterans.[11] This makes the targeting of the MilVets population a means to jeopardize federal agencies ranging from law enforcement and defense to healthcare and food safety.

America's adversaries focus on deceiving MilVets because they are particularly vulnerable to blackmail: Beyond the battlefield and long after they've taken off the uniform, MilVets who require security clearances can have their careers ended if their finances are compromised or if they are put in situations that leave them vulnerable.

The data breach that was announced by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)[12] on June 4, 2015, became a valuable lesson in cybersecurity. Malware allegedly associated with a Chinese-government-sponsored "advanced persistent threat," or APT, known as Deep Panda obtained the background-investigation records of current, former, and prospective federal employees and contractors dating as far back as 2000. Twenty-two-million individuals had their personal data stolen. To put this into the context of the MilVets community, every servicemember whose military occupational specialty, rank, or position required a security clearance since before the Global War on Terror began had sensitive information such as their social-security numbers, address histories, and contact information stolen by a foreign government. Soon after the breach was publicized, OPM and the Department of Defense (DoD) announced a contract to provide temporary credit-monitoring and identity-theft insurance to victims of the breach. Congress then passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (Public Law No. 115-31). Section 633 of that law requires OPM to provide complimentary insurance to these 22-million affected individuals from 2016-2026.

Four years after the OPM data breach, the Justice Department filed charges alleging that some of that data had been used to take out fraudulent loans in the names of unsuspecting victims.[13] This incident could be the first of many, particularly if the state-sponsored APT Deep Panda is selling the information on the dark web (the portion of the internet that allows users to remain untraceable). There remains the tremendous risk of APT Deep Panda coordinating with hostile non-state intelligence services, such as WikiLeaks, or hostile nation states in an attempt to disrupt the US government and population. If published publicly, this vast trove of information would cause serious personal damage to the 22-million affected Americans. The ripple effect of this vulnerability being exploited would cause incalculable social and economic harm to our country.

While this threat of personal financial ruin hovers over the heads of millions of veterans, an even more disturbing hazard awaits troops on the battlefield at the intersection of cyber- and kinetic warfare, or cyber-kinetic warfare, in which enemy forces can detect and/or interfere with electronic devices and use them to cause harm. The Russian hacking unit known as APT 28, or Fancy Bear, has been known to use malware on the personal devices of Ukrainian troops to track their movements and ultimately target them with conventional weapons.[14] Ukrainian troops and their families have also been targeted by Russia with “pinpoint propaganda” messages sent via text.[15] These messages aren’t meant only to destroy morale. Texts sent to Ukrainian military families falsely announcing that their soldiers were killed in action cause panic, and Russians track the resulting surge in calls and mobile-phone signals from the families to the troops so that they can target the soldiers with conventional weapons.[16] This insidious tactic could be similarly used against American troops in current conflict areas with information garnered from the OPM leak, as well as by using information easily gathered from American troops’ social-media profiles. The effects could be further amplified by impostor social-media accounts meant to look like reputable or high-ranking MilVets and the organizations that represent them — while thousands of bot accounts (autonomous programs on the internet designed to behave like real individuals) are activated to make it confounding to discern fact from fiction.

In 2018 yet another growing threat related to impostor social-media accounts that target the intelligence and defense communities was brought to light. LinkedIn was singled out as a platform exploited by China through the use of impostor accounts meant to blend in with those of MilVets and intelligence professionals.[17] US officials have said that there is some correlation between targets of the Chinese LinkedIn campaign and the OPM data breach. Recent court documents have demonstrated that China uses LinkedIn to target Americans for recruitment as spies and then pays those spies to hand over the information of LinkedIn users they connect with. This tactic is as easy as creating a fake profile using a picture of a servicemember and falsifying a military affiliation in the account’s work history.

This report will focus on the recent targeting of MilVets by foreign entities online — primarily on social-media platforms. We document the creation of websites meant to mislead as well as mine data from and implant malicious software into the computer systems of American servicemembers and veterans. The tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that foreign entities use to build audiences and spread disinformation and social discord will be displayed visually so that readers can see how this problem looks and evolves. We also reanalyzed the ads known to have been created by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) to reveal that the targeting of MilVets during the 2016 campaign was so specific that the Russians paid to explicitly reach followers of the Facebook pages of trusted VSOs such as “Vietnam Veterans of America,” “Disabled American Veterans,” and “AMVETS,” as well as veterans organizations affiliated with far-left and far-right politics such as “Vietnam Veterans Against the War” and “Concerned Veterans for America.” The report will conclude with policy recommendations for coordinating the response necessary to protect veterans and national security in this world where everything is connected through the internet — through the Fifth Domain: the newest theater of warfare.

APPROACH

This report will provide a detailed qualitative analysis of the methods foreign adversaries use to target servicemembers and veterans in cyber-environments, as well as provide recommendations for the White House, Congress, and the private sector to respond effectively. Our analysis will reveal previously unpublished findings that include, but are not limited to, a massive campaign to trick veterans into downloading malware by an as-yet-unidentified foreign entity.

To conduct this study, we analyzed suspicious social-media activity in and around the tight-knit community of MilVet advocates centered in Washington, DC, for two years, beginning in August 2017. Suspicious social-media accounts and websites were documented with screen-captures (a screenshot of an image on a computer, tablet, or cell phone), then catalogued and organized by date of recording.

"Suspicious activity" includes: coordinated inauthentic behavior;[18] spelling and grammar mistakes typical of non-native English speakers; sharing URLs that are associated with malware; masking of links with URL-shorteners; soliciting personal information from MilVets; the use of ad technology to target and retarget MilVets; and the use of the same MilVet-related photos, memes (a captioned picture or video, often altered to be humorous, that is copied and spread online), or links across multiple accounts and platforms. Suspicious activity also includes false representation of MilVet status or VSO affiliation and the spreading of known foreign-state-sponsored and state-controlled propaganda such as TASS,[19] RT,[20] and Sputnik News.[21] Other suspicious activity includes the changing of the names and focuses (ie, topics of discussion, themes) of pages and groups related to MilVets.

Searches were performed via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine[22] to examine now-shuttered websites and the previous editions of websites that are still functioning. Suspicious websites whose information was publicly available were examined via the DomainTools WHOIS page[23] to determine country of origin, date of creation, registrar, and registrant. Suspicious written content was checked for plagiarism/origin via the Google search engine and the website PapersOwl.com. Reverse-image-search was performed with the TinEye Google Chrome Plugin, as well as Google's reverse-image-search function.

Facebook's automated "recommended pages" and "related pages" functions that appear on users' Facebook pages on desktop were used to map networks of suspicious pages targeting the MilVets community. How Facebook's algorithms determine what pages are related or recommended is unclear, but the tool has been consistently useful nonetheless. Beginning in August 2018, Facebook made available to users in the United States a function to reveal the countries of origin of admins of pages with very large followings and those who have purchased ads on politically sensitive topics and "issues of national importance," which appears to include all MilVet-related merchandise. When available, admin profiles of the less-followed individual Facebook pages, group administrators, and bots (autonomous programs on the Internet designed to behave like a real individual) were examined to determine likely country of origin based on geographic "check-ins," likes, and the languages used in public posts.

All Russian IRA ads released by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI)[24] were examined, and we determined that 113 of them included unredacted imagery and/or text content and/or targeting details that were related to the MilVet community. Isolating the MilVet-focused IRA ads from the rest allowed new patterns to emerge. We analyzed the ads by separating them into subcategories according to the specific affinity groups or divisive issues that they targeted, paying special attention to the ads with which the Russians specifically targeted VVA and other legitimate veterans organizations.

Most suspicious accounts in our investigation on Twitter found us — following, retweeting, and liking VVA-affiliated Twitter accounts in unusual yet predictable patterns. Twitter's automated "who to follow" function that appears on users' browsers and mobile apps allowed us to identify networks displaying coordinated inauthentic behavior. As is the case with the similar Facebook function, it is unclear how the algorithm works, but Twitter's automated recommendations were very helpful for mapping bot networks. Other Twitter accounts were brought to our attention by MilVets and other VSOs who were aware of our investigation and believed they had spotted suspicious behavior.

Facebook's free Google Chrome extension "CrowdTangle"[25] was used to determine which social-media accounts had shared specific links, such as web pages featuring falsified news. This helped us to identify coordinated inauthentic behavior and related accounts that spanned various social-media platforms. This tool also lists the number of followers of each social-media account that shared these links and the number of reactions (likes, shares, retweets, etc.) each shared link resulted in. This helped us to estimate the impact and virality of certain content.

ABBREVIATIONS

AI: Artificial Intelligence

APT: Advanced Persistent Threat

C2: Command & Control

CVA: Concerned Veterans for America

DoD: Department of Defense

HPSCI: House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

IAVA: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

ICA: Intelligence Community Assessment

IRA: Russian Internet Research Agency

MilVets: Military and Veterans

NSPM: National Security Presidential Memorandum

OPM: Office of Personnel Management

PII: Personally Identifiable Information

TTPs: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

URL: Uniform Resource Locator (also known as a web address)

VA: Department of Veterans Affairs

VPN: Virtual Private Network

VSO: Veterans Service Organization

VVA: Vietnam Veterans of America

GLOSSARY

This list contains terms narrowly defined within the context of and in relation to this investigation.

Admin/administrator: a Facebook admin/administrator controls and manages settings on pages and groups

Adware: usually refers to unwanted advertisements or malware (malicious software)

Antifa: stands for the "anti-fascist" movement that had its roots in left-wing protests against right-wing conservatism; a loose collection of regional groups and individuals aiming — through peaceful and violent measures — to resist and disrupt political actions they consider to be far-right and/or racist

App: short for "application," a program for personal electronic devices

Bot: autonomous programs on the internet designed to behave like real individuals; some run automatically, while others require specific input to execute commands; bots are often used to perform malicious actions

Command and Control: the exercising of authority by a commander (including planning, coordinating, directing, and controlling) to accomplish a mission

Cyber Caliphate: cyber-hacker group self-identifying as the digital army for ISIS

Cyber-health/cyber-hygiene: practice of risk mitigation online; includes taking steps such as changing passwords frequently and installing antivirus software

Cyber-kinetic warfare: in which enemy forces can detect or interfere with electronic devices and use them to cause physical harm

Dark web: a collection of websites that use anonymity tools to hide their IP addresses

Deepfake: Combining/superimposing images or video, often with the nefarious purpose of producing video/images of people who may not actually exist or of real people saying/doing things they did not actually do

Deep Panda: a Chinese-government-sponsored threat group

Dog whistle: a strategy to communicate that sends a subtly coded message

Evergreen content: content that does not become dated

Facebook group: joining allows Facebook users who share common interests to be connected and communicate in one place

Facebook page: for business accounts and public figures to create an online presence; offers advertising features

False flag: a covert operation designed to deceive; the deception creates the appearance of a particular party, group, or nation being responsible for some activity, disguising the actual source of responsibility

Falsified news: real news stories that are subtly altered in order to provoke outrage, often includes the plagiarization of complete articles with only the date of publication changed so that readers are made to believe the content is more recent

Fancy Bear: Russian cyberespionage group, also known as APT 28

Follows: when a person "likes" a Facebook page or connects with a social-media account, they will automatically see updates in their news feed

Inauthentic behavior: misleading actions to deceive others about who an individual/group is or what the individual or group is doing

IP: Internet Protocol, which is a numerical label that identifies a device and location

Junk news: misleading or deceptive content, deliberate misinformation purporting to be authentic and true

Like: a social-media feature that allows users to express a positive reaction or support to content

Link/URL-shortener: a tool to shorten links, which can be used to circumvent bans or disguise websites

Malware: malicious types of software such as adware, spyware, viruses

m.me URL: a shortened URL that Facebook users can use to enter into a conversation with the affiliated page admin

Meme/internet memes: an image, video, or concept, often captioned and altered to be humorous, that is copied and spread online

News feed: a list of updates about friends on a Facebook home page as well as advertisements

Retweet: reposting content by another user on Twitter, with or without an additional comment

Screen-captures/screenshots: a copy of the image that appears on a cell-phone, tablet, or computer screen

Social media: websites or apps that allow users to interact and share content

Sockpuppet: a false online identity meant to deceive

Spam: unsolicited messages sent to a large number of recipients

Spear-phishing: sending emails from an ostensibly trusted source to solicit confidential information

Spoof: creation of an IP with a false address

Spyware: a kind of malware, which a user unknowingly installs, that can gain access to the computer and steal data

Tab: a feature on Facebook that loads content; examples are "About" tab, "Community," "Info and Ads"

Troll: a person who seeks to sow discord, disrupt, or influence behavior on the internet by posting inflammatory content

Troll farm: an organization whose members or employees engage in online behavior that is meant to disrupt, distract, cause conflict, and influence conversations/behavior for nefarious purposes

Useful idiot: a naive person who is persuaded by a group (usually through deception) to further its political agenda without fully comprehending the goal or its ramifications

WHOIS: an Internet service used to look up information about a domain name or IP address

Zero-day vulnerability: a computer-software vulnerability unknown to the manufacturer, typically used in targeted attacks

THE INVESTIGATION

CHAPTER 1: The Imitation of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

Similar to widely reported stories of those organizations known as troll farms that engaged in nefarious online behavior, sowed discord during the 2016 election cycle, and specifically targeted veterans,[26] the following online entities operate by first appealing to patriotic Americans, and once they have gained the trust of tens or even hundreds of thousands of followers, they begin spreading manipulated and divisive news and other political content.

VVA is a congressionally chartered VSO whose membership exceeds 86,000 Vietnam veterans living around the globe. For many of our aging and disabled veterans, their most significant connection to VVA and the outside world is through the use of the internet and social-media platforms (Figure 1). According to a recent University of Oxford study, veterans are trusted by the civilian populace as opinion leaders, which makes us an economically efficient target for influence from the perspective of America's adversaries.[27]

The First Bulgarian Entity: "Vietnam Vets of America," "Nam Vets," and "Vietnam-Veterans.org"[28]

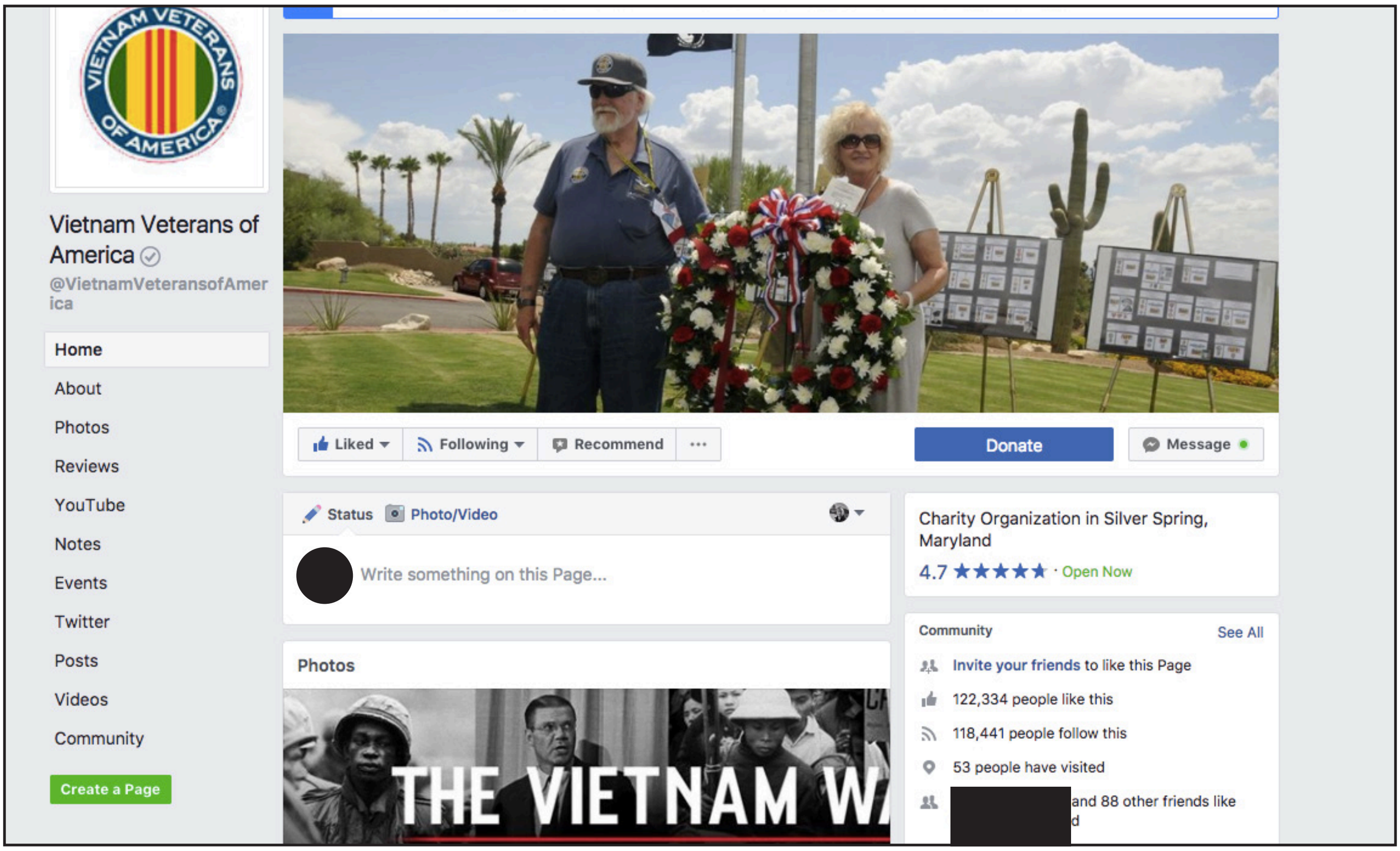
On August 21, 2017, we discovered a Facebook page titled "Vietnam Vets of America,"[29] which had at times been using our logo and registered trademark to deceive its online audience into thinking it was an affiliate of our legitimate VSO (Figure 2).[30,31]

Posts from "Vietnam Vets of America" typically linked to vvets.eu, a website anonymously registered[32] through Netfinity JSC[33] of Bulgaria. After filing complaints for copyright infringements via Facebook's help tools, we monitored the page for activity and reached out directly to report the suspicious page to a member of Facebook's security team on August 23, 2017.

While most of the posts shared on "Vietnam Vets of America" were junk memes of no particular significance, the page frequently shared deceptive or manipulated news and political content that was spread with the intent of inciting anger from veterans (Figures 3 and 4). On September 26, 2017, the page shared a manipulated video using "Facebook Live," which for approximately four hours streamed a looped 58-second-long clip about a Vietnam veterans monument being defaced.[34] We immediately reported this to Facebook's security team and logged a complaint for "spam" (unsolicited messages sent to a large number of recipients) via Facebook's video-reporting function. The original video had been produced by News 22 WWLP, a local news station from Springfield, Massachusetts;[35] however, the "Vietnam Vets of America" inserted a caption over the video that read, "DO YOU THINK THE CRIMINALS MUST SUFFER?" with icons encouraging people to respond with the "heart" and "angry-face" reactions (Figure 5). These emoticon responses are interpreted by Facebook's algorithm as indications that the user is more invested in the content than a user who reacts with the traditional thumbs-up "like" response.[36] The algorithm then funnels the more-invested users additional content similar to that which they've engaged with using those responses; this includes placing the impostor "Vietnam Vets of America" into the users' Facebook feed more often.

Over the course of the four-hour video, thousands of shares, comments, and reactions were produced — taking advantage of Facebook's algorithms that promote popular "live" videos, increasing the likelihood that people who hadn't yet clicked "like" or followed the page would be exposed to it. This video contained a link to the vvets.eu website, which copied verbatim the written content of News 22 WWLP's reporting.[37] By October 3, 2017, the manipulated video had been viewed over 37,000 times.

(text continued on page 25)



Vietnam Veterans of America

@VietnamVeteransofAmerica

Write something on this Page...

Charity Organization in Silver Spring, Maryland

4.7 ★★★★★ · Open Now

Invite your friends to like this Page

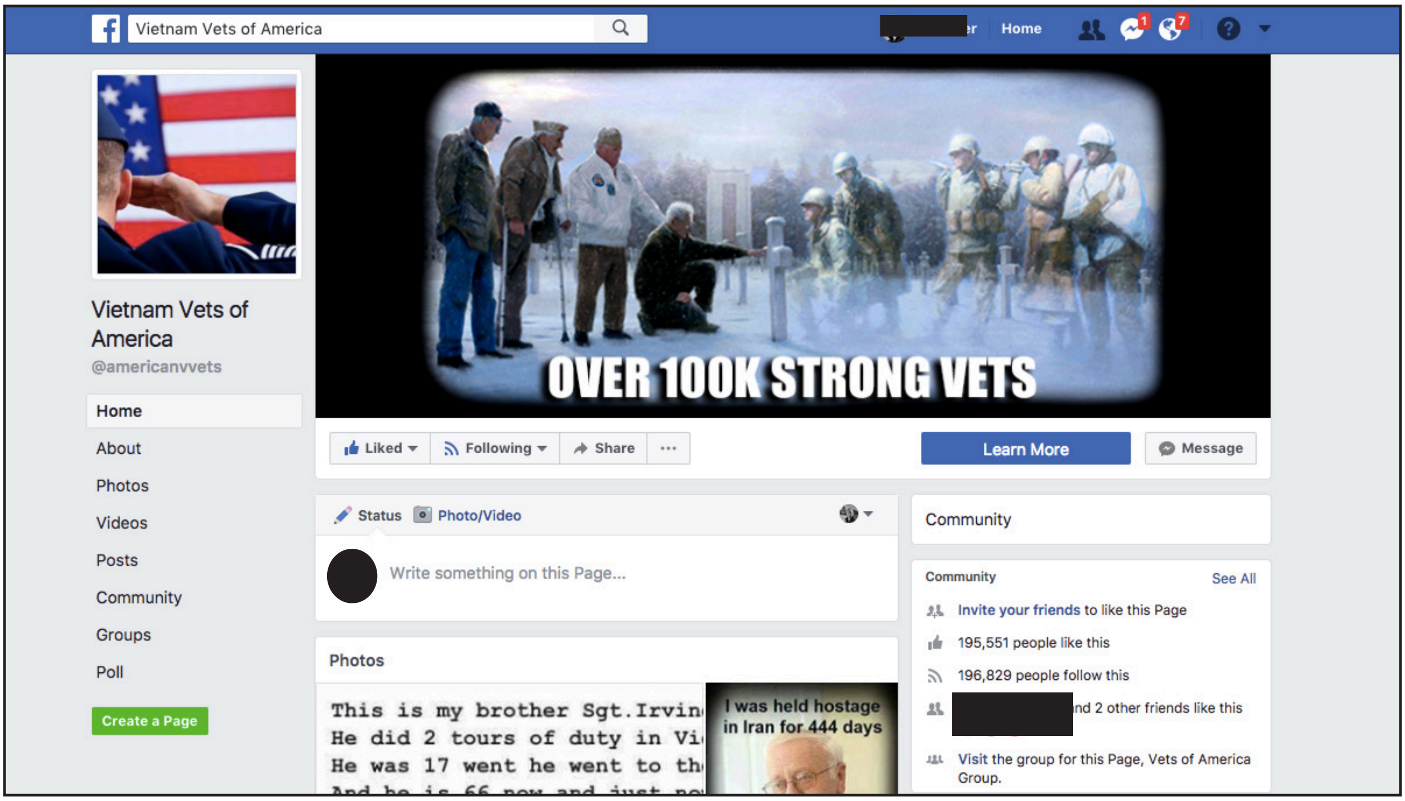
122,334 people like this

118,441 people follow this

53 people have visited

[redacted] and 88 other friends like d

Figure 1: VVA's real Facebook page features a grey checkmark, showing that Facebook has confirmed this as an authentic page for this organization.



Vietnam Vets of America

@americanvvets

Write something on this Page...

This is my brother Sgt.Irvin
He did 2 tours of duty in Vi
He was 17 went he went to th
And he is 66 now and just no

Invite your friends to like this Page

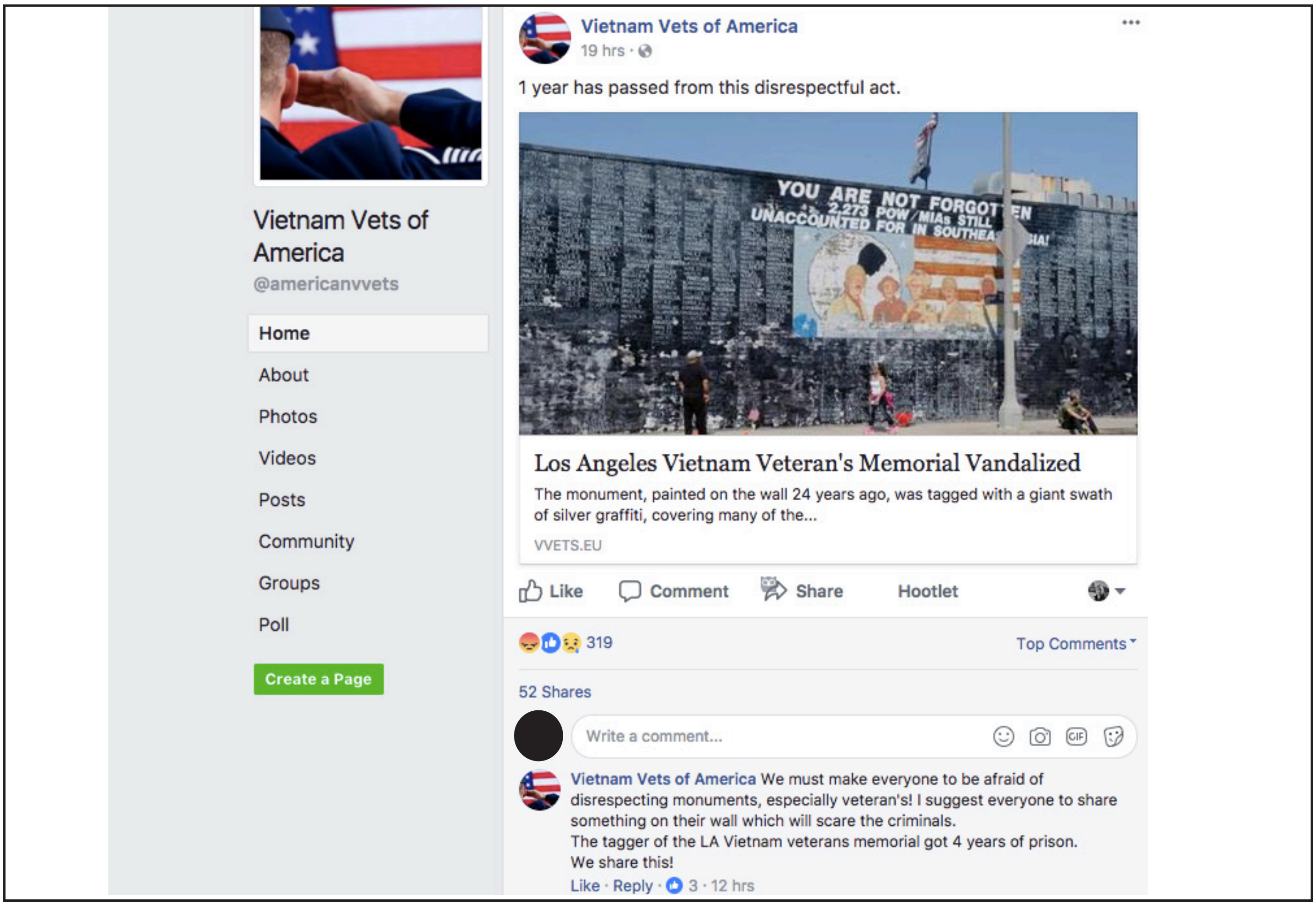
195,551 people like this

196,829 people follow this

[redacted] nd 2 other friends like this

Visit the group for this Page, Vets of America Group.

Figure 2: Impostor Facebook page: "Vietnam Vets of America."



Vietnam Vets of America
19 hrs ·

1 year has passed from this disrespectful act.

Los Angeles Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Vandalized

The monument, painted on the wall 24 years ago, was tagged with a giant swath of silver graffiti, covering many of the...

VVETS.EU

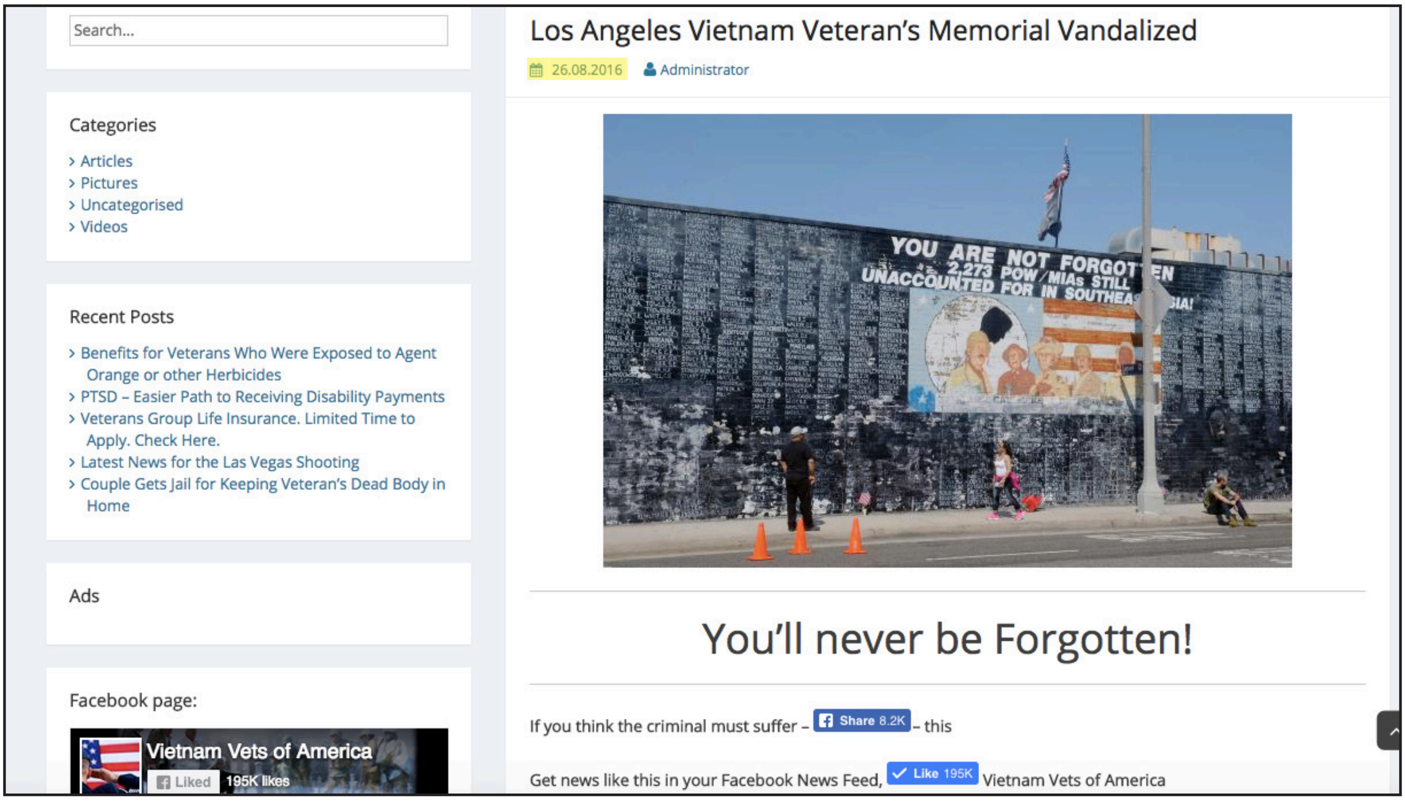
319

52 Shares

Vietnam Vets of America We must make everyone to be afraid of disrespecting monuments, especially veteran's! I suggest everyone to share something on their wall which will scare the criminals.
The tagger of the LA Vietnam veterans memorial got 4 years of prison.
We share this!

Like · Reply · 3 · 12 hrs

Figure 3: "Vietnam Vets of America" frequently and repeatedly reposted the same inflammatory news. Language errors raise red flags.



Los Angeles Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Vandalized

26.08.2016 Administrator

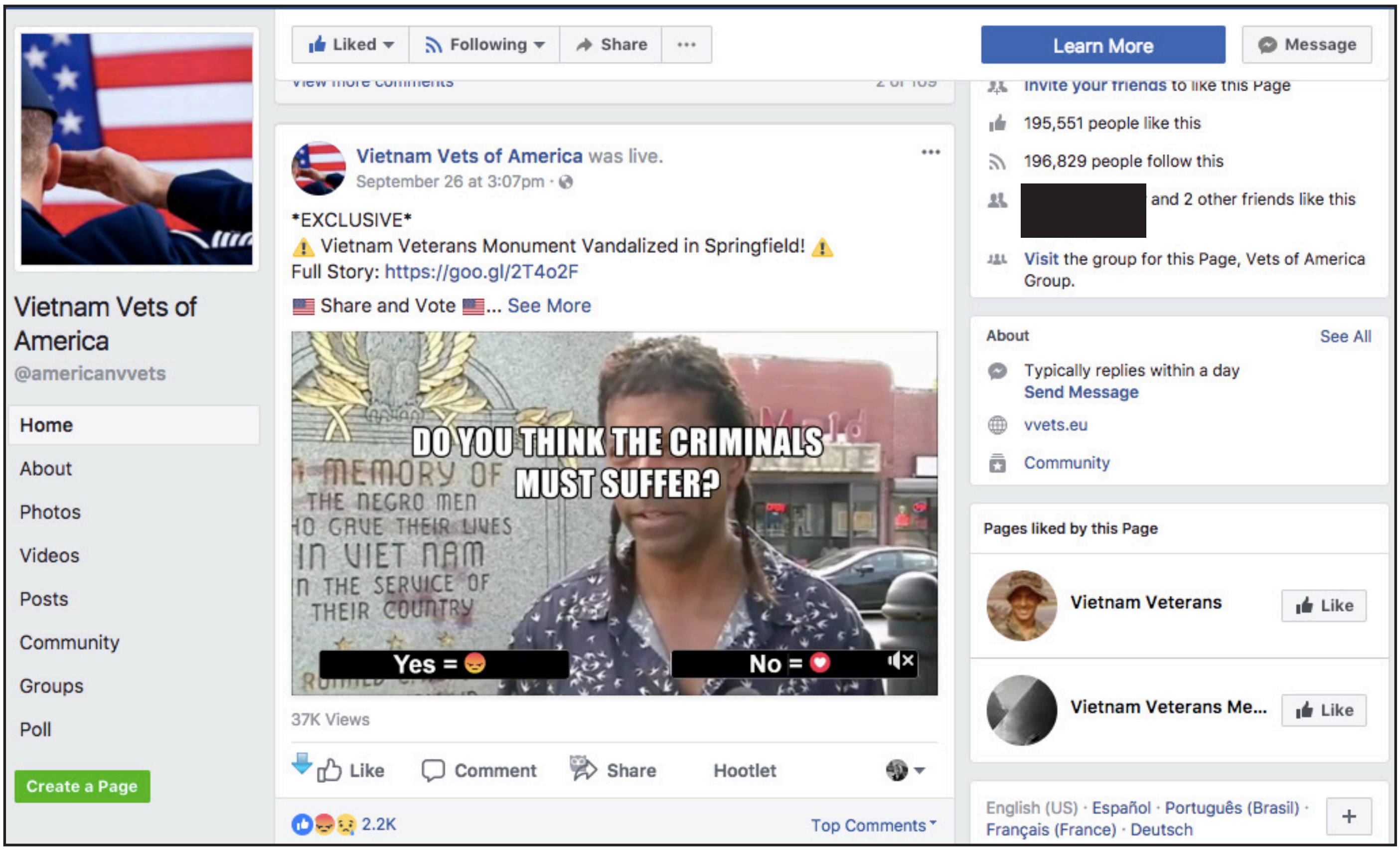
- Benefits for Veterans Who Were Exposed to Agent Orange or other Herbicides
- PTSD – Easier Path to Receiving Disability Payments
- Veterans Group Life Insurance. Limited Time to Apply. Check Here.
- Latest News for the Las Vegas Shooting
- Couple Gets Jail for Keeping Veteran's Dead Body in Home

You'll never be Forgotten!

If you think the criminal must suffer – Share 8.2K – this

Get news like this in your Facebook News Feed, Like 195K Vietnam Vets of America

Figure 4: VVets.eu-connected Facebook pages linked many of their posts to the same inflammatory news articles over and over again. The screen-capture above shows an article originally posted on August 26, 2016, which had amassed at least 8,200 shares on Facebook by October 10, 2017. Note that the date at the top-left directly above the photo is 26.08.2016, using the format "day.month.year," which is uncommon among Americans.



Liked ▾ | Following ▾ | Share | ···

Learn More | Message

Vietnam Vets of America
@americanvvets

Home
About
Photos
Videos
Posts
Community
Groups
Poll

Create a Page

Vietnam Vets of America was live.
September 26 at 3:07pm ·

EXCLUSIVE
⚠ Vietnam Veterans Monument Vandalized in Springfield! ⚠
Full Story: https://goo.gl/2T4o2F
🇺🇸 Share and Vote 🇺🇸... See More

DO YOU THINK THE CRIMINALS MUST SUFFER?
IN MEMORY OF THE NEGRO MEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN VIET NAM IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
Yes = 😡
No = ❤

37K Views

Like | Comment | Share | Hootlet

2.2K | Top Comments ▾

Invite your friends to like this Page
195,551 people like this
196,829 people follow this
[redacted] and 2 other friends like this
Visit the group for this Page, Vets of America Group.

About | See All
Typically replies within a day
Send Message
vvets.eu
Community

Pages liked by this Page
Vietnam Veterans | Like
Vietnam Veterans Me... | Like

English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch

Figure 5: Impostor VVA Facebook page shares manipulated video of divisive news event. Between the September 26, 2017, broadcasting and October 6, 2017, when this screen-capture was made, the video had been viewed at least 37,000 times and shared 1,290 times.

(text continued from page 22)

News 22 WWLP broadcast the original video on September 25, 2017. The Bulgarian entity quickly identified this news event and within 24 hours had produced its own four-hour-long looped version. The fact that the foreign entity recognized a divisive news story and was able to so expeditiously manipulate it and spread it as propaganda suggests that they are closely watching even the local American media.

Other divisive, political content shared by "Vietnam Vets of America" included the NFL's "Take a Knee" and boycott controversies,[38] as well as commentary on "Blue Lives Matter."[39] While these types of posts were popular among Americans and were also generated organically and domestically on social media, their creation and use by a foreign entity is consistent with information-warfare tactics described in the Russian book *Information-Psychological War Operations: A Short Encyclopedia and Reference Guide.*

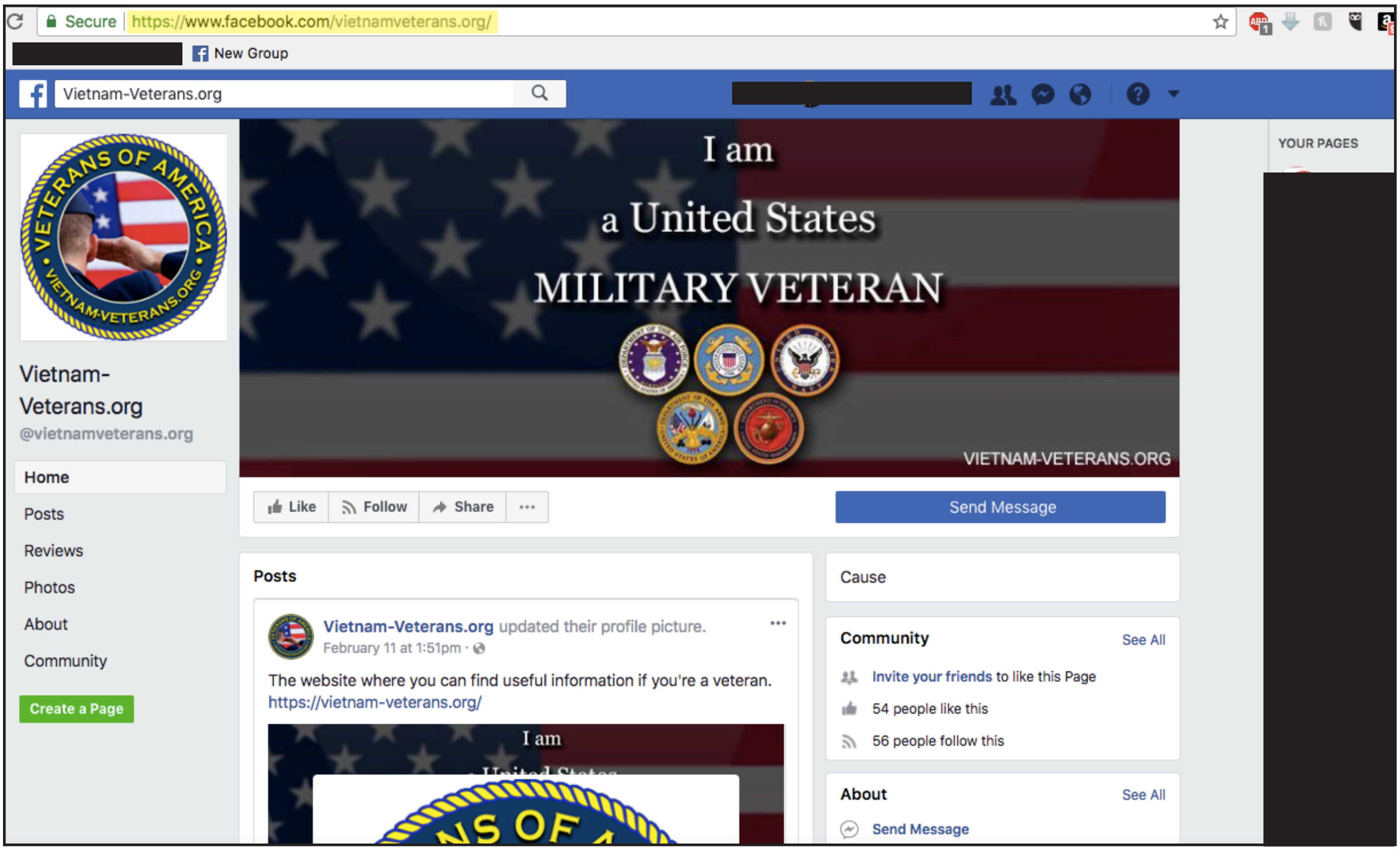
The *Guardian* reports:

> The book is designed for "students, political technologists, state security services and civil servants" – a kind of user's manual for junior information warriors. The deployment of information weapons, it suggests, "acts like an invisible radiation" upon its targets: "The population doesn't even feel it is being acted upon. So the state doesn't switch on its self-defence mechanisms." If regular war is about actual guns and missiles, the encyclopedia continues, "information war is supple, you can never predict the angle or instruments of an attack."[40]

The rate at which the "Vietnam Vets of America" page grew in followers is staggering. According to their "About" tab, they went from 30,000 followers on November 1, 2016, to 196,567 as of October 2017.[41] For comparison, the real VVA page has garnered 133,755 likes since it was created in June 2010.

On October 9, 2017, after having not found a solution through talks with Facebook's security team,[42] VVA began to go public via the press with appeals to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to take proactive measures to protect servicemembers and veterans online from foreign political influence.[43]

(text continued on page 31)



Secure | https://www.facebook.com/vietnamveterans.org/

[redacted] New Group

Vietnam-Veterans.org

[redacted]

YOUR PAGES

[redacted]

I am
a United States
MILITARY VETERAN

VIETNAM-VETERANS.ORG

Vietnam-Veterans.org
@vietnamveterans.org

Posts

Vietnam-Veterans.org updated their profile picture.
February 11 at 1:51pm ·

The website where you can find useful information if you're a veteran.
https://vietnam-veterans.org/

Cause

Community — See All

Invite your friends to like this Page

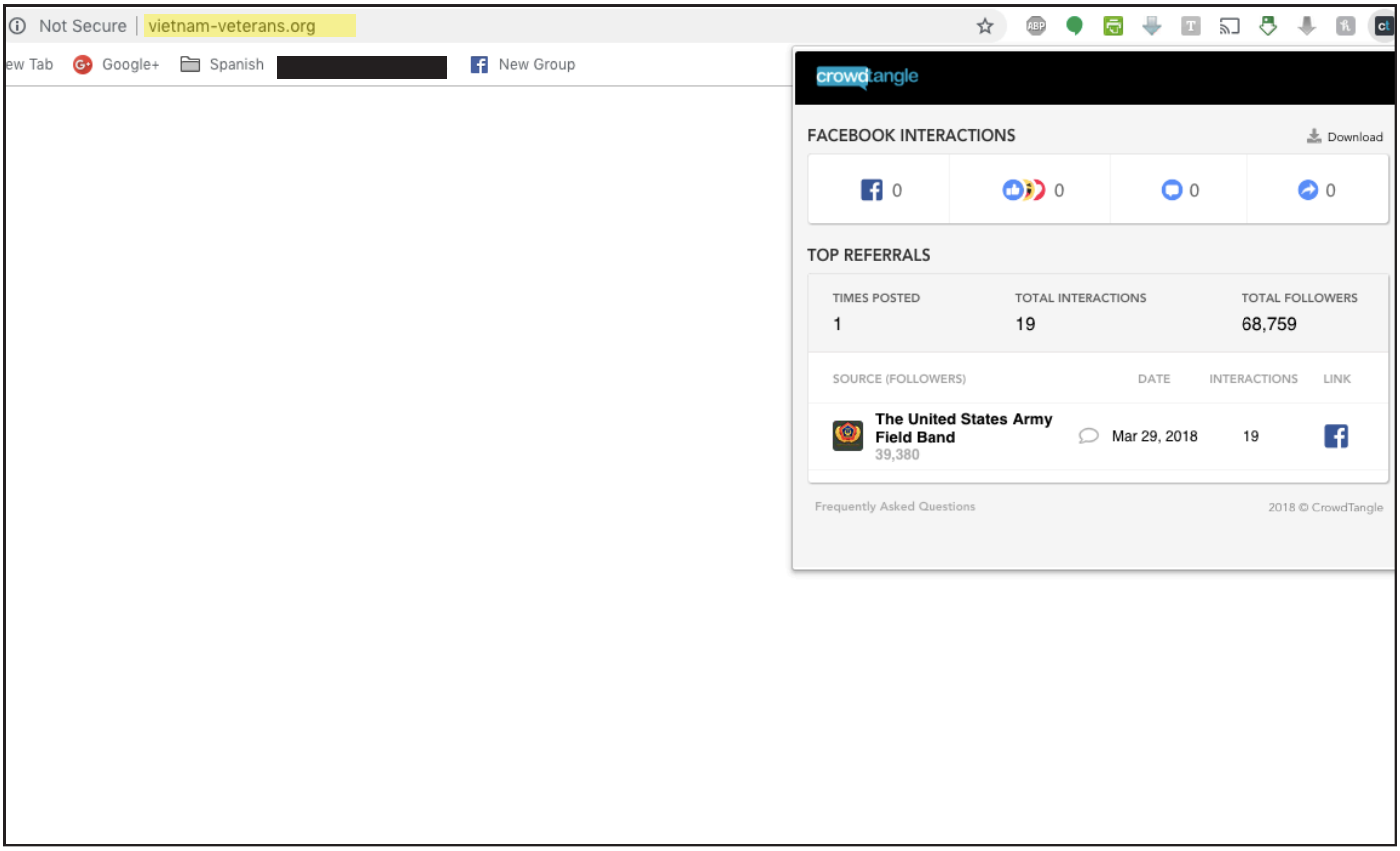
54 people like this

56 people follow this

About — See All

Send Message

Figure 6: "Vietnam-Veterans.org" Facebook page created in December 2017 using a new, original logo.



Not Secure | vietnam-veterans.org

ew Tab · Google+ · Spanish · [redacted] · New Group

crowdtangle

FACEBOOK INTERACTIONS — Download

0 · 0 · 0 · 0

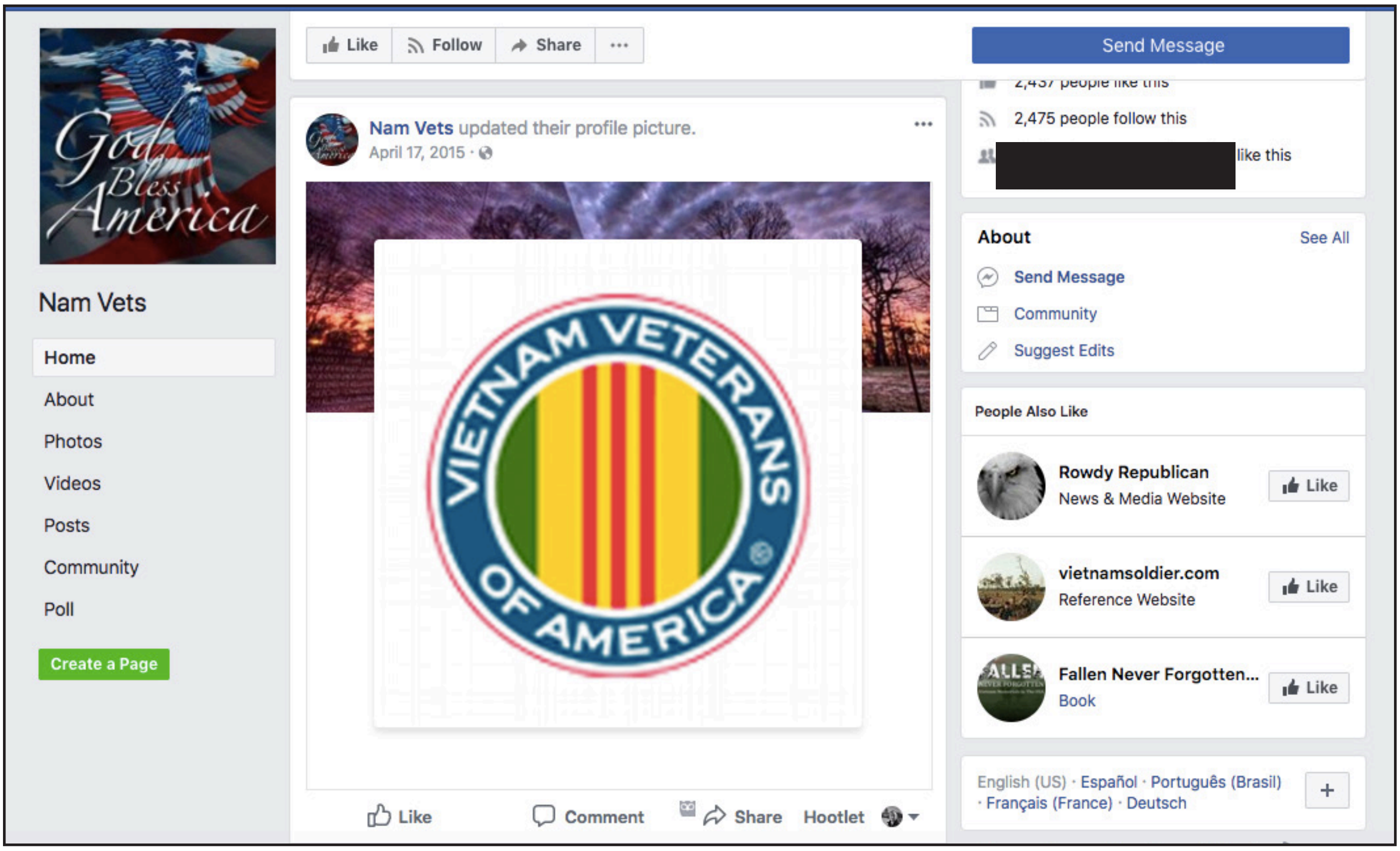
TOP REFERRALS

TIMES POSTED	TOTAL INTERACTIONS	TOTAL FOLLOWERS
1	19	68,759

SOURCE (FOLLOWERS)	DATE	INTERACTIONS	LINK
The United States Army Field Band 39,380	Mar 29, 2018	19	f

Frequently Asked Questions · 2018 © CrowdTangle

Figure 7: The CrowdTangle report on social-media shares of the impostor "Vietnam-Veterans.org" website shows that the admins of the official United States Army Field Band's page shared it, then received 19 interactions in the form of comments, likes, and shares from their followers.



Nam Vets

Home · About · Photos · Videos · Posts · Community · Poll · Create a Page

Like · Follow · Share · ···

Nam Vets updated their profile picture.
April 17, 2015

Like · Comment · Share · Hootlet

Send Message

2,437 people like this

2,475 people follow this

[redacted] like this

About — See All

Send Message

Community

Suggest Edits

People Also Like

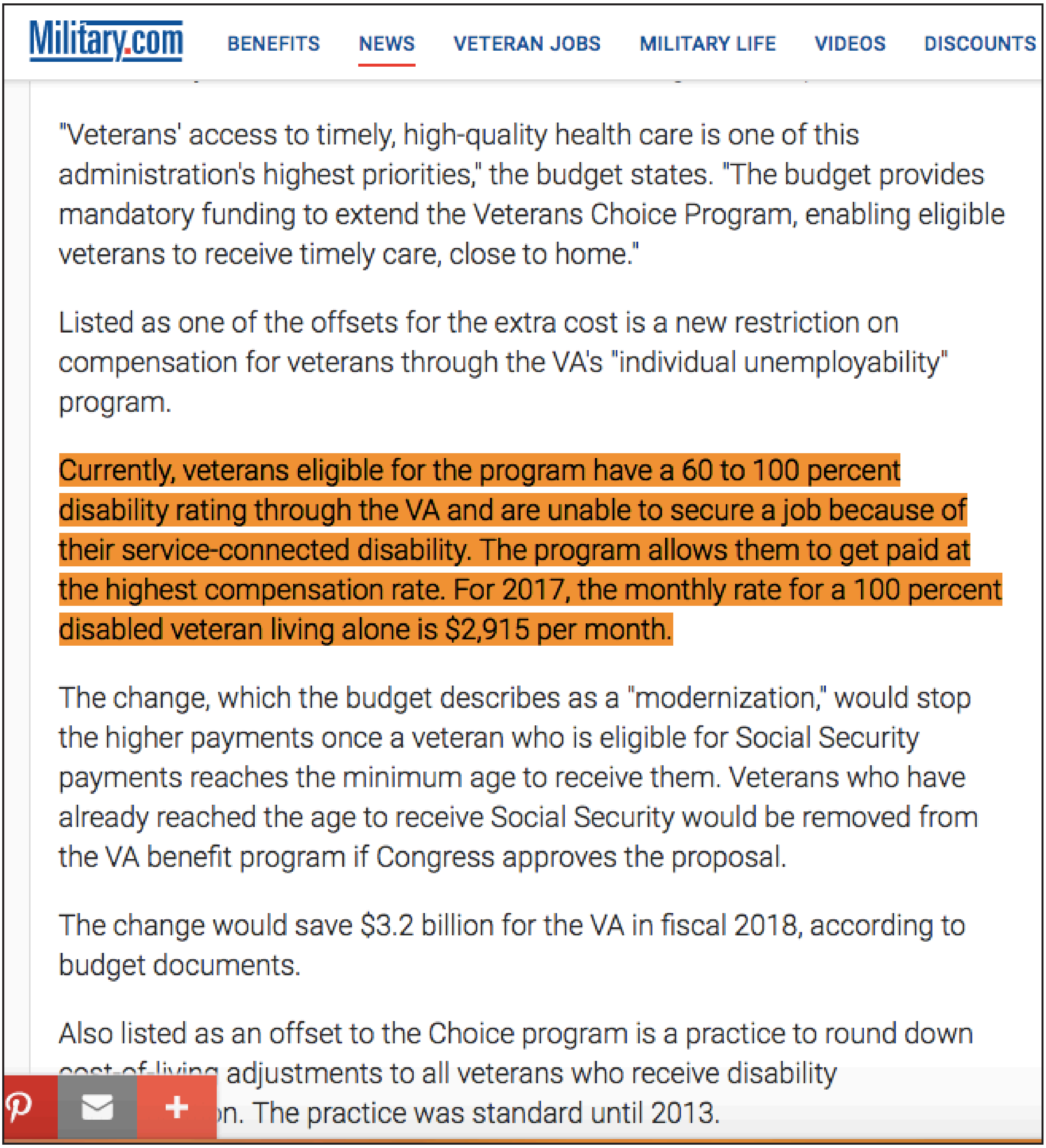
Rowdy Republican — News & Media Website — Like

vietnamsoldier.com — Reference Website — Like

Fallen Never Forgotten... — Book — Like

English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch

Figure 8: The Facebook page "Nam Vets" started by using the trademarked name and logo of VVA, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization. The profile photo for this page was later changed, possibly as a reaction to trademark-infringement complaints by VVA against the admins' other pages.



"Veterans' access to timely, high-quality health care is one of this administration's highest priorities," the budget states. "The budget provides mandatory funding to extend the Veterans Choice Program, enabling eligible veterans to receive timely care, close to home."

Listed as one of the offsets for the extra cost is a new restriction on compensation for veterans through the VA's "individual unemployability" program.

Currently, veterans eligible for the program have a 60 to 100 percent disability rating through the VA and are unable to secure a job because of their service-connected disability. The program allows them to get paid at the highest compensation rate. For 2017, the monthly rate for a 100 percent disabled veteran living alone is $2,915 per month.

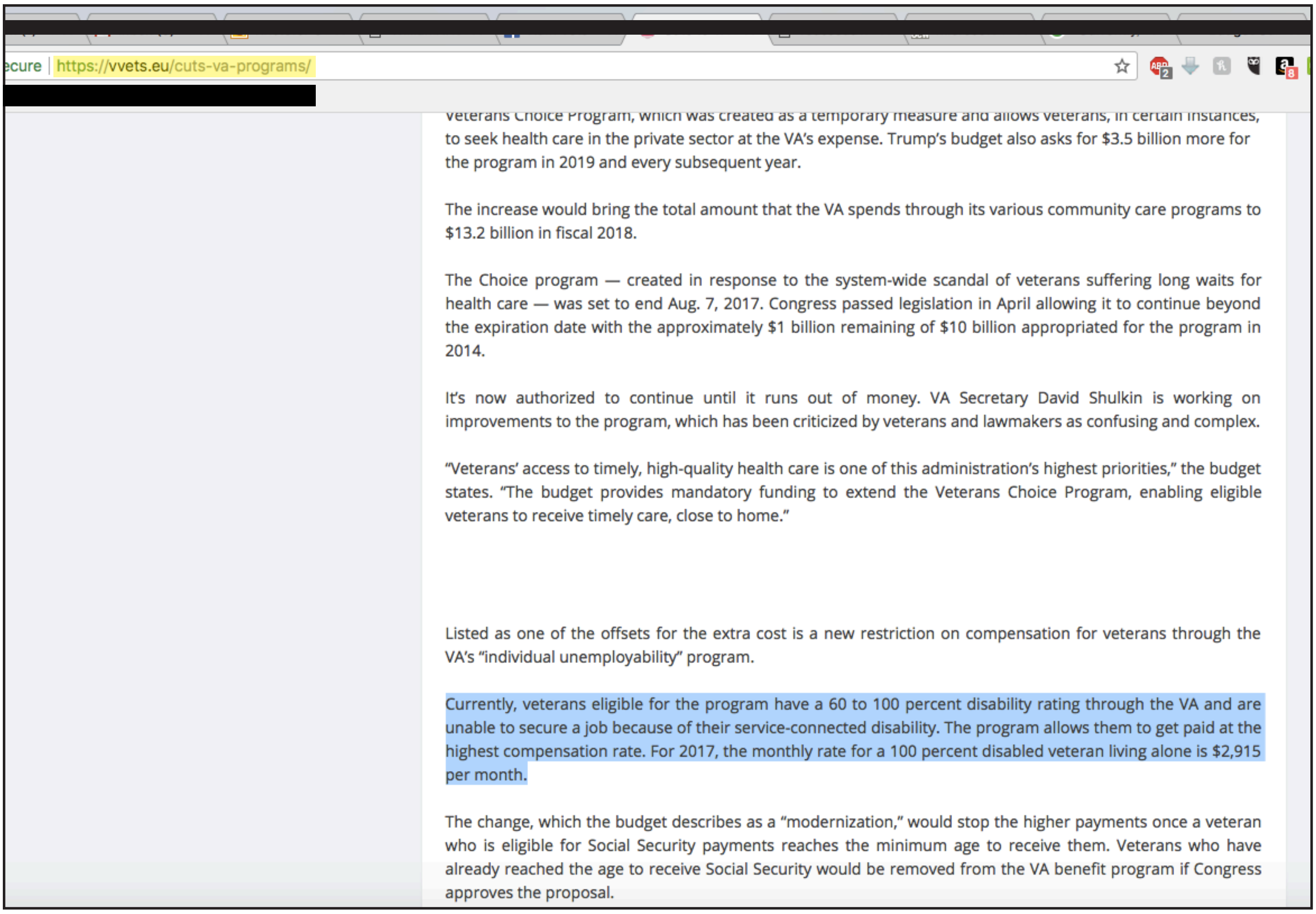
The change, which the budget describes as a "modernization," would stop the higher payments once a veteran who is eligible for Social Security payments reaches the minimum age to receive them. Veterans who have already reached the age to receive Social Security would be removed from the VA benefit program if Congress approves the proposal.

The change would save $3.2 billion for the VA in fiscal 2018, according to budget documents.

Also listed as an offset to the Choice program is a practice to round down cost-of-living adjustments to all veterans who receive disability

n. The practice was standard until 2013.

Figure 9: The original Stars and Stripes *article by Nikki Wentling was posted on May 23, 2017.*



[redacted]

[redacted]

veterans Choice Program, which was created as a temporary measure and allows veterans, in certain instances, to seek health care in the private sector at the VA's expense. Trump's budget also asks for $3.5 billion more for the program in 2019 and every subsequent year.

The increase would bring the total amount that the VA spends through its various community care programs to $13.2 billion in fiscal 2018.

The Choice program — created in response to the system-wide scandal of veterans suffering long waits for health care — was set to end Aug. 7, 2017. Congress passed legislation in April allowing it to continue beyond the expiration date with the approximately $1 billion remaining of $10 billion appropriated for the program in 2014.

It's now authorized to continue until it runs out of money. VA Secretary David Shulkin is working on improvements to the program, which has been criticized by veterans and lawmakers as confusing and complex.

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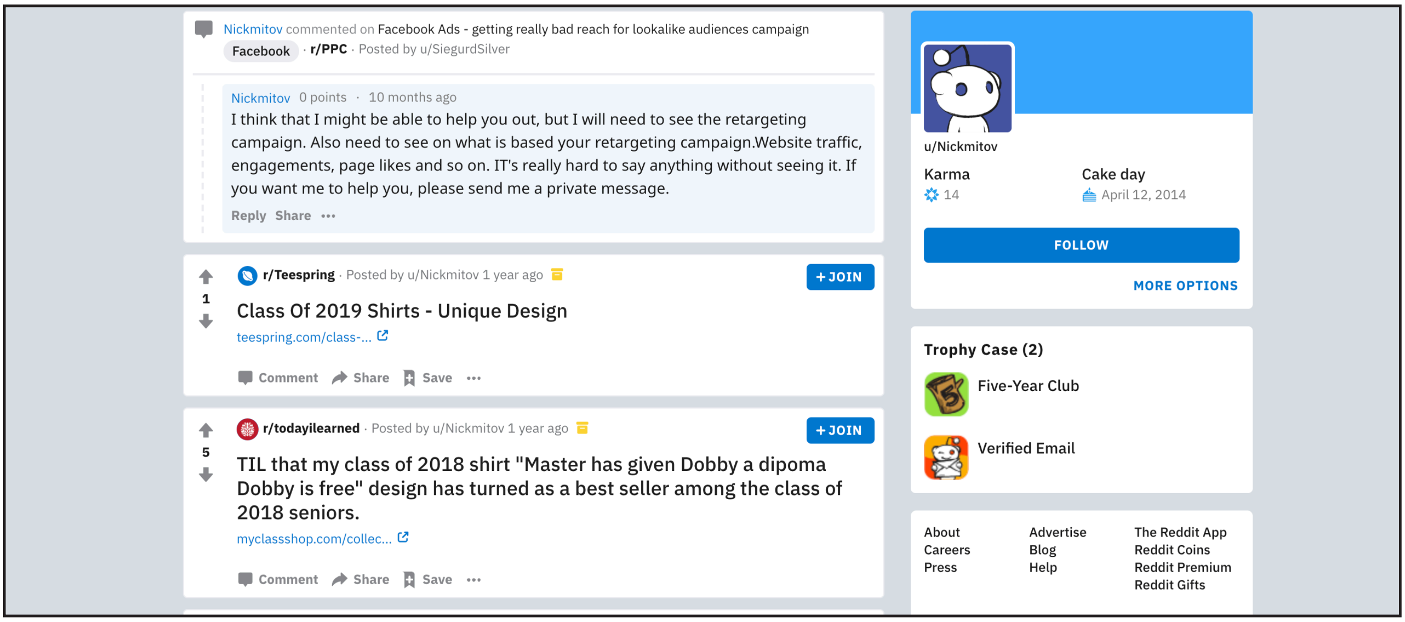
Figure 10: Text of original Stars and Stripes *article (Figure 9) matches text on vvets.eu website, where it was posted as falsified news with the date changed.*



Nickmitov commented on Facebook Ads - getting really bad reach for lookalike audiences campaign
Facebook · r/PPC · Posted by u/SiegurdSilver

Nickmitov 0 points · 10 months ago
I think that I might be able to help you out, but I will need to see the retargeting campaign. Also need to see on what is based your retargeting campaign.Website traffic, engagements, page likes and so on. IT's really hard to say anything without seeing it. If you want me to help you, please send me a private message.
Reply Share ···

1 · r/Teespring · Posted by u/Nickmitov 1 year ago · +JOIN
Class Of 2019 Shirts - Unique Design
teespring.com/class-...
Comment Share Save ···

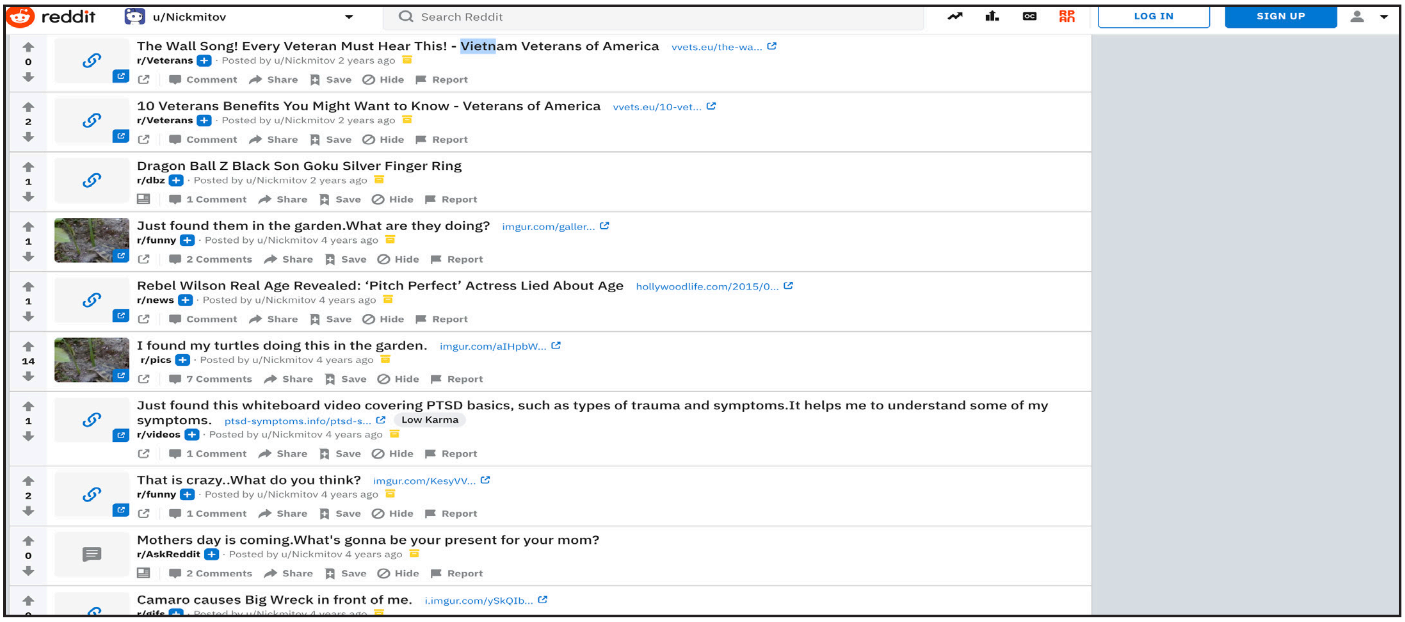
5 · r/todayilearned · Posted by u/Nickmitov 1 year ago · +JOIN
TIL that my class of 2018 shirt "Master has given Dobby a dipoma Dobby is free" design has turned as a best seller among the class of 2018 seniors.
myclassshop.com/collec...
Comment Share Save ···

u/Nickmitov
Karma: 14
Cake day: April 12, 2014
FOLLOW
MORE OPTIONS

Trophy Case (2)
Five-Year Club
Verified Email

About · Careers · Press · Advertise · Blog · Help · The Reddit App · Reddit Coins · Reddit Premium · Reddit Gifts

Figure 11: "The "Nickmitov" Reddit account was active until approximately October 2018.



reddit · u/Nickmitov · Search Reddit · LOG IN · SIGN UP

0 · The Wall Song! Every Veteran Must Hear This! - Vietnam Veterans of America · vvets.eu/the-wa...
r/Veterans · Posted by u/Nickmitov 2 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

2 · 10 Veterans Benefits You Might Want to Know - Veterans of America · vvets.eu/10-vet...
r/Veterans · Posted by u/Nickmitov 2 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

1 · Dragon Ball Z Black Son Goku Silver Finger Ring
r/dbz · Posted by u/Nickmitov 2 years ago
1 Comment Share Save Hide Report

1 · Just found them in the garden.What are they doing? · imgur.com/galler...
r/funny · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
2 Comments Share Save Hide Report

1 · Rebel Wilson Real Age Revealed: 'Pitch Perfect' Actress Lied About Age · hollywoodlife.com/2015/0...
r/news · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

14 · I found my turtles doing this in the garden. · imgur.com/aIHpbW...
r/pics · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
7 Comments Share Save Hide Report

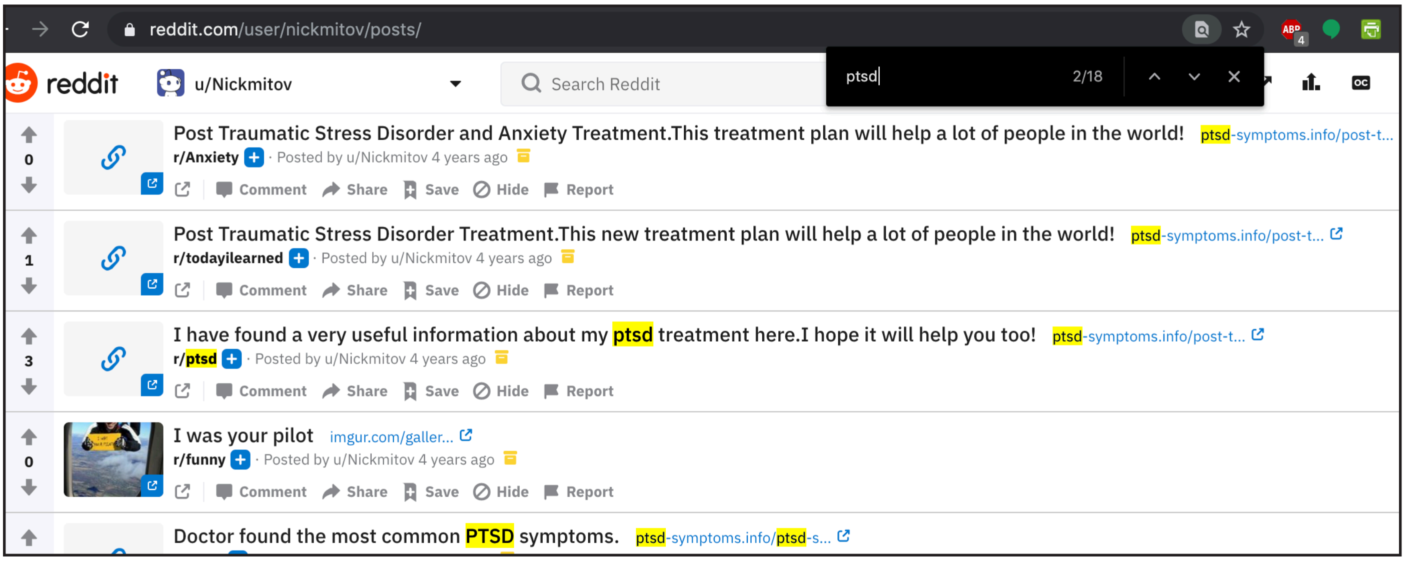
1 · Just found this whiteboard video covering PTSD basics, such as types of trauma and symptoms.It helps me to understand some of my symptoms. · ptsd-symptoms.info/ptsd-s... · Low Karma
r/videos · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
1 Comment Share Save Hide Report

2 · That is crazy..What do you think? · imgur.com/KesyVV...
r/funny · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
1 Comment Share Save Hide Report

0 · Mothers day is coming.What's gonna be your present for your mom?
r/AskReddit · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
2 Comments Share Save Hide Report

Camaro causes Big Wreck in front of me. · i.imgur.com/ySkQIb...
r/gifs · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago

Figure 12



reddit.com/user/nickmitov/posts/

reddit · u/Nickmitov · Search Reddit · ptsd · 2/18

0 · Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Anxiety Treatment.This treatment plan will help a lot of people in the world! · ptsd-symptoms.info/post-t...
r/Anxiety · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

1 · Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Treatment.This new treatment plan will help a lot of people in the world! · ptsd-symptoms.info/post-t...
r/todayilearned · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

3 · I have found a very useful information about my ptsd treatment here.I hope it will help you too! · ptsd-symptoms.info/post-t...
r/ptsd · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

0 · I was your pilot · imgur.com/galler...
r/funny · Posted by u/Nickmitov 4 years ago
Comment Share Save Hide Report

Doctor found the most common PTSD symptoms. · ptsd-symptoms.info/ptsd-s...

Figure 13: The "Nickmitov" account shared veteran-targeted posts including links to the website "ptsd-symptoms.info" as early as April 2015. Ptsd-symptoms.info was also registered by Nick Mitov.

(text continued from page 25)

On October 18, 2017, Facebook responded to questioning by *Stars and Stripes* regarding VVA's specific complaints by saying that the impostor "Vietnam Vets of America" page had not violated Facebook terms of use[44] and placed the burden on VVA to speak out and educate Facebook users about the impostor page.

On October 24, 2017, Facebook removed the suspect page for violation of VVA's copyright, though no information was publicly shared regarding who had been operating the page.[45] At a November 1, 2017, hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Russian interference in America's election using social media, Facebook's lawyer, Colin Stretch, was questioned directly on the matter by Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia.[46] Mr. Stretch denied knowledge of the impostor VVA page and the efforts to target veterans.[47] Nor did Mr. Stretch promise specific efforts by Facebook to counteract such deception aimed at veterans.

To date, DoD and VA have yet to respond to VVA's request[48] that they coordinate federal efforts to protect servicemembers and veterans from deceptive, foreign-generated online content.

On February 21, 2018, we became aware of two new Facebook pages, "Nam Vets" and "Vietnam-Veterans.org," which linked to vvets.eu as well as a sister website, Vietnam-Veterans.org, which uses a similar logo and posts identical content (Figure 6).[49] According to the "About" tab of the "Nam Vets" Facebook page, it reached 500 followers on November 24, 2017, and before it was shut down in March 2018, it had reached 3,044 followers.[50] The Facebook page "Vietnam-Veterans.org" first posted on December 10, 2017,[51] and it had approximately 155 followers upon being closed in March 2018.[52] Although these pages had relatively few followers, they had an engaged audience who often responded to posts asking them to divulge information such as what unit they served with and when they were deployed.

The "Vietnam-Veterans.org" page was authentic-looking enough that the United States Army Field Band's blue-check-verified Facebook page[53] shared the website with its 39,000 followers to celebrate Vietnam Veterans Day 2018 (Figure 7). The US Army Field Band's original post read:

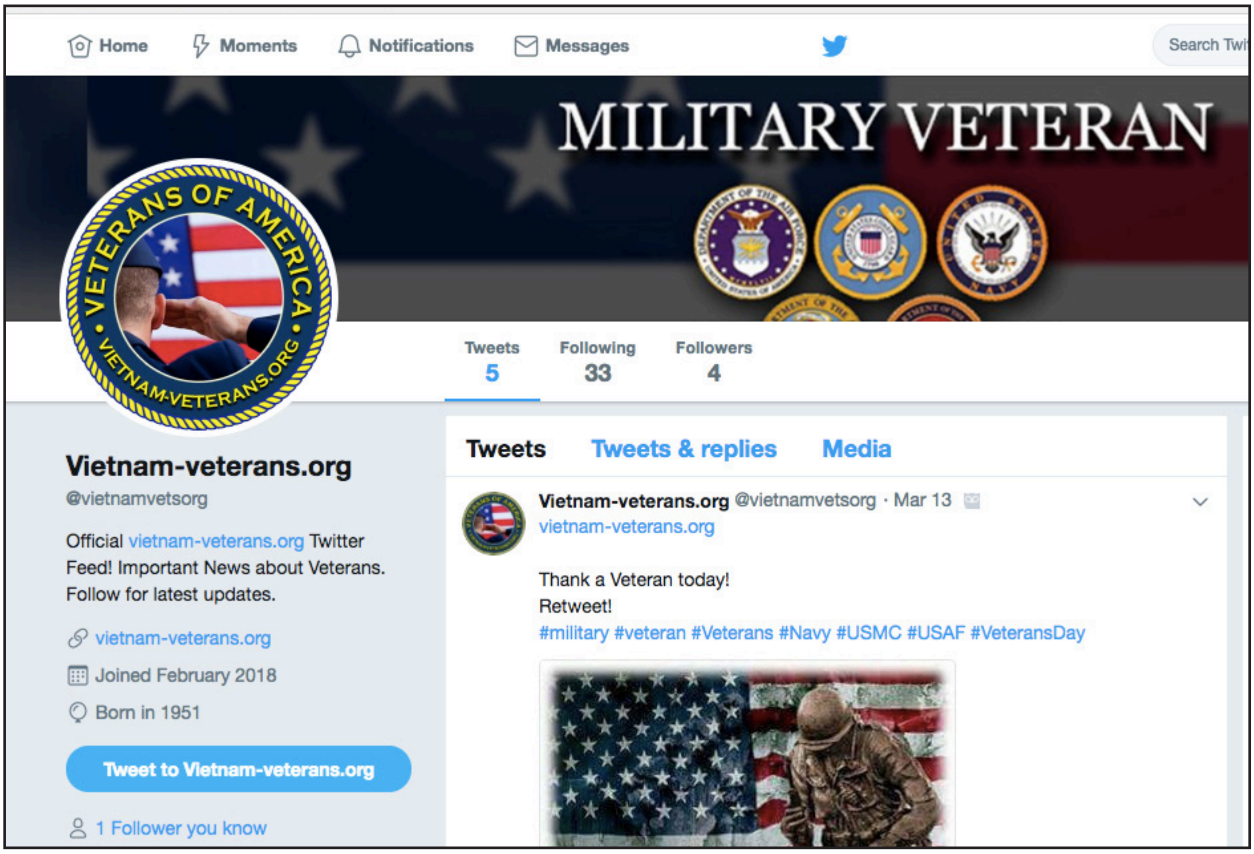
> We set aside time to honor our nation's heroes at every concert. If you know a Vietnam War Veteran, thank them for their service today by tagging them in the comments below. #VietnamVeteransDay #heroes U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vietnam Veterans of America

This post by an official DoD-affiliated account tagged the blue-check-verified "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs" Facebook page, as well as VVA's authentic Facebook page. Recognizing that reporting these pages to Facebook results in only temporary relief, we have ceased filing reports for abuse or illegal trademark use. We learned from the incident with the original impostor VVA page that Facebook's policy of simply shutting down pages does not prevent others from rising in their place — nor does it bring us closer to finding out who is behind these pages or what their motivations are. As soon as our first report went public, however, the inauthentic pages listed in that report (which was shared with various federal agencies and congressional committees in March 2018) were closed.

Like the now defunct "Vietnam Vets of America" page, the "Nam Vets" Facebook page began by using VVA's logo to gain trust from American veterans. According to the timestamp on the post with our stolen logo, the "Nam Vets" Facebook page was in existence as early as April 17, 2015 (Figure 8).

The first "Nam Vets" posts linked to a now-archived Europe-based website containing inflammatory political content such as videos of protesters stomping on American flags.[54] Content more recently posted on the Facebook pages and affiliated websites included pictures and videos of veterans' memorials being defaced (with deceptive dating to make these events appear more recent),[55] a video produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs,[56] and the illegally copied text[57] of an article written by Nikki Wentling of *Stars and Stripes*[58] (Figure 9) regarding cuts to veterans' benefits — which was posted well after it was current news[59] (Figure 10). The new site Vietnam-Veterans.org was registered to one "Nikola Mitov," also through Netfinity JSC of Bulgaria.[60]

(text continued on page 33)



Vietnam-veterans.org
@vietnamvetsorg

Official vietnam-veterans.org Twitter Feed! Important News about Veterans. Follow for latest updates.

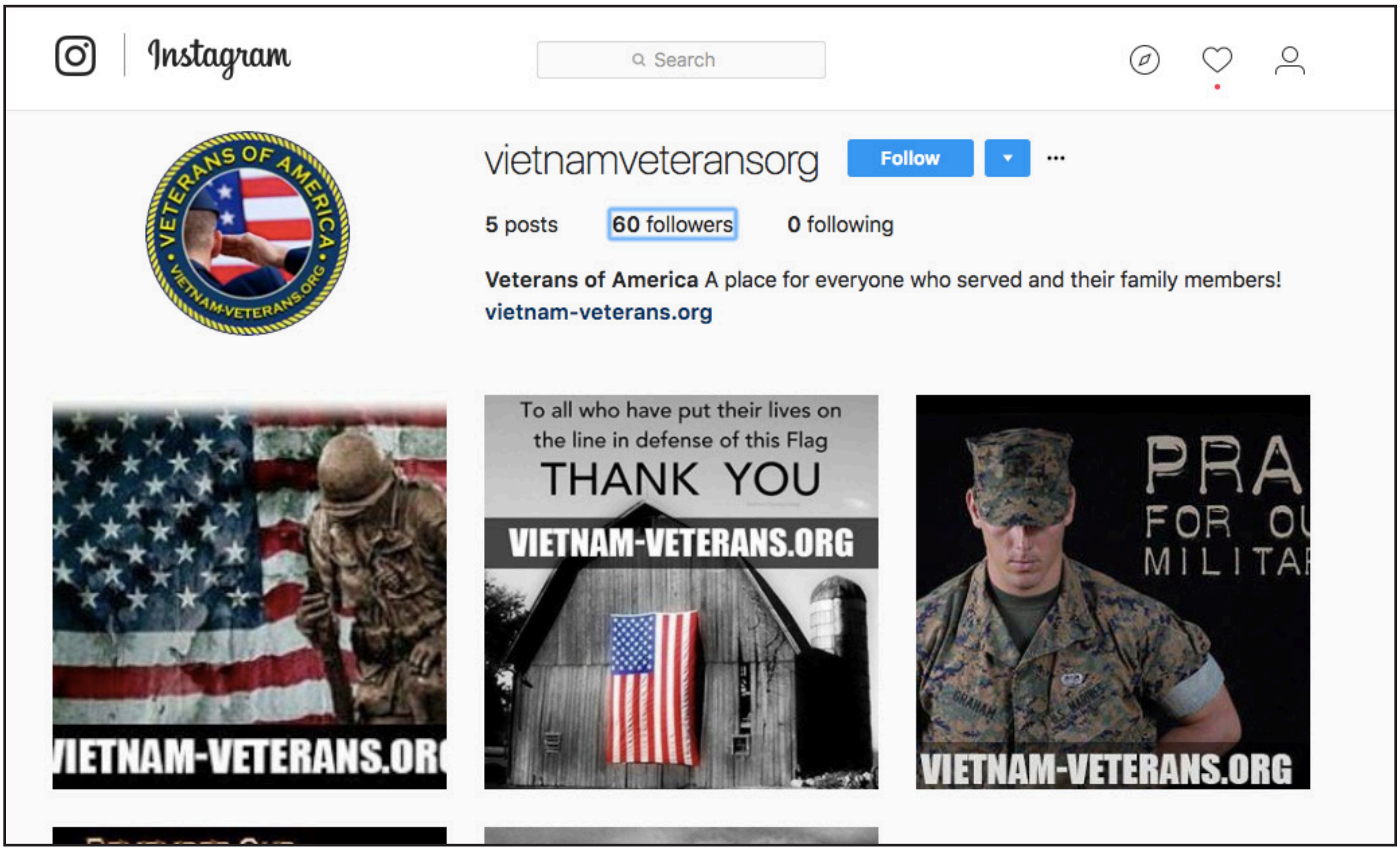
vietnam-veterans.org
Joined February 2018
Born in 1951

1 Follower you know

Vietnam-veterans.org @vietnamvetsorg · Mar 13
vietnam-veterans.org

Thank a Veteran today!
Retweet!
#military #veteran #Veterans #Navy #USMC #USAF #VeteransDay

Figure 14: Vietnam-veterans.org's Twitter account on March 16, 2018.

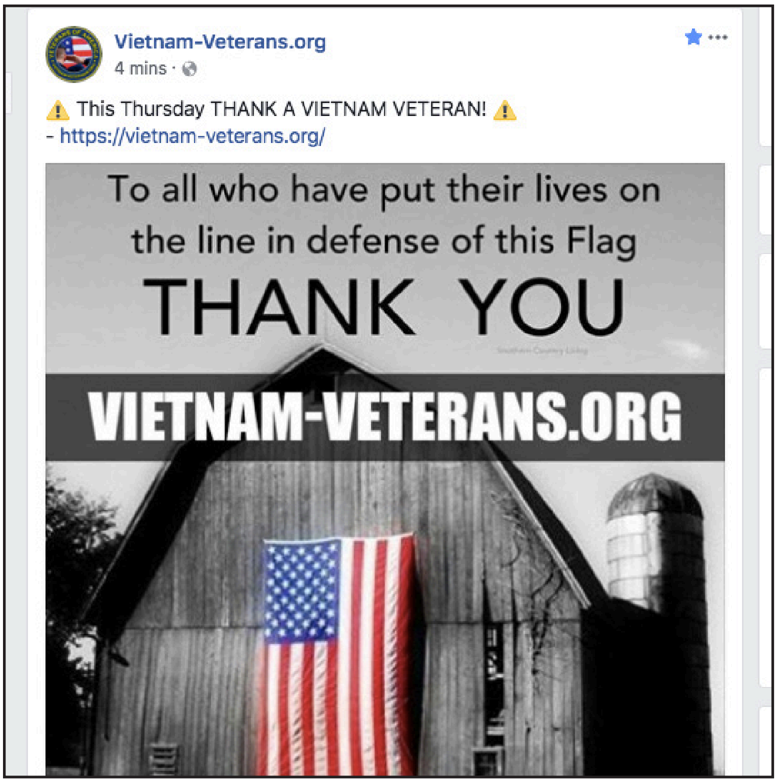


vietnamveteransorg

5 posts 60 followers 0 following

Veterans of America A place for everyone who served and their family members!
vietnam-veterans.org

Figure 15: Vietnam-Veterans.org's Instagram account posted the same content as the Twitter account.



Vietnam-Veterans.org
4 mins ·

⚠ This Thursday THANK A VIETNAM VETERAN! ⚠
- https://vietnam-veterans.org/

To all who have put their lives on the line in defense of this Flag
THANK YOU
VIETNAM-VETERANS.ORG

Figure 16: "Vietnam-Veterans.org" Facebook page acting in tandem with Twitter and Instagram accounts.

(text continued from page 31)

It is unclear if Nikola Mitov is a real person or a pseudonym, or if multiple people operate accounts that are registered to that name. When searching the street address ("210 6-th september BLVD") for the registrant provided on the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) website, it shows up in Ukraine,[61] rather than Bulgaria as listed — although this may be due to translation errors or limitations of Google Maps.

Both Bulgaria[62] and Ukraine[63] have struggled to control online trolls[64] who work to promote pro-Russian disinformation.

Using CrowdTangle to determine who had shared the vvets.eu website, we were able to find a Reddit account using a variation of the name that had registered the website, "Nick Mitov" (Figures 11-13). In addition to sharing vvets.eu, this Reddit account also promoted the now-defunct website ptsd-symptoms.info since at least April 2015.

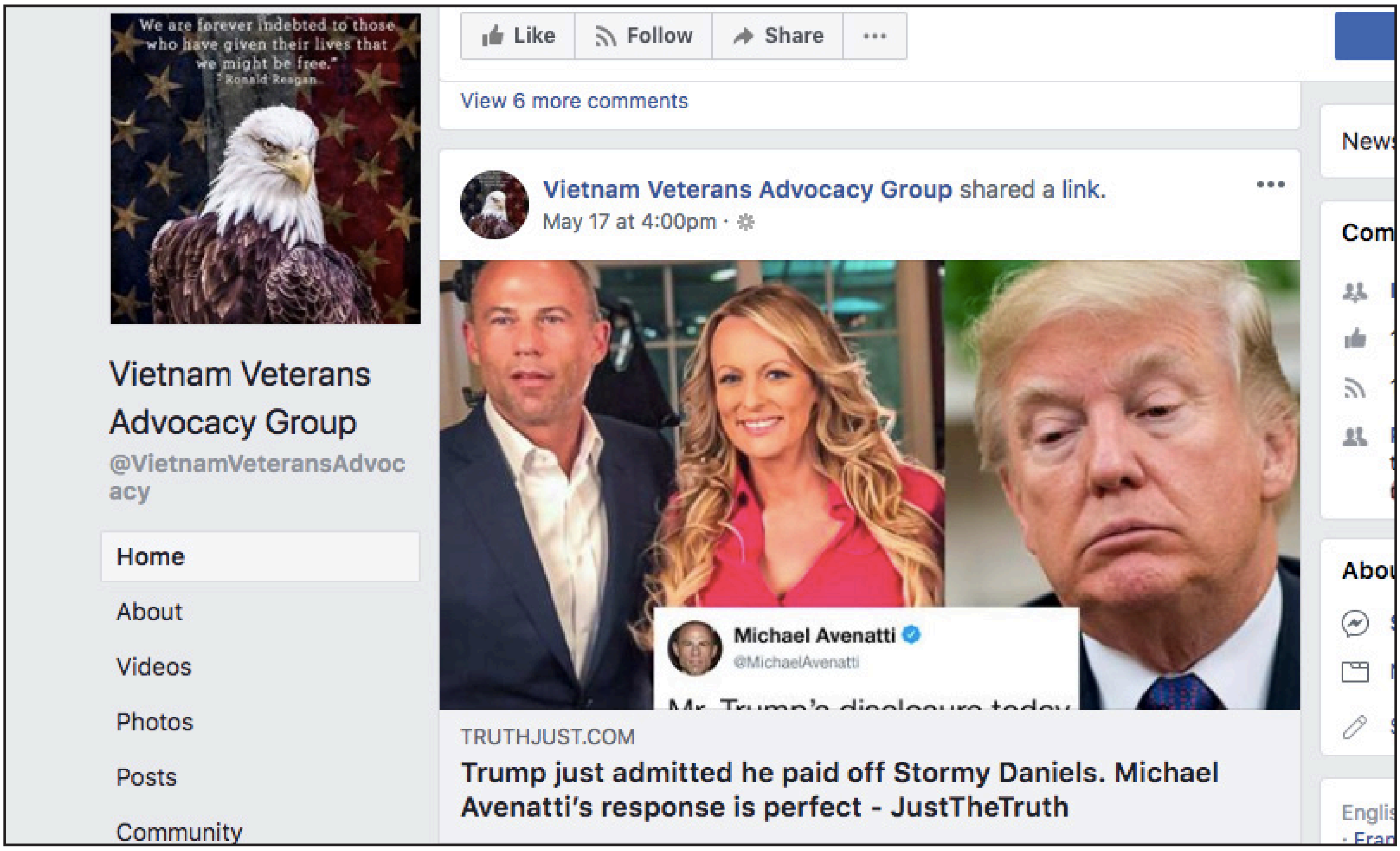
The Bulgarian Vietnam-Veterans.org entity also created accounts across at least two new social-media platforms, including Twitter[65] and Instagram.[66] These Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts posted identical content (Figures 14-16) until Facebook took down the "Vietnam-Veterans.org" page after our earlier report went public.

The Vietnam-Veterans.org Twitter and Instagram accounts are still operational, which may mean that the foreign entity behind them can still be traced by law enforcement.

The Broader Investigation Begins

This imitation episode led us to expand our search for other foreign entities impersonating MilVets organizations. Since March 2018, we have manually inspected and cataloged over 150 Facebook pages, most of which are either directly targeting MilVets or are tangentially connected to other pages[67] that are directly targeting MilVets. Admins of the pages that we have analyzed are operating from at least 32 countries outside the United States.[68] Because Facebook reveals the countries of origin only for admins of pages who either have well over 100,000 likes or followers, and of pages that have purchased political ads, many of the pages we tracked have not had admin locations revealed.

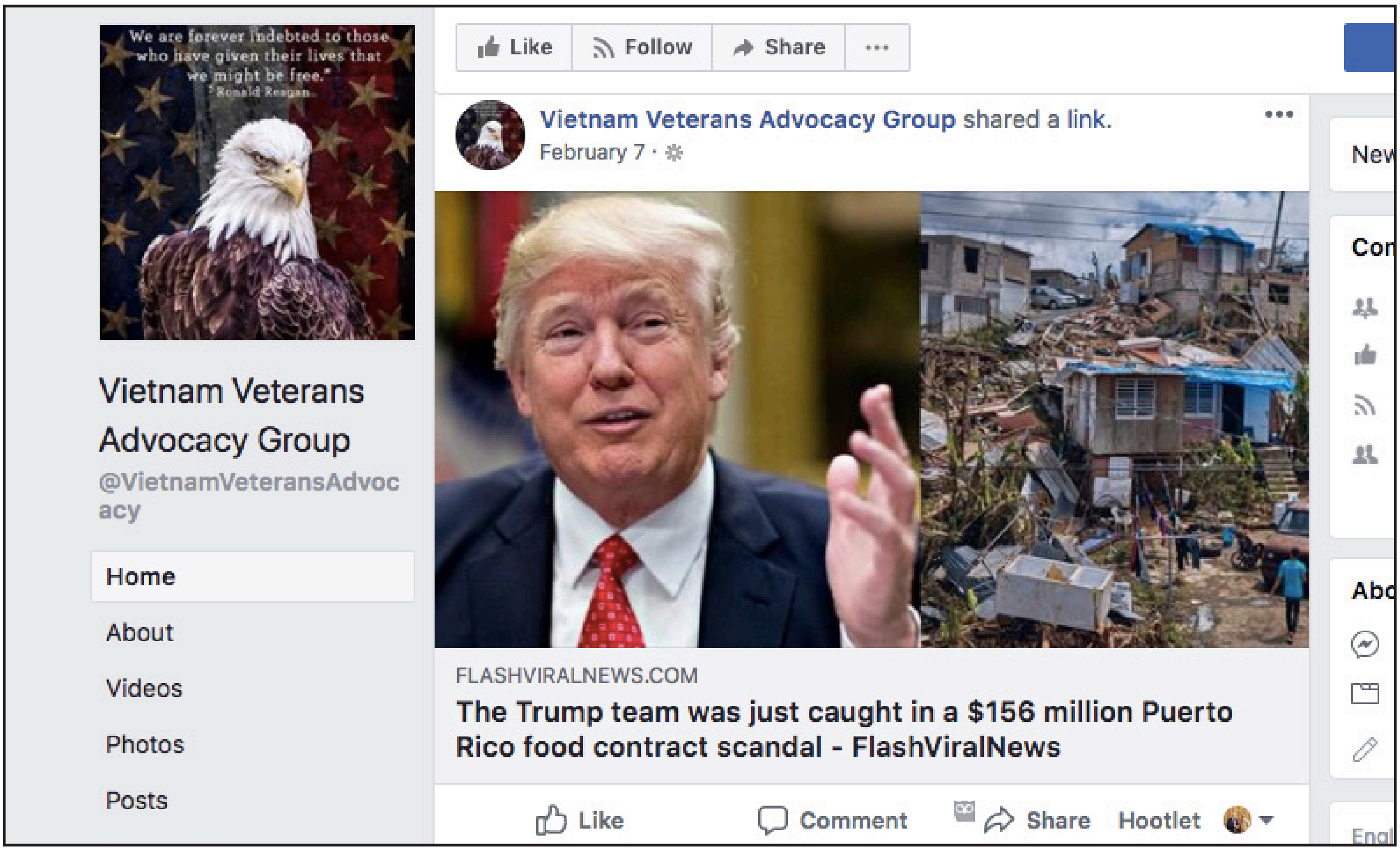
(text continued on page 35)


We are forever indebted to those who have given their lives that we might be free." Ronald Reagan
Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group
@VietnamVeteransAdvocacy
Home
About
Videos
Photos
Posts
Community
Like
Follow
Share
View 6 more comments
News
Com
Abou
Englis
· Fran
Michael Avenatti
@MichaelAvenatti
Mr. Trump's disclosure today

Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group shared a link.
May 17 at 4:00pm ·

TRUTHJUST.COM
Trump just admitted he paid off Stormy Daniels. Michael Avenatti's response is perfect - JustTheTruth

Figure 17: The "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" shared only pro-Obama and anti-Trump articles from junk-news websites.


We are forever indebted to those who have given their lives that we might be free." Ronald Reagan
Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group
@VietnamVeteransAdvocacy
Home
About
Videos
Photos
Posts
Like
Follow
Share
New
Con
Abo
Engl
Like
Comment
Share
Hootlet

Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group shared a link.
February 7 ·

FLASHVIRALNEWS.COM
The Trump team was just caught in a $156 million Puerto Rico food contract scandal - FlashViralNews

Figure 18: "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" sharing anti-Trump junk news from websites truthjust.com and flashviralnews.com.

(text continued from page 33)

At least one-third of the pages that we evaluated since we began our investigation have since been shut down by Facebook during various purges for "inauthentic behavior."[69] The now-shuttered Facebook pages that we had been monitoring had a combined following of over 32 million Facebook users.[70] Nearly 10 percent of the total pages evaluated specifically targeted Vietnam veterans, while other pages targeted veterans of other generations, veterans of specific military branches, or veterans more generally. These veteran-focused Facebook pages are often related to others that target specific demographics and ideological groups of Americans. Foreign admins use these pages to try to drive wedges between groups along varying racial or ethnic identities or prejudices, often pitting law enforcement against minorities.

Unknown Origins: The Anti-Trump "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group"

A Facebook page named "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" was created on December 30, 2017, and by the time we discovered it on July 10, 2018, it had amassed 142,335 likes. Unfortunately, at this time Facebook had not yet implemented the feature that reveals admin country locations for pages with very large followings.

"Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" at first had been posting only politically inflammatory, anti-Trump stories from the junk-news websites www.truthjust.com[71] and flashviralnews.com[72] (Figures 17 and 18), which were co-hosted with the website ExposingGovernment.com. ExposingGovernment.com was once a similar junk news site,[73] but today contains only a link to trick visitors into downloading the malware SecuryBrowse. SecuryBrowse is a Google Chrome extension that brands itself as an antivirus tool, but its primary function is to direct users to affiliated websites that expose them to additional security threats.[74] These three websites were registered anonymously through third-party privacy-protection groups. According to the WHOIS Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (WHOIS ICANN) service, truthjust.com and flashviralnews.com were registered via Proxy Protection, LLC, out of California, while ExposingGovernment.com was registered via Perfect Privacy, LLC, from Florida.

The "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" Facebook page was taken down by Facebook on or before August 2, 2018. Prior to being taken down, as of July 20, 2018, it appeared that either Facebook or the page admins had purged hundreds of posts related to the junk-news websites listed above. The "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" page was then filled by its admins with scores of pro-Barack-Obama memes. It is unclear if Facebook had purged specific links and posts in this way or if this action was done by the page admins.

Unknown Origins: "Vietnam Vets Unite"

Some Facebook pages have a "Community" tab for users to publicly post and interact with varying levels of moderation by the page admins. "Vietnam Veterans Advocacy Group" had one such Community tab, where a user promoted another page, "Vietnam Vets Unite." This page, which was created on November 26, 2016, frequently posts photos from the Vietnam War in an attempt to build its audience — cycling through a single batch of photos and reposting them over and over, with as many as 15 posts per day. In between these photos are advertisements for veteran-themed memorabilia from Amazon. This Facebook page has been advertising counterfeit VVA-branded merchandise since December 4, 2016.[75]

"Vietnam Vets Unite" has advertised at least two different VVA-branded items. The first is a challenge coin, a commemorative trinket featuring VVA's trademarked name and logo, sold by by Coins and Coins (Figures 19 and 20), which sells merchandise through Amazon.[76]

The second VVA-branded item is a flag sold by Breeze Decor (Figures 21 and 22) through Amazon, which according to the Amazon[77] site sells products "proudly made in the USA."[78] The affiliated Breeze Decor website, however, says that it is owned by the Germany-based company TWO Group. The LinkedIn page for "TWO Group" says that it "is a German-owned company with its headquarters in Stuttgart German and Guangzhou China, and offices in UK, USA, Czech and Hong Kong *[sic]*" (Figure 23).[79] The TWO Group website, however, is a China-based site that appears to have been shut down by the Chinese government for a licensure discrepancy (Figures 24 and 25).

Because of this complicated web of stores that sell on Amazon, international companies, and foreign-based websites, it is difficult to tell who it is that benefits from selling counterfeit VVA-branded products or what their motivations for doing so may be. Is the primary purpose of the "Vietnam Vets Unite" Facebook page to earn money selling merchandise? Or is the posting of MilVet trinkets simply meant to add credibility to a page designed to spread divisive political propaganda? Because this Facebook page has a small following and has not purchased political ads, the admin locations are not revealed.

With complete anonymity, the admins behind these social-media accounts are able to confuse the non-political message of VVA and other VSOs while profiting financially by defrauding veterans and supporters.

International Effort to Sell Counterfeit VVA-Branded Products, Alongside Racist Messaging, Russian Propaganda, and Sales of Pro-Trump Merchandise: "Vietnam Veterans"

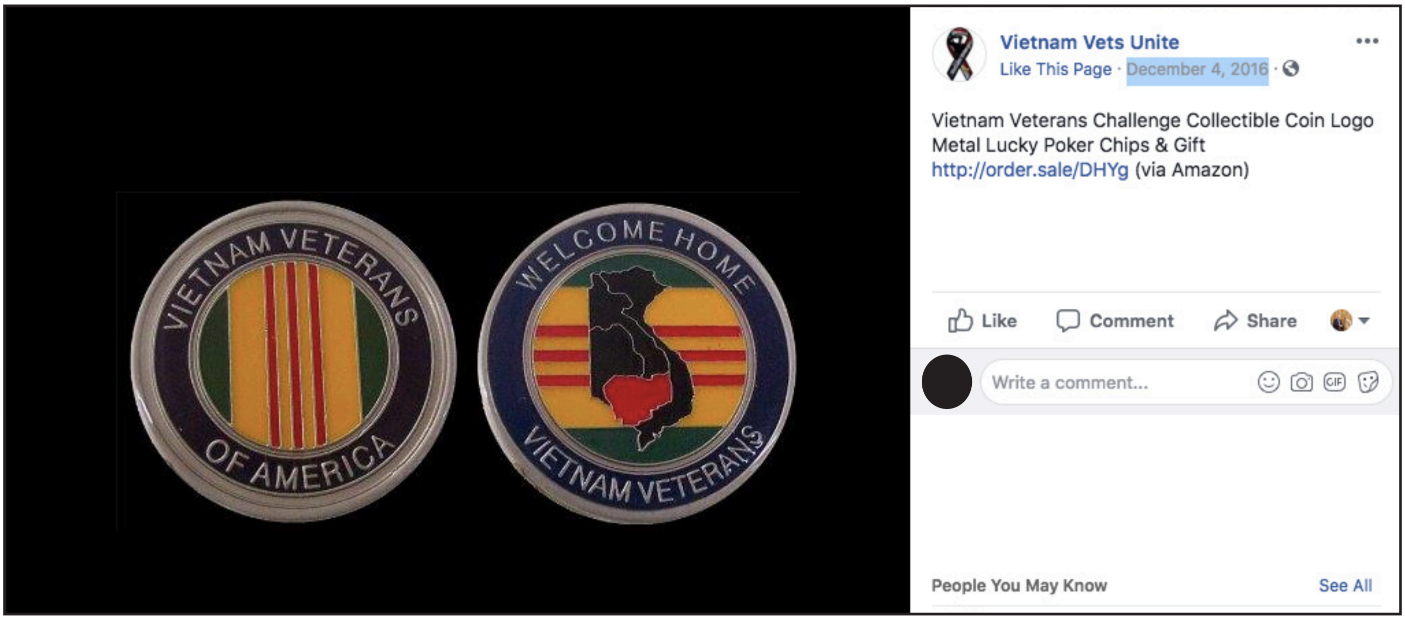
There are countless impostor pages similar to those above that falsely present themselves as representing American veterans and affiliated patriotic organizations: They build an audience and obtain their trust using sophisticated and deceptive tactics and then prey on them for financial gain and to exploit divisions and spread hateful, anti-American messages.

The Facebook page "Vietnam Veterans,"[80] according to its Info and Ads tab at the time this report was being prepared, had two admins in Vietnam and one in the US,[81] as well as 185,123 followers. It is unclear if a virtual private network (VPN) or other technology can be used to spoof admin locations to make it appear as if admins are operating in different countries from their actual physical location — though Facebook's Threat Intelligence Team assured us during a meeting that this is not possible.

This page posts multiple times per day with messages like "Support our Vietnam Veteran" and "Only for Vietnam Veteran" (next to a picture of a post-9/11 Marine in Afghanistan) with links to merchandise on third-party websites such as GearBubble. The thousands of people who see these posts on social media each day in isolation might reasonably believe that a portion of the proceeds goes toward supporting Vietnam veterans or legitimate Vietnam veterans organizations like VVA — though there is no evidence that this is the case.

The Facebook page "Vietnam Veterans" has also been engaged in advertising counterfeit VVA-branded products since at least November 24, 2016[82] (Figure 26). The page has also used VVA's logo to promote politically divisive memes and content (Figure 27). In order to make this impostor page more closely resemble a VVA-affiliated page, the admins have stolen pictures and content from the official VVA Facebook page. These stolen graphics feature our name and logo, and photographs include VVA's CEO John Rowan visiting a war memorial (Figures 28 and 29).

The "Vietnam Veterans" page's co-opting of the photos featuring VVA's leadership and VVA's branded content is done to make the impostor page appear authentic and to build viewership. This page also features memes known to have been developed and used by the Russian-based IRA's social-media accounts and content created specifically for the Bulgarian entity, "Vietnam Vets of America" (Figure 30). As confirmed in the Mueller report, "Being Patriotic" (Figure 31) is one of the Russian IRA's unique brands.[83] "Being Patriotic" memes were frequently used by this entity well after the original page was taken down; it's important to note that these divisive memes were recycled and reposted by "Vietnam Veterans" on November 2, 2017, long after the elections. This page edited out the "Being Patriotic"[84]



Vietnam Vets Unite
Like This Page · December 4, 2016 ·

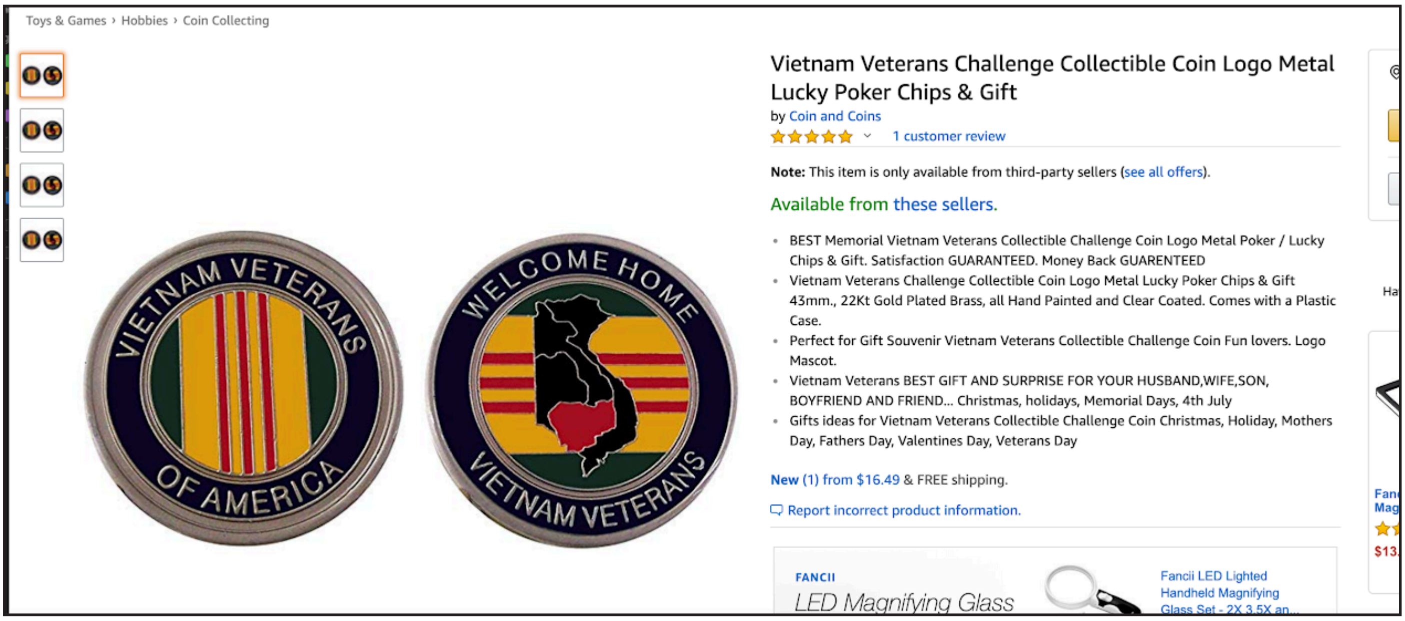
Vietnam Veterans Challenge Collectible Coin Logo Metal Lucky Poker Chips & Gift
http://order.sale/DHYg (via Amazon)

Like Comment Share

Write a comment...

People You May Know See All

Figure 19: "Vietnam Vets Unite" Facebook page linking to an Amazon store offering counterfeit VVA-branded merchandise from the seller Coins and Coins.



Toys & Games › Hobbies › Coin Collecting

Vietnam Veterans Challenge Collectible Coin Logo Metal Lucky Poker Chips & Gift
by Coin and Coins
1 customer review

Note: This item is only available from third-party sellers (see all offers).

Available from these sellers.

- BEST Memorial Vietnam Veterans Collectible Challenge Coin Logo Metal Poker / Lucky Chips & Gift. Satisfaction GUARANTEED. Money Back GUARENTEED
- Vietnam Veterans Challenge Collectible Coin Logo Metal Lucky Poker Chips & Gift 43mm., 22Kt Gold Plated Brass, all Hand Painted and Clear Coated. Comes with a Plastic Case.
- Perfect for Gift Souvenir Vietnam Veterans Collectible Challenge Coin Fun lovers. Logo Mascot.
- Vietnam Veterans BEST GIFT AND SURPRISE FOR YOUR HUSBAND,WIFE,SON, BOYFRIEND AND FRIEND... Christmas, holidays, Memorial Days, 4th July
- Gifts ideas for Vietnam Veterans Collectible Challenge Coin Christmas, Holiday, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Valentines Day, Veterans Day

New (1) from $16.49 & FREE shipping.

Report incorrect product information.

FANCII LED Magnifying Glass
Fancii LED Lighted Handheld Magnifying Glass Set - 2X 3.5X an...

Figure 20: The Amazon store Coins and Coins selling VVA-branded merchandise, which is linked to from the "Vietnam Vets Unite" Facebook page.

scroll from the bottom of the original graphic but otherwise left the meme in its original form (Figure 32).

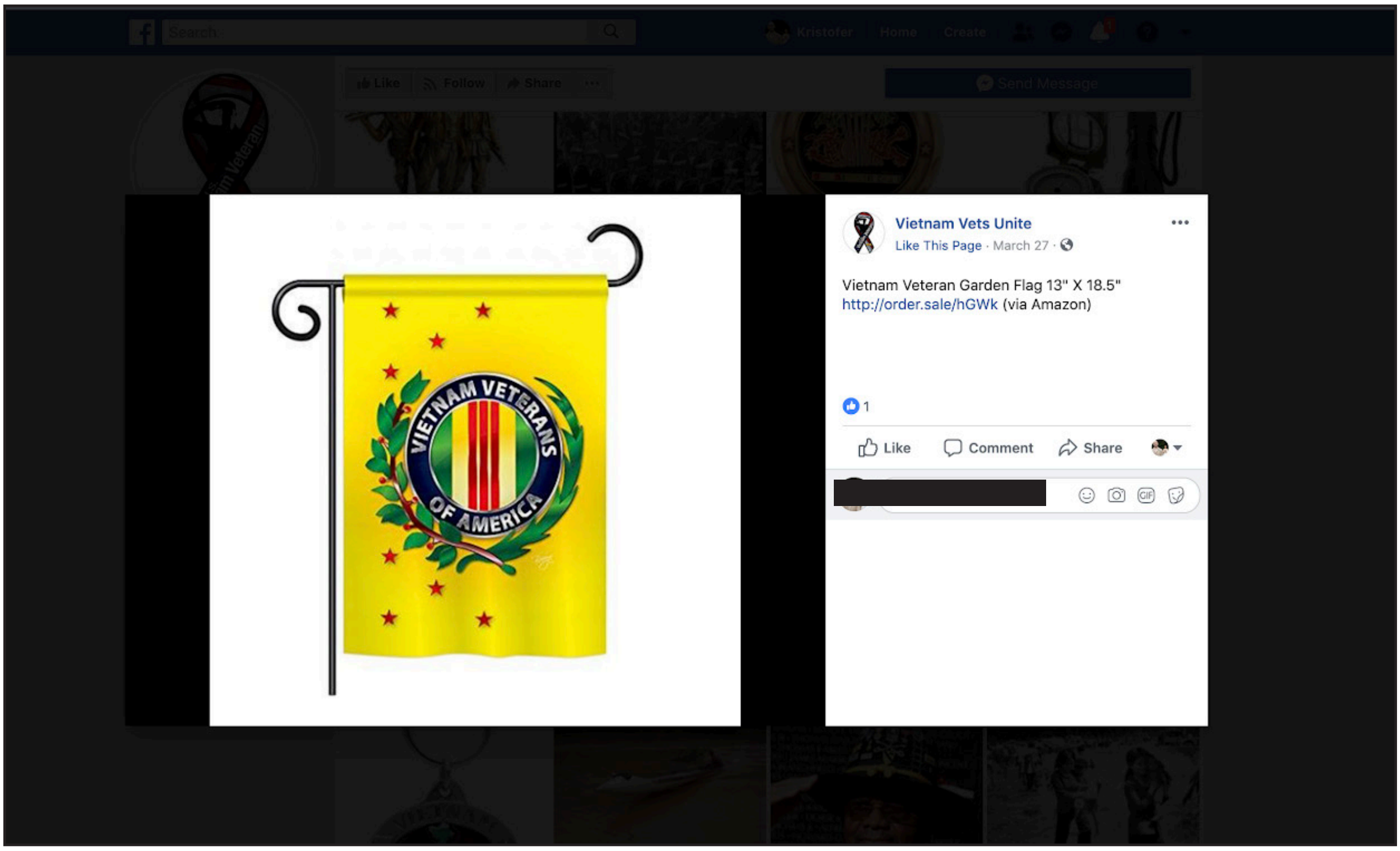
Just days after the 2016 election, "Vietnam Veterans" advertised political Trump-branded merchandise with the slogan "Hey TRUMP Let's MAKE NAM VETS GREAT AGAIN" (Figure 33).[85] As a matter of VVA's nonpartisan charter and status as a VSO, VVA has not and will never endorse a political candidate; similarly, VVA would never adopt a version of a political campaign slogan for our merchandise — but the activity of "Vietnam Veterans" may confuse social-media users who see this political merchandise being sold by an entity using VVA's branding.

According to the text of the post, this item, a t-shirt, was listed as part of a three-day sale, from November 9, 2016, to November 11, 2016. However, the date was formatted in a way that is unfamiliar to Americans: "(9-11/11)." The way the date is written, with the awkward capitalization and grammar of the post "Comment Yes If you support D.TRUMP and proud to wear this t-shirt" is a likely indication that this is being posted by a non-native English speaker and presumably someone outside of the United States. Furthermore, the third-party website teechip.com, where the t-shirt was sold, has no American admins, similar to other fraudulent veteran-targeted pages.

This entity further obscures VVA's message by posting memes that use racist and xenophobic rhetoric. VVA condemns the slogan "VETS BEFORE ILLEGALS," a phrase commonly posted by this entity on Facebook in the same way that counterfeit VVA merchandise is sold (Figure 34). There are countless undocumented immigrants who have served honorably among veterans of the United States Armed Forces. VVA has proudly worked toward ending the practice of the deportation of undocumented immigrants who have served in the American military.

VVA has since its inception supported keeping our promise to the brave allies who work alongside us in combat as interpreters; these allies deserve to settle in the United States as refugees and avoid acts of revenge perpetrated on them and their families. VVA therefore also condemns the phrase "VETERANS BEFORE REFUGEES," another slogan that is used alongside our trademarked name and logo by this entity (Figure 35). Furthermore, VVA, along with other VSOs in an effort led by the nonprofit No One Left Behind, has called upon Congress to recognize foreign nationals who served as interpreters alongside our military as "honorary veterans" of the United States, so that VSOs and other American nonprofit organizations can legally provide more support to these honorable women and men and their families.[86]

(text continued on page 46)

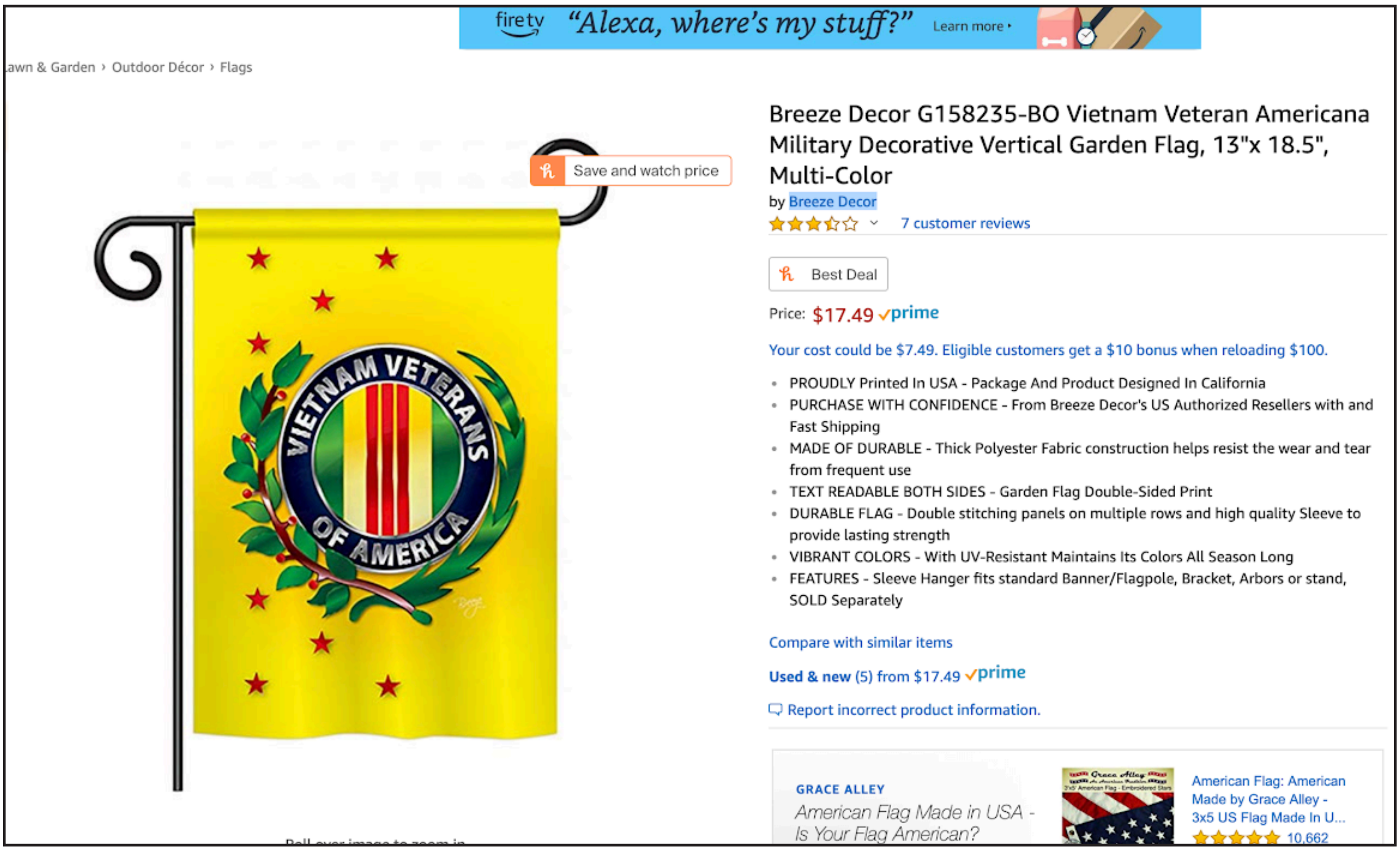


Vietnam Vets Unite
Like This Page · March 27 ·

Vietnam Veteran Garden Flag 13" X 18.5"
http://order.sale/hGWk (via Amazon)

[redacted]

Figure 21: The "Vietnam Vets Unite" page uses the link-shortener "order.sale" in posts advertising counterfeit VVA merchandise.


fire tv
"Alexa, where's my stuff?"
Learn more ›
awn & Garden › Outdoor Décor › Flags
Save and watch price
Best Deal

Breeze Decor G158235-BO Vietnam Veteran Americana Military Decorative Vertical Garden Flag, 13"x 18.5", Multi-Color

by Breeze Decor

★★★☆☆ 7 customer reviews

Price: $17.49 ✓prime

Your cost could be $7.49. Eligible customers get a $10 bonus when reloading $100.

- PROUDLY Printed In USA - Package And Product Designed In California
- PURCHASE WITH CONFIDENCE - From Breeze Decor's US Authorized Resellers with and Fast Shipping
- MADE OF DURABLE - Thick Polyester Fabric construction helps resist the wear and tear from frequent use
- TEXT READABLE BOTH SIDES - Garden Flag Double-Sided Print
- DURABLE FLAG - Double stitching panels on multiple rows and high quality Sleeve to provide lasting strength
- VIBRANT COLORS - With UV-Resistant Maintains Its Colors All Season Long
- FEATURES - Sleeve Hanger fits standard Banner/Flagpole, Bracket, Arbors or stand, SOLD Separately

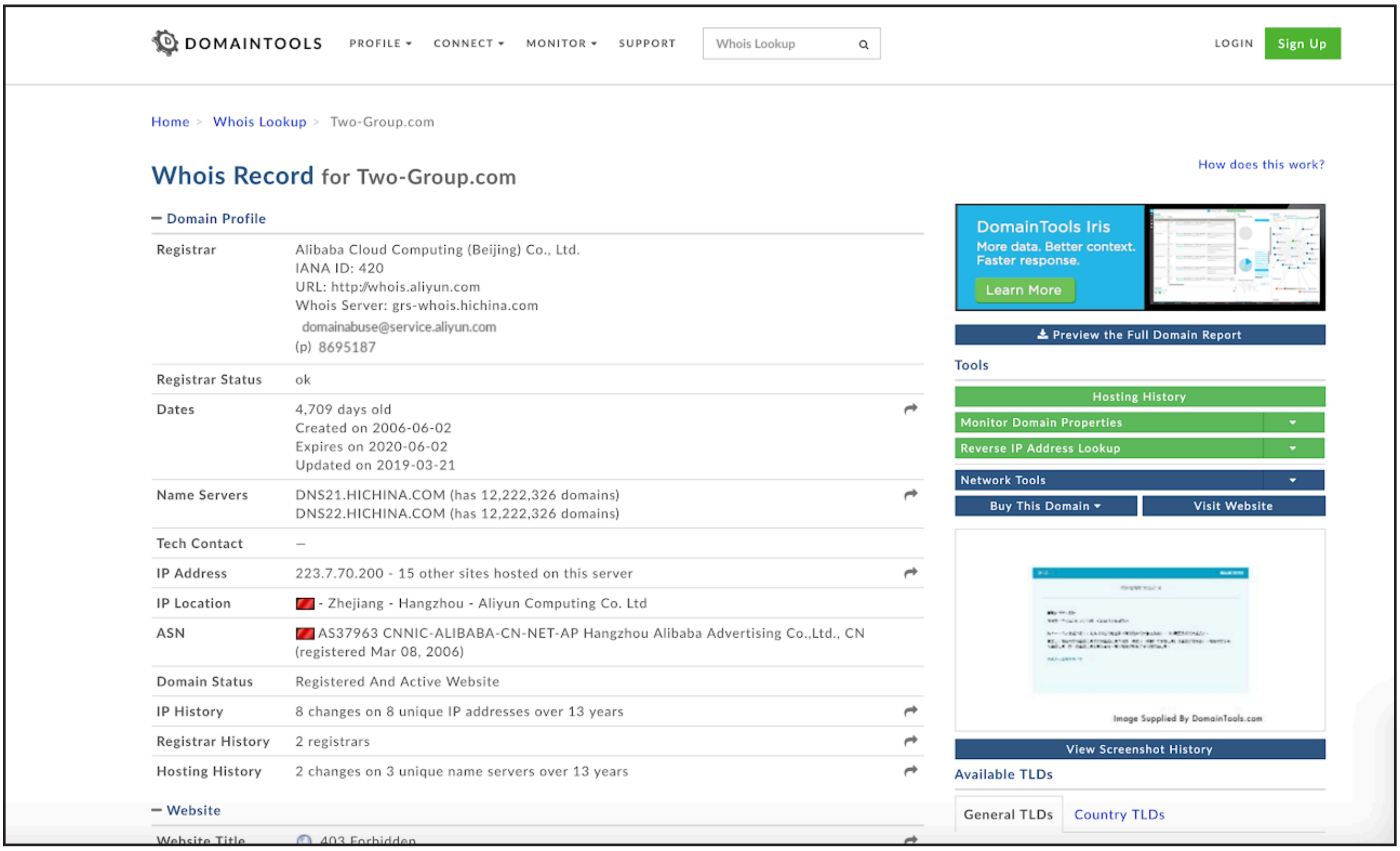
Compare with similar items

Used & new (5) from $17.49 ✓prime

Report incorrect product information.

GRACE ALLEY
American Flag Made in USA - Is Your Flag American?
American Flag: American Made by Grace Alley - 3x5 US Flag Made In U...
★★★★★ 10,662
Roll over image to zoom in

Figure 22: "Vietnam Vets Unite" Facebook page selling VVA-branded flag via Breeze Decor, which sells products through Amazon.



Home > Whois Lookup > Two-Group.com

Whois Record for Two-Group.com

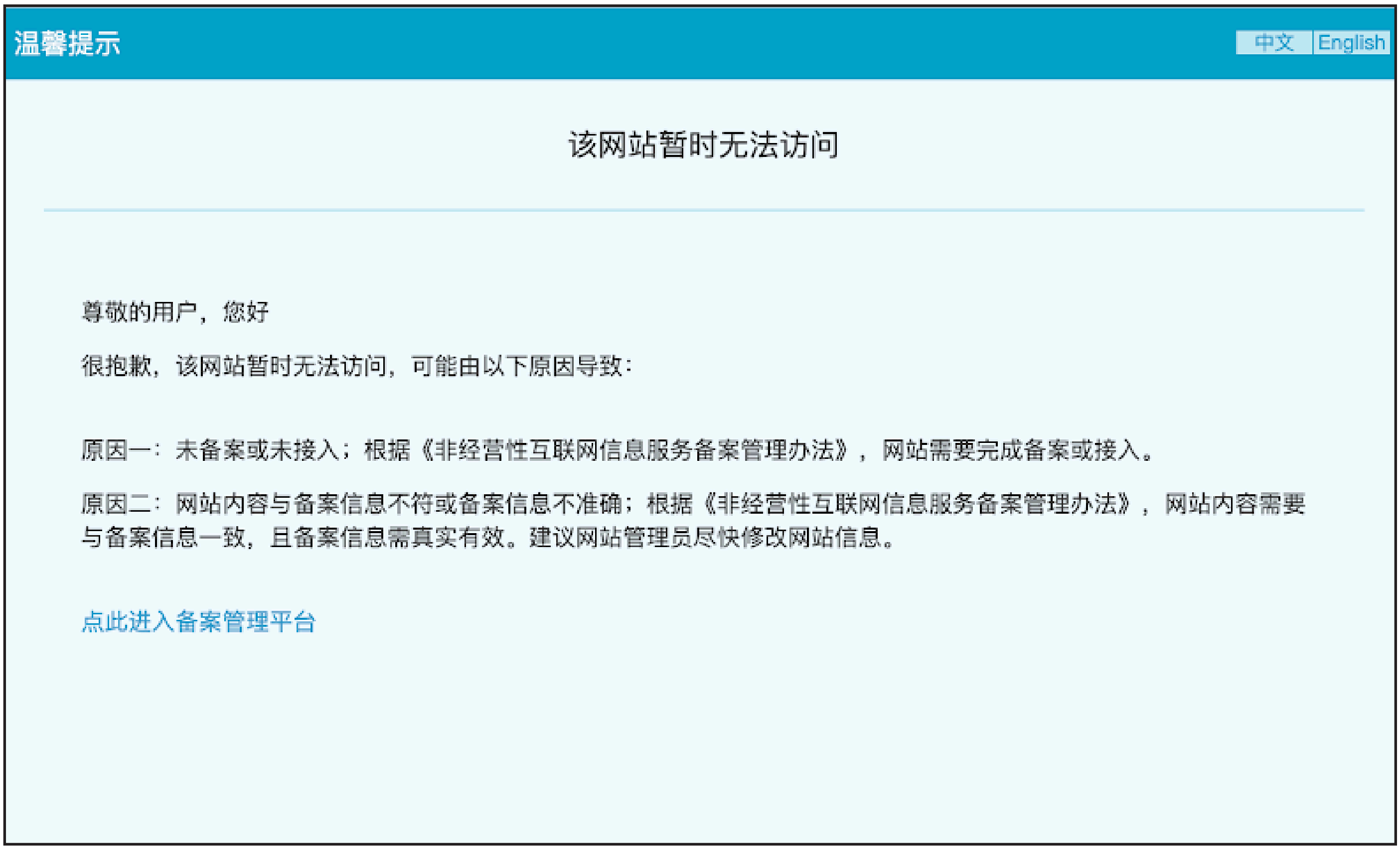
– Domain Profile

Registrar	Alibaba Cloud Computing (Beijing) Co., Ltd. IANA ID: 420 URL: http://whois.aliyun.com Whois Server: grs-whois.hichina.com domainabuse@service.aliyun.com (p) 8695187
Registrar Status	ok
Dates	4,709 days old Created on 2006-06-02 Expires on 2020-06-02 Updated on 2019-03-21
Name Servers	DNS21.HICHINA.COM (has 12,222,326 domains) DNS22.HICHINA.COM (has 12,222,326 domains)
Tech Contact	—
IP Address	223.7.70.200 - 15 other sites hosted on this server
IP Location	- Zhejiang - Hangzhou - Aliyun Computing Co. Ltd
ASN	AS37963 CNNIC-ALIBABA-CN-NET-AP Hangzhou Alibaba Advertising Co.,Ltd., CN (registered Mar 08, 2006)
Domain Status	Registered And Active Website
IP History	8 changes on 8 unique IP addresses over 13 years
Registrar History	2 registrars
Hosting History	2 changes on 3 unique name servers over 13 years

– Website

Website Title	403 Forbidden

Figure 23: The WHOIS records for the Two-Group.com website reveals that it is Chinese in origin.



该网站暂时无法访问

尊敬的用户，您好

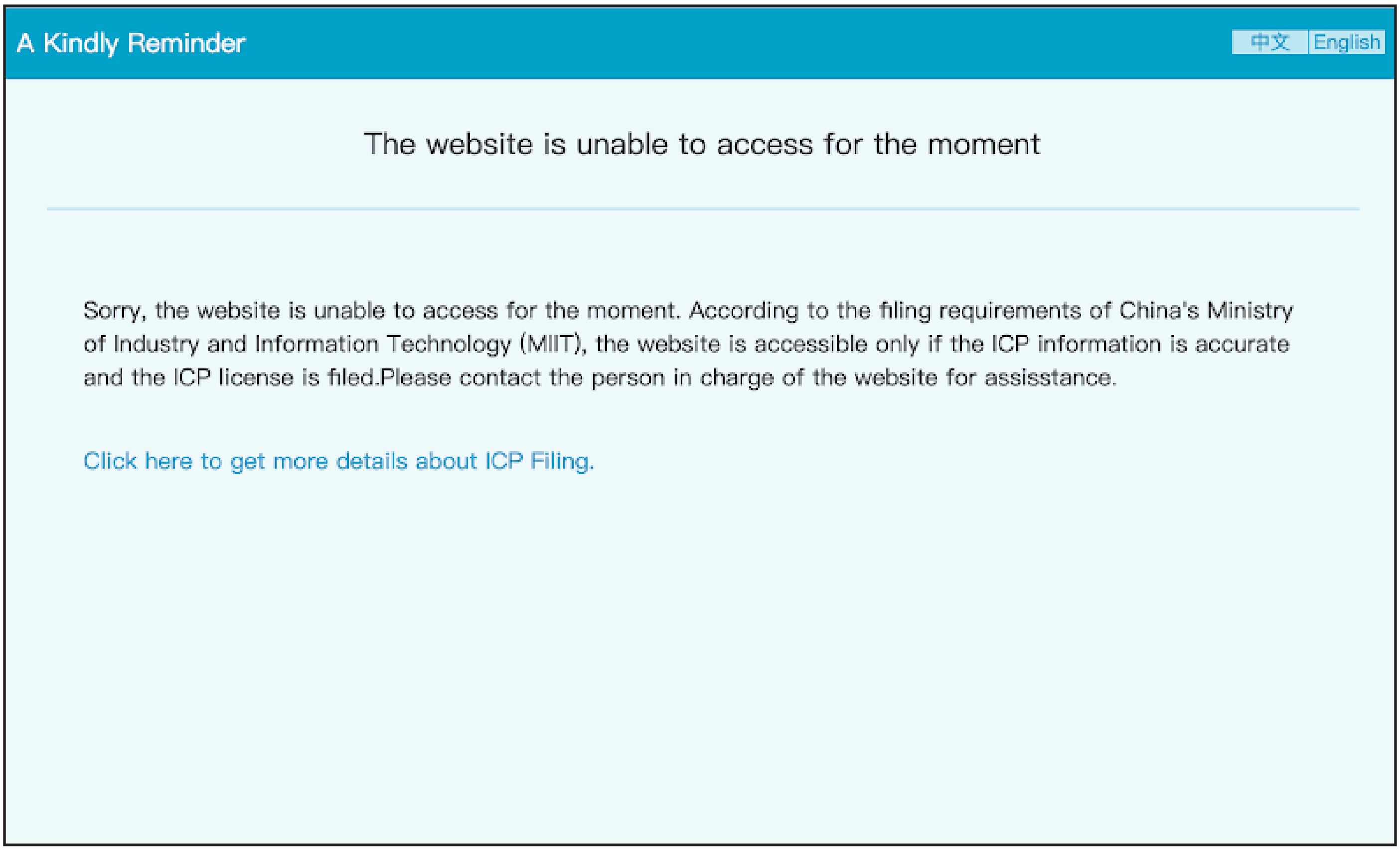
很抱歉，该网站暂时无法访问，可能由以下原因导致：

原因一：未备案或未接入；根据《非经营性互联网信息服务备案管理办法》，网站需要完成备案或接入。

原因二：网站内容与备案信息不符或备案信息不准确；根据《非经营性互联网信息服务备案管理办法》，网站内容需要与备案信息一致，且备案信息需真实有效。建议网站管理员尽快修改网站信息。

点此进入备案管理平台

Figure 24: Two-Group.com is the owner of Breeze Decor, which sells products via Amazon and links to a China-based website that appears to have been disabled by the Chinese government due to licensure issues. See Figure 25 for translation.



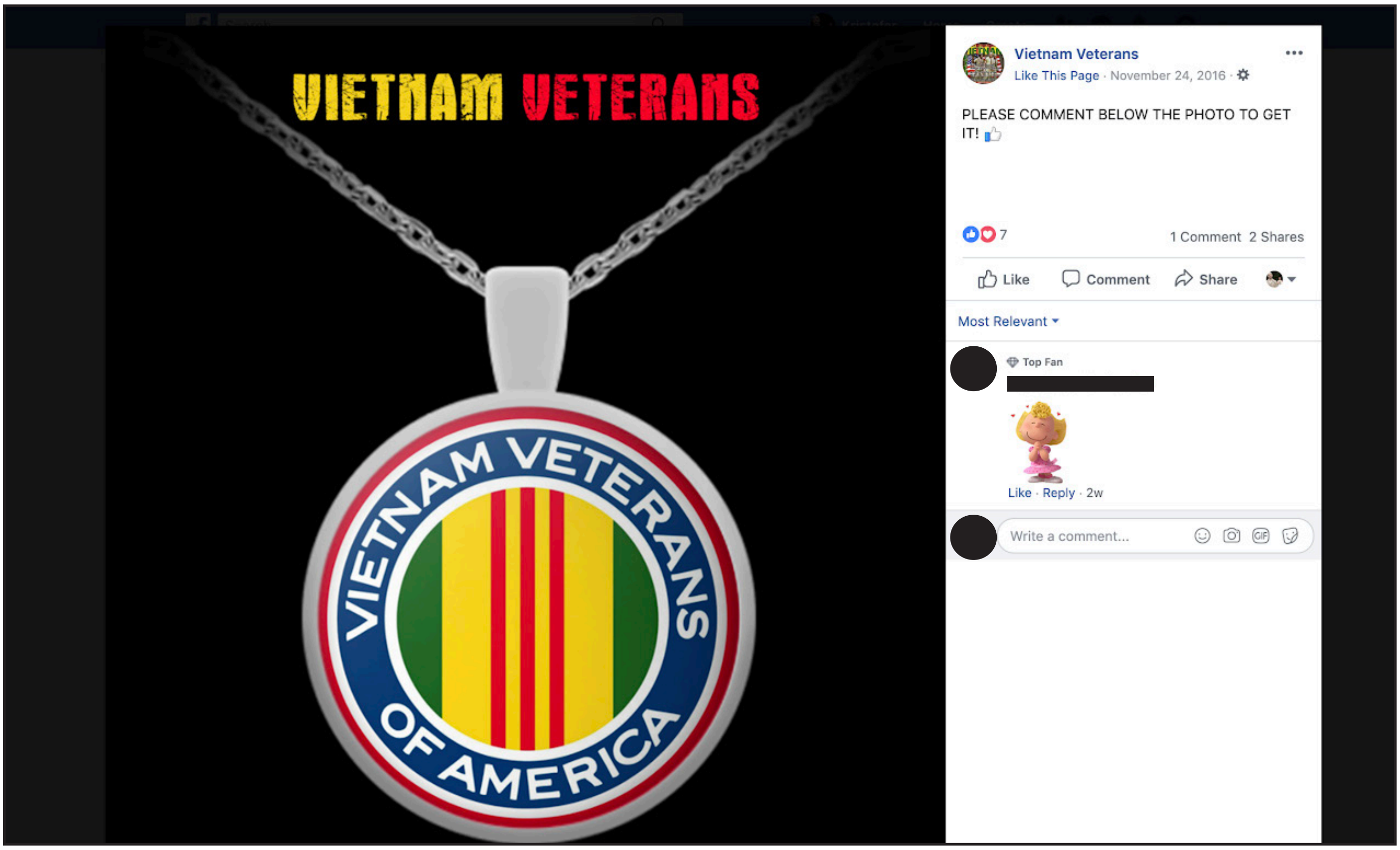
A Kindly Reminder

The website is unable to access for the moment

Sorry, the website is unable to access for the moment. According to the filing requirements of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the website is accessible only if the ICP information is accurate and the ICP license is filed.Please contact the person in charge of the website for assisstance.

Click here to get more details about ICP Filing.

Figure 25: An English translation of the error message displayed in Figure 24.



Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · November 24, 2016

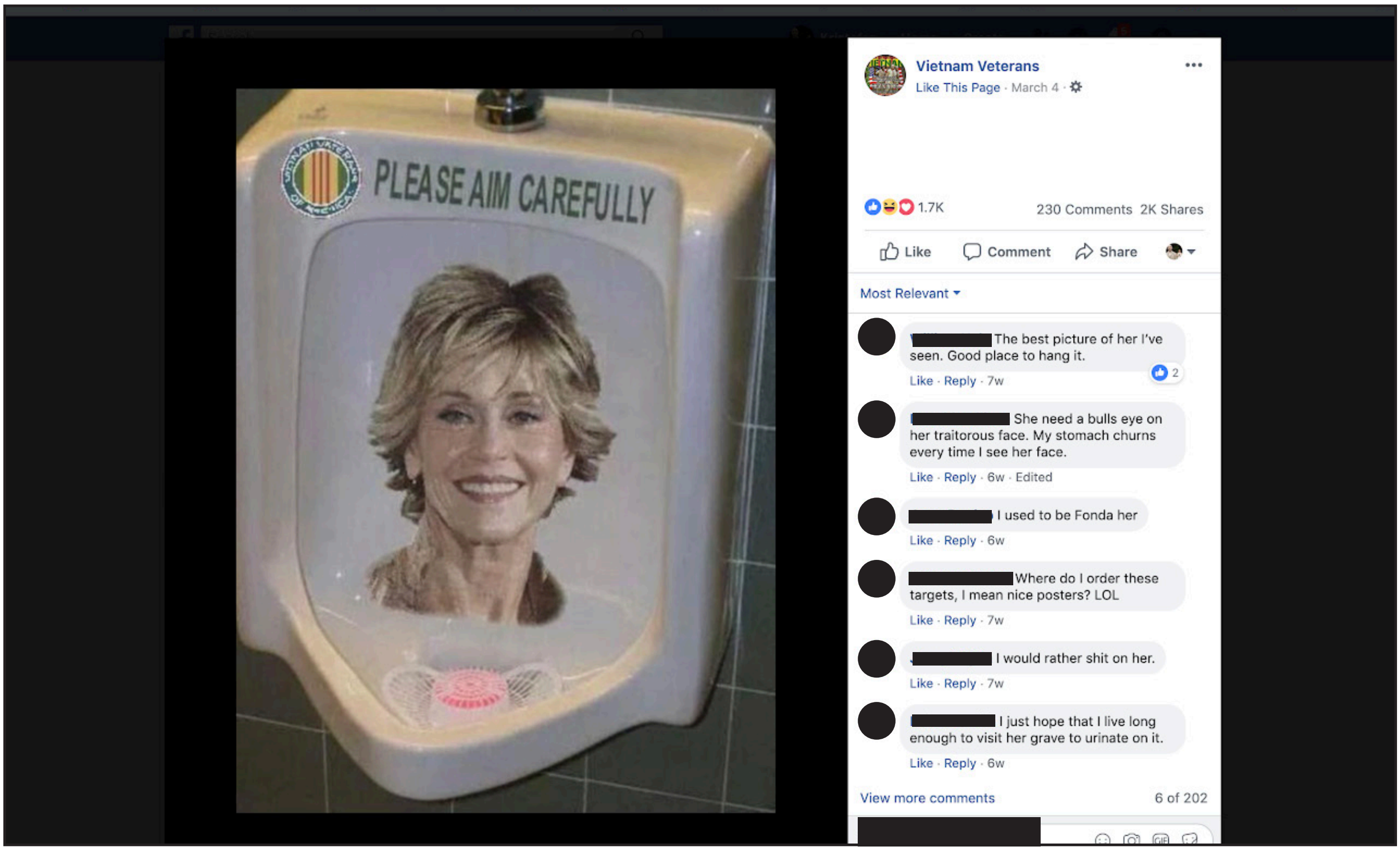
PLEASE COMMENT BELOW THE PHOTO TO GET IT! 👍

7 1 Comment 2 Shares

Top Fan
[redacted]

Like · Reply · 2w

Figure 26: VVA's trademarked name and logo used to advertise counterfeit merchandise on the Facebook page "Vietnam Veterans."



Vietnam Veterans ···
Like This Page · March 4 ·

1.7K 230 Comments 2K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] The best picture of her I've seen. Good place to hang it. 2
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] She need a bulls eye on her traitorous face. My stomach churns every time I see her face.
Like · Reply · 6w · Edited

[redacted] I used to be Fonda her
Like · Reply · 6w

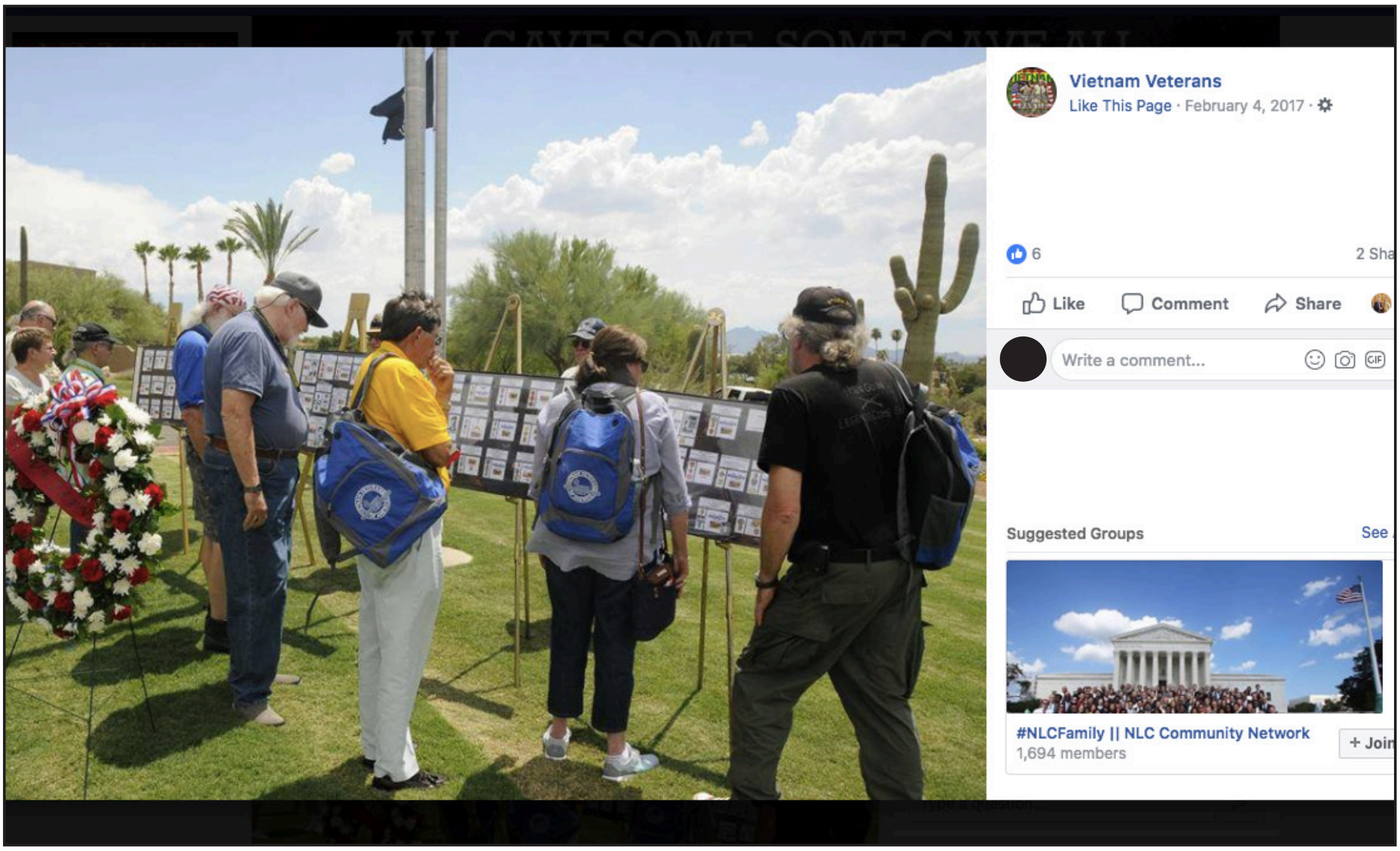
[redacted] Where do I order these targets, I mean nice posters? LOL
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] I would rather shit on her.
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] I just hope that I live long enough to visit her grave to urinate on it.
Like · Reply · 6w

View more comments 6 of 202

Figure 27: VVA's trademarked name and logo being used to promote politically divisive memes. This graphic features a photoshopped image of Jane Fonda's face in a urinal. Ms. Fonda was widely criticized for a trip to North Vietnam during the war and to this day provokes anger in many veterans.



Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · February 4, 2017 ·

6 2 Sha

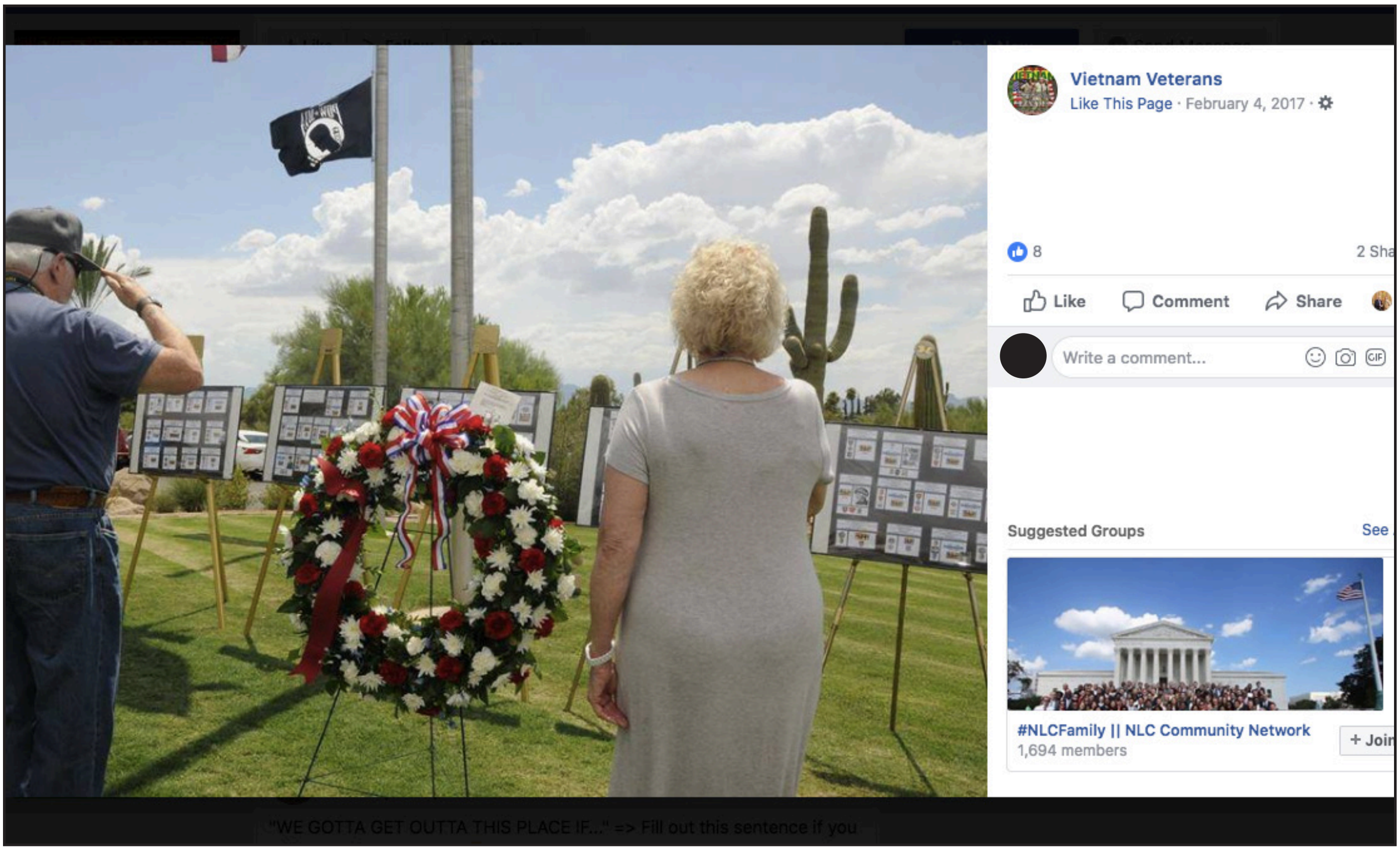
Like Comment Share

Write a comment...

Suggested Groups See

#NLCFamily || NLC Community Network
1,694 members
+ Joir

Figure 28: "Vietnam Veterans" is falsely representing itself to gain credibility by posting photos of VVA's CEO and national president John Rowan on its Facebook page. Rowan is the man in this photo and the following one with white hair and a hat. In the context of a social-media page that is designed to appear as if it is by and for Vietnam veterans, Rowan is widely recognized by the 86,000-plus members of VVA.

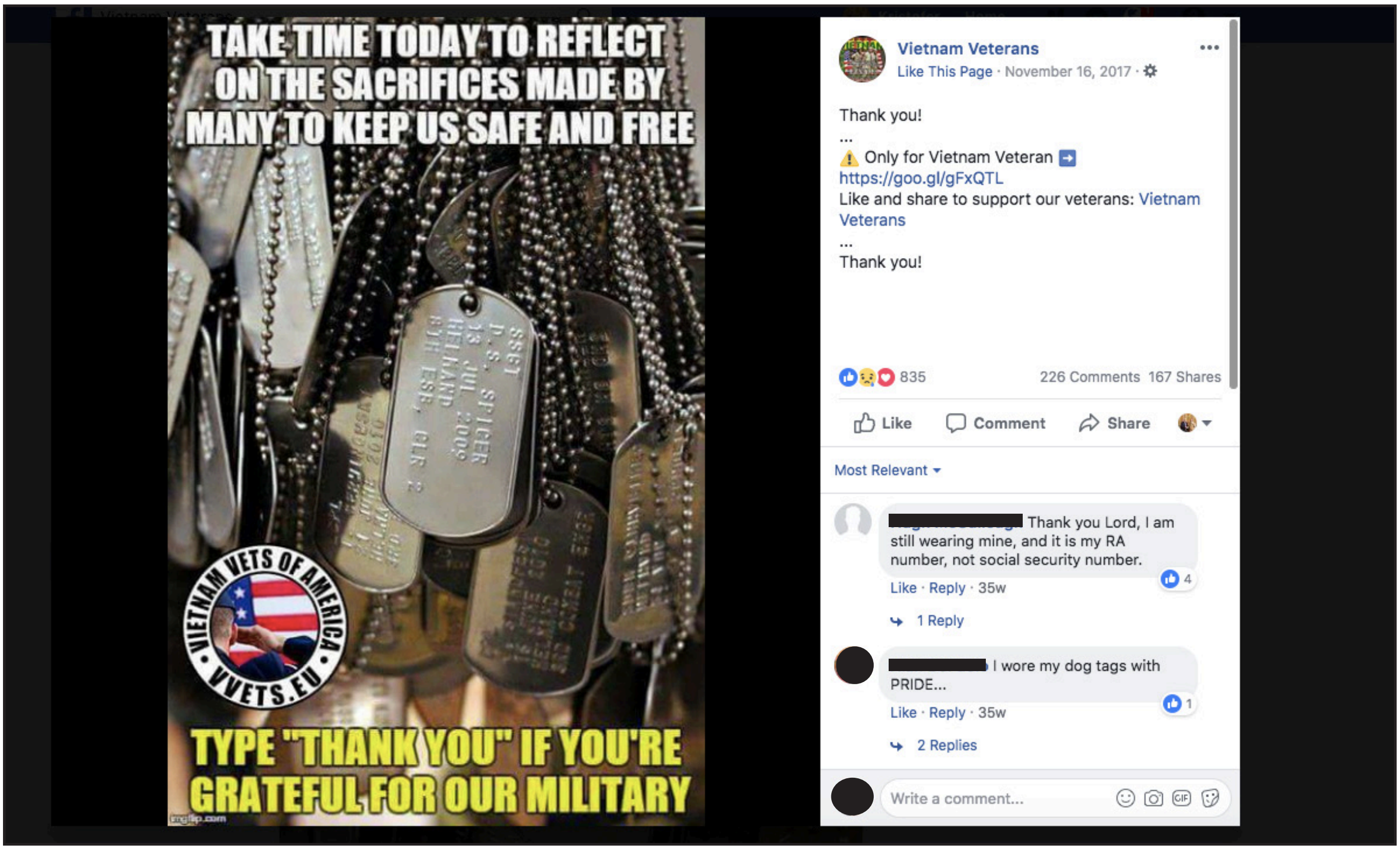


Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · February 4, 2017 ·

8 2 Sha

"WE GOTTA GET OUTTA THIS PLACE IF..." => Fill out this sentence if you

Figure 29: Foreign admins exploit VVA's participation in a solemn memorial.



TAKE TIME TODAY TO REFLECT ON THE SACRIFICES MADE BY MANY TO KEEP US SAFE AND FREE
VIETNAM VETS OF AMERICA
VVETS.EU
TYPE "THANK YOU" IF YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR OUR MILITARY
imgflip.com

Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · November 16, 2017 ·

Thank you!
...
⚠ Only for Vietnam Veteran ➡
https://goo.gl/gFxQTL
Like and share to support our veterans: Vietnam Veterans
...
Thank you!

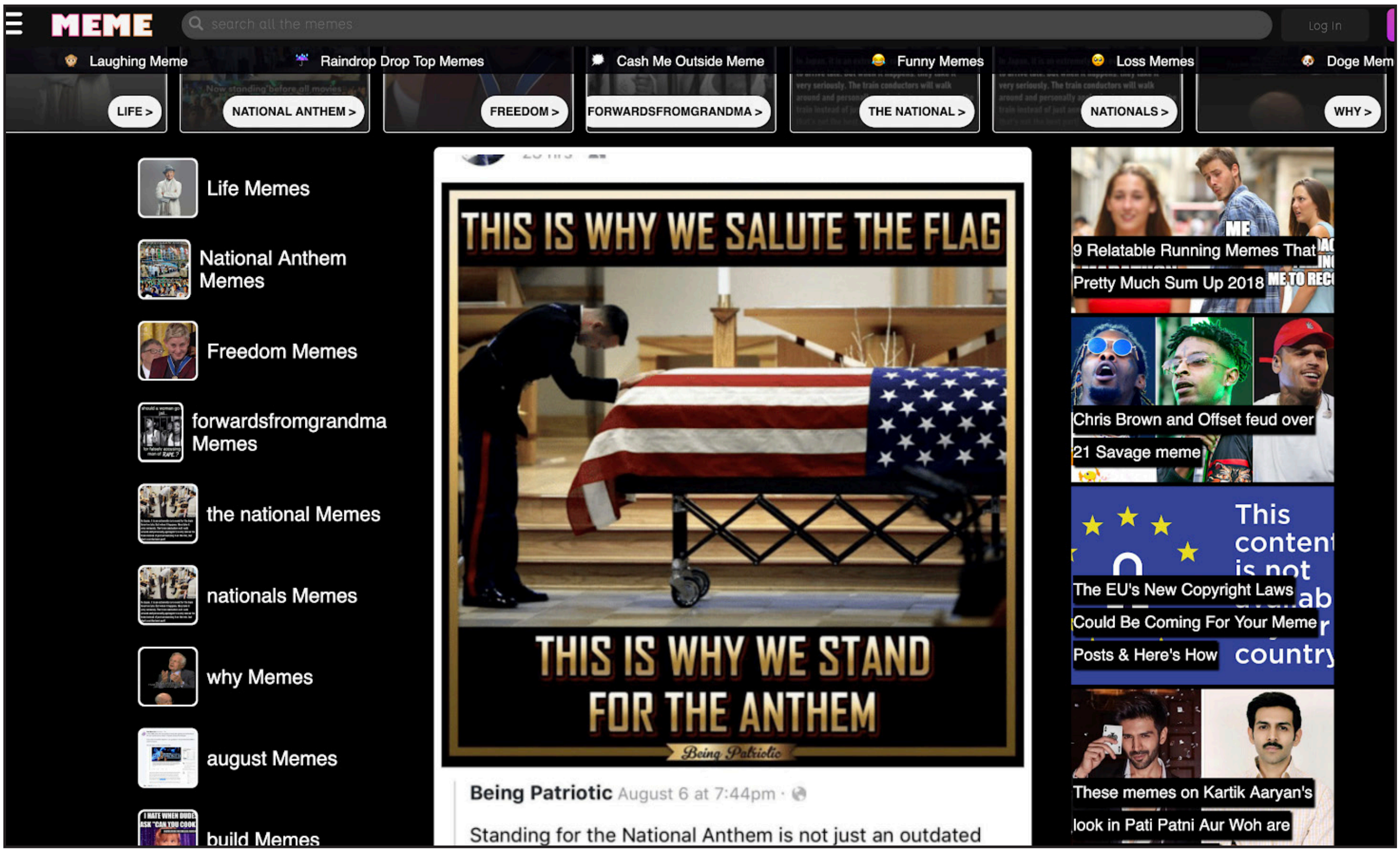
835 226 Comments 167 Shares

Like
Comment
Share
Most Relevant

[redacted] Thank you Lord, I am still wearing mine, and it is my RA number, not social security number.
Like · Reply · 35w 4
1 Reply

[redacted] I wore my dog tags with PRIDE...
Like · Reply · 35w 1
2 Replies

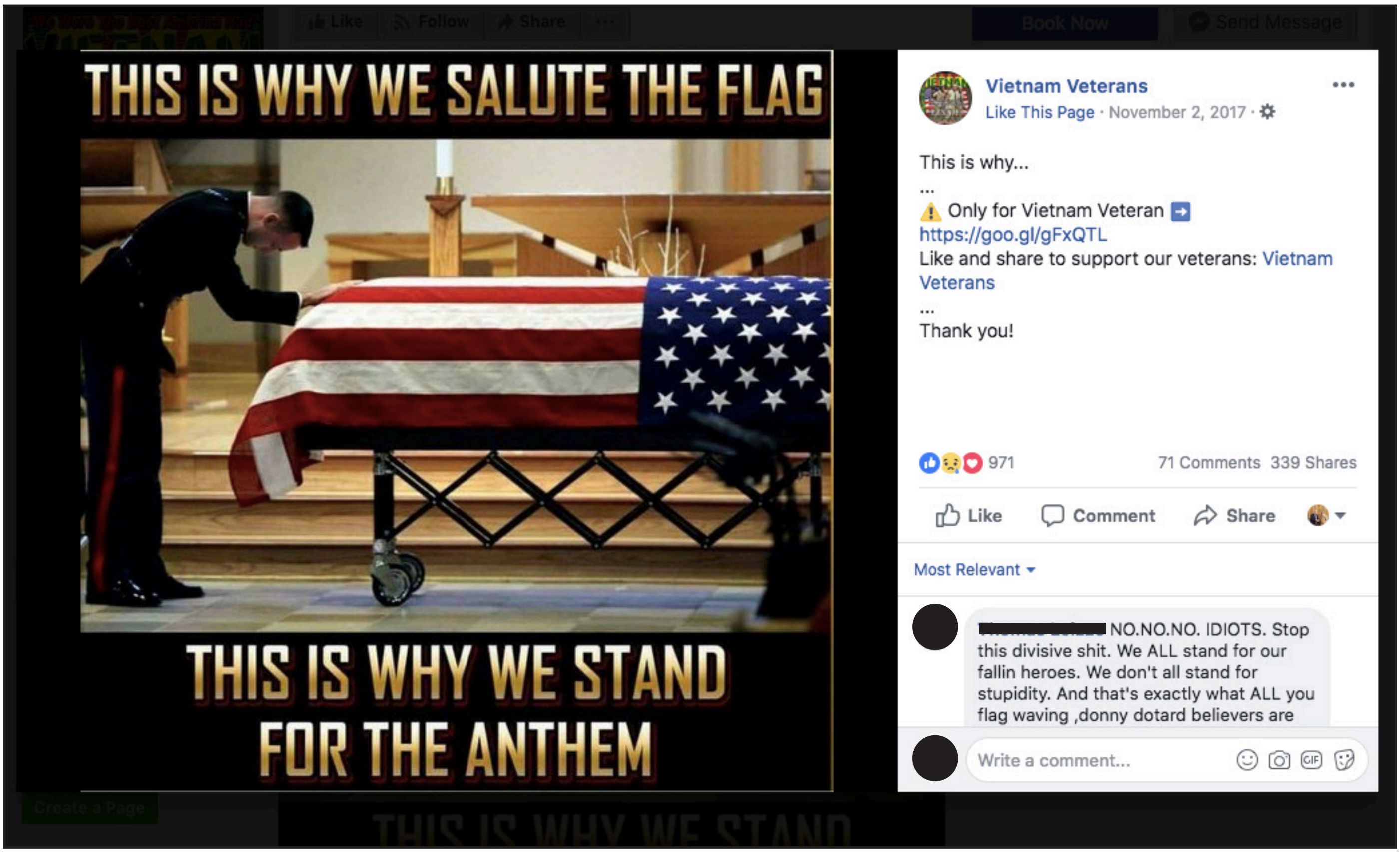
Figure 30: The Facebook page "Vietnam Veterans" has posted content that was developed for and branded by the Bulgarian-based "Vietnam Vets of America" impostor page, which was affiliated with the Europe-based vvets.eu website that featured falsified and inflammatory news.


MEME
search all the memes
Log In
Laughing Meme
Raindrop Drop Top Memes
Cash Me Outside Meme
Funny Memes
Loss Memes
Doge Mem
LIFE >
NATIONAL ANTHEM >
FREEDOM >
FORWARDSFROMGRANDMA >
THE NATIONAL >
NATIONALS >
WHY >
Life Memes
National Anthem Memes
Freedom Memes
forwardsfromgrandma Memes
the national Memes
nationals Memes
why Memes
august Memes
build Memes
THIS IS WHY WE SALUTE THE FLAG
THIS IS WHY WE STAND FOR THE ANTHEM
Being Patriotic
9 Relatable Running Memes That Pretty Much Sum Up 2018
Chris Brown and Offset feud over 21 Savage meme
The EU's New Copyright Laws Could Be Coming For Your Meme Posts & Here's How
These memes on Kartik Aaryan's look in Pati Patni Aur Woh are

Being Patriotic August 6 at 7:44pm ·

Standing for the National Anthem is not just an outdated

Figure 31: The "Being Patriotic" online entity is confirmed in the Mueller report to have been operated by the Russian IRA.


Like
Follow
Share
Book Now
Send Message
THIS IS WHY WE SALUTE THE FLAG
THIS IS WHY WE STAND FOR THE ANTHEM
Create a Page

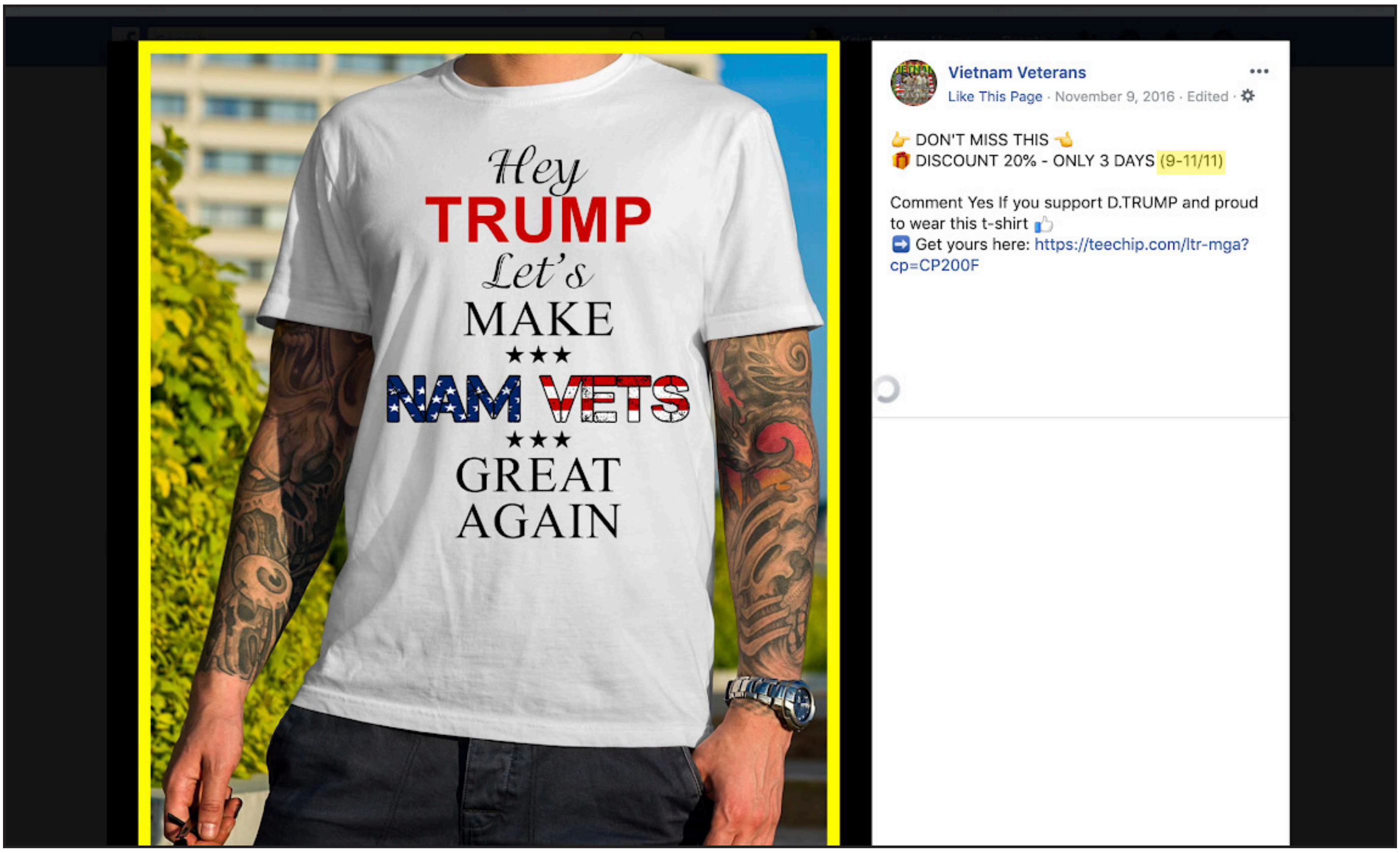
Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · November 2, 2017 ·

This is why...
...
⚠ Only for Vietnam Veteran ➡
https://goo.gl/gFxQTL
Like and share to support our veterans: Vietnam Veterans
...
Thank you!

971 71 Comments 339 Shares

[redacted] NO.NO.NO. IDIOTS. Stop this divisive shit. We ALL stand for our fallin heroes. We don't all stand for stupidity. And that's exactly what ALL you flag waving ,donny dotard believers are

Figure 32: In the "Vietnam Veterans" posts, the easily identifiable characteristics of all-capital-letter gold-chromatic font remains, while the "Being Patriotic" scroll is cut from the bottom of the graphic.

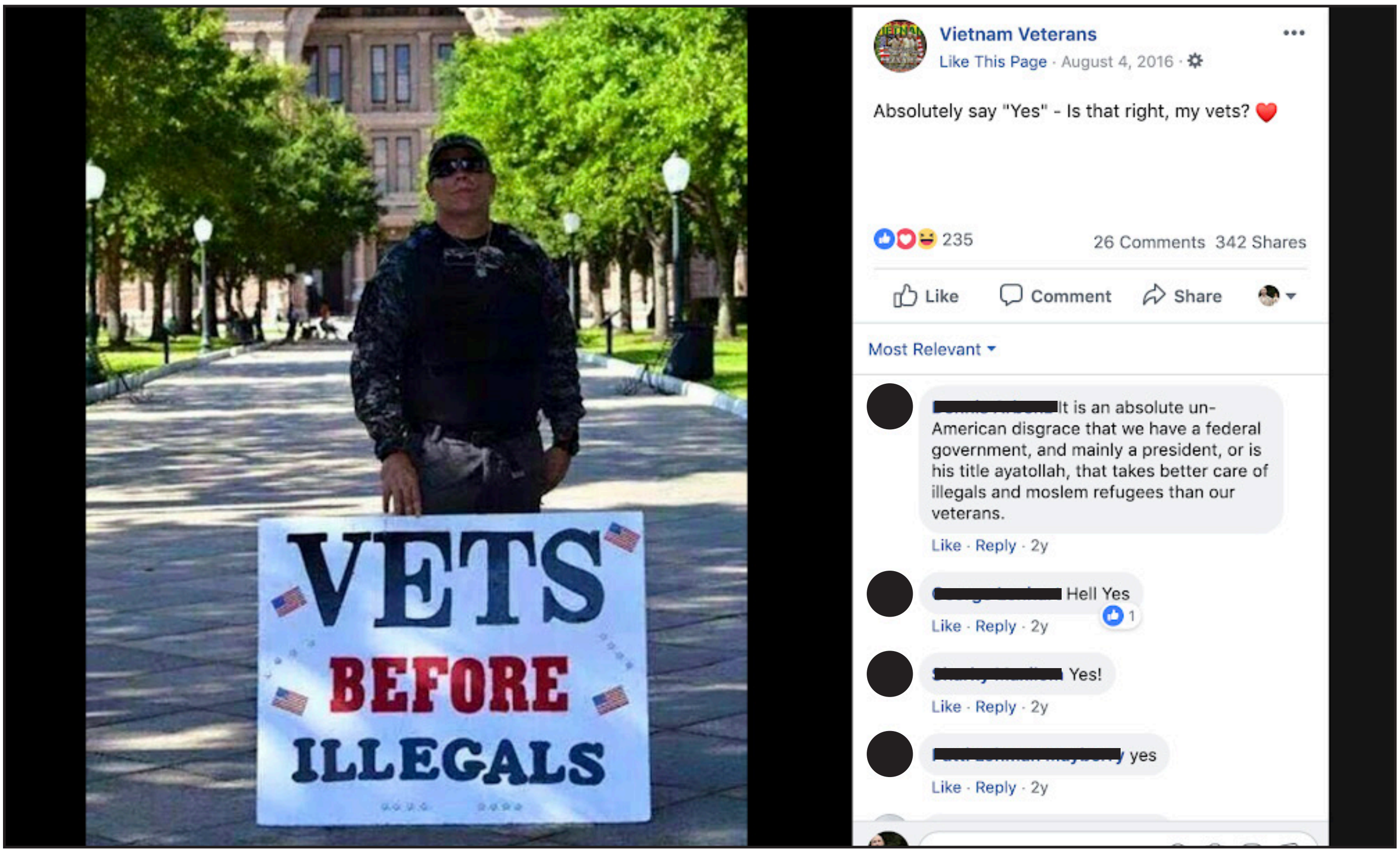


Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · November 9, 2016 · Edited ·

👉 DON'T MISS THIS 👈
🎁 DISCOUNT 20% - ONLY 3 DAYS (9-11/11)

Comment Yes If you support D.TRUMP and proud to wear this t-shirt 👍
➡️ Get yours here: https://teechip.com/ltr-mga?cp=CP200F

Figure 33: "Vietnam Veterans" sells political merchandise in a post that uses non-native English and non-native date formatting of "9-11/11," which translates to "9-11/November" or, as Americans would write it, "11/9-11/11" or "November 9-11."



Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · August 4, 2016 ·

Absolutely say "Yes" - Is that right, my vets? ❤️

235 26 Comments 342 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] It is an absolute un-American disgrace that we have a federal government, and mainly a president, or is his title ayatollah, that takes better care of illegals and moslem refugees than our veterans.
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Hell Yes
Like · Reply · 2y 1

[redacted] Yes!
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] yes
Like · Reply · 2y

Figure 34: "Vietnam Veterans" posted a "VETS BEFORE ILLEGALS" meme on August 4, 2016. This individual post has been shared 342 times on Facebook.

(text continued from page 38)

Fundraising Scams

VVA's logo has been used by foreign nationals to trick unsuspecting Americans into financial scams, displaying what is made to look like an opportunity to both help the organization and make money while supporting veterans. VVA has received many reports from potential victims who reach out to us to verify if these "opportunities" are in fact being posted by VVA employees. Unfortunately, because these scams often occur on Instagram and Snapchat, there is no way for VVA to proactively search for and report these scams. There is no reverse-image-search function for either of these social-media platforms, and individual scammer accounts can simply restrict who can see their posts.

As a result, we cannot estimate the number of individual Americans who are ripped off by scammers using our logo — nor can we calculate the damage that causes to our trusted brand.

How the fundraising scams work:

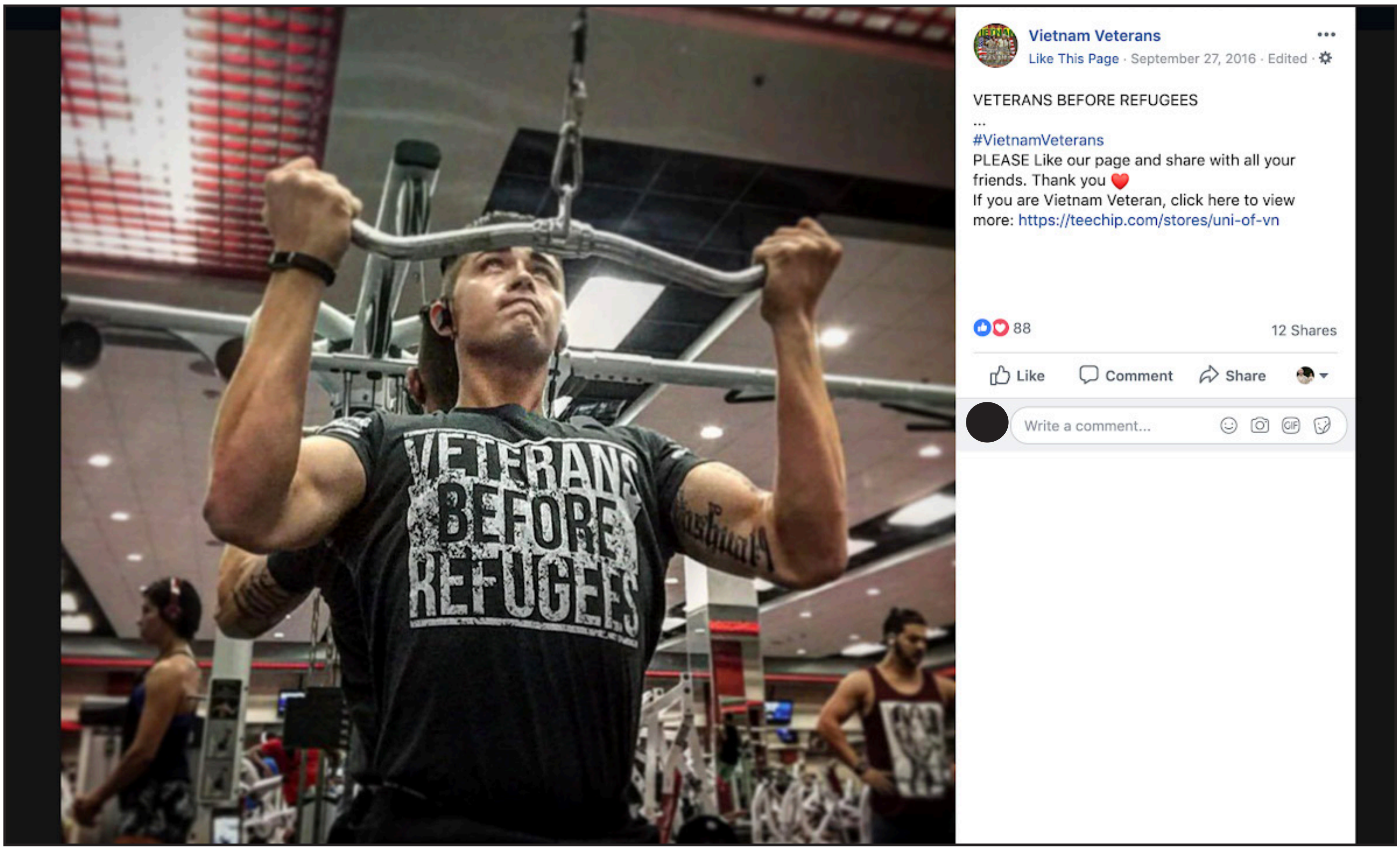
Scammers use Snapchat and Instagram "stories" (pictures and video that display in sequence over a defined period of time — usually a few seconds each) to claim to have access to get-rich-quick schemes. They display VVA's logo, information about the organization, offers to make several thousands of dollars each week for little-to-no work, piles of cash, and instructions to "DM" (direct message) the user to learn more.

Victims are then asked to provide their personal information as they would for a legitimate job. Personal information includes name, address, banking information (for purported direct deposits), photos, and copies of government-issued identification. In some cases, victims are asked to hand over their username and passwords for their banking apps so that the scammer can "verify" that the victim "is can handle large deposits. *[sic]*"

Once the scammers have this information, they can quickly empty the victim's bank accounts, open credit-card accounts in the victim's name, and sell the victim's information and identity to other scammers.

While it may seem unlikely that people would fall for a scam like this — the fact is that cybercrimes like this happen every day to Americans from a variety of backgrounds. And these scammers are earning the trust of their victims by exploiting VVA's reputation.

(text continued on page 49)



Vietnam Veterans

Like This Page · September 27, 2016 · Edited ·

VETERANS BEFORE REFUGEES

...

#VietnamVeterans

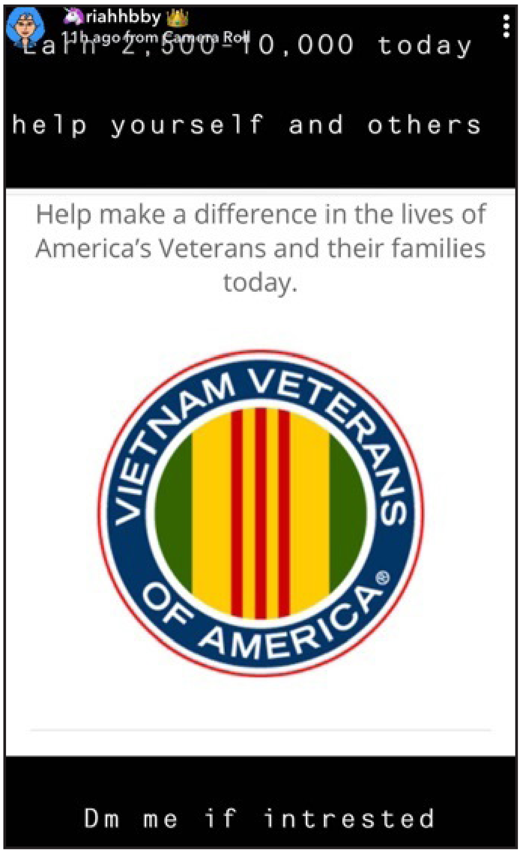
PLEASE Like our page and share with all your friends. Thank you ❤️

If you are Vietnam Veteran, click here to view more: https://teechip.com/stores/uni-of-vn

88

12 Shares

Figure 35: T-shirts with divisive messages such as "VETERANS BEFORE REFUGEES" are meant to create false dichotomies, causing a sense of cultural conflict between veterans and other subgroups of American society.



riahhbby

11h ago from Camera Roll

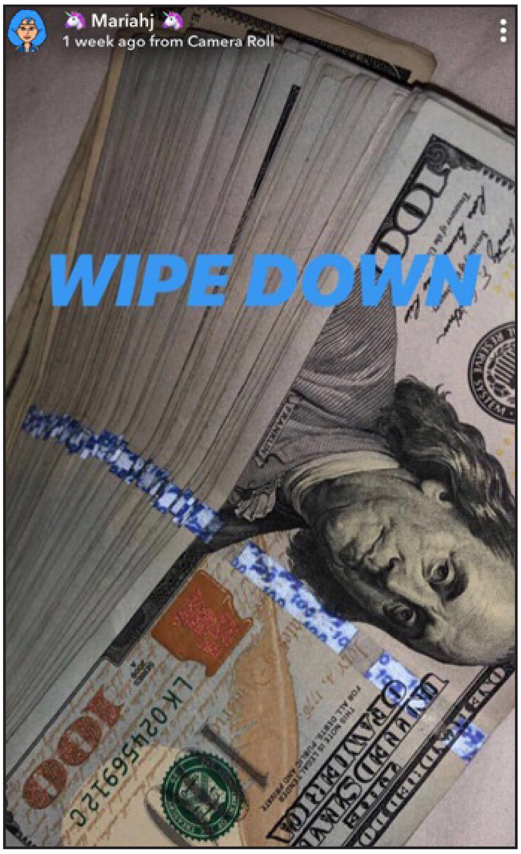
Earn 2,500-10,000 today

help yourself and others

Help make a difference in the lives of America's Veterans and their families today.

Dm me if intrested

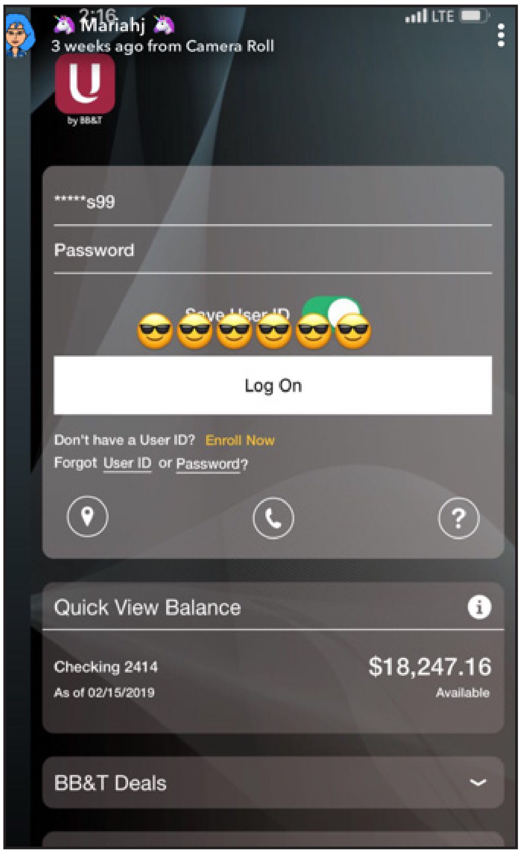
Figure 36: Note: "riahhbby" changed Snapchat username to "mariahj" during the scam.



Mariahj

1 week ago from Camera Roll

Figure 37



2:16

Mariahj

3 weeks ago from Camera Roll

*****s99

Password

Save User ID

Log On

Don't have a User ID? Enroll Now

Forgot User ID or Password?

Quick View Balance

Checking 2414 As of 02/15/2019	$18,247.16 Available

BB&T Deals

Figure 38

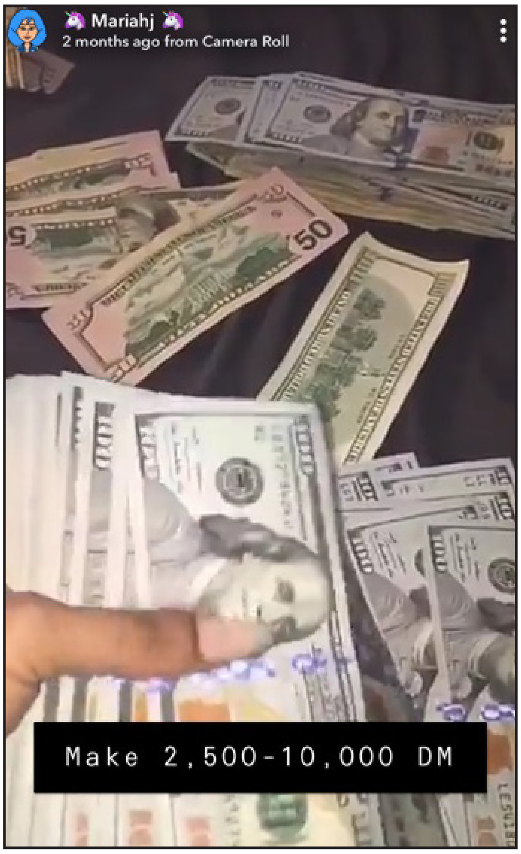
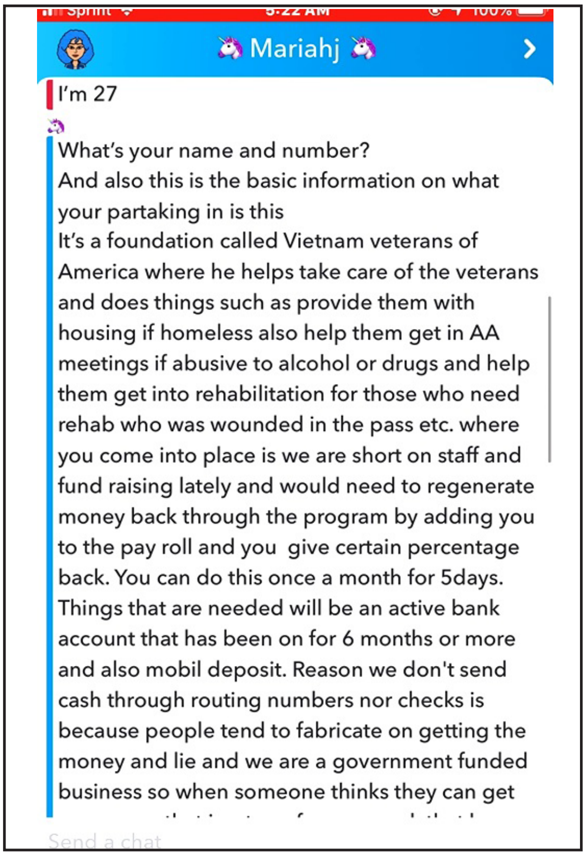


Figure 39



I'm 27

What's your name and number?
And also this is the basic information on what your partaking in is this
It's a foundation called Vietnam veterans of America where he helps take care of the veterans and does things such as provide them with housing if homeless also help them get in AA meetings if abusive to alcohol or drugs and help them get into rehabilitation for those who need rehab who was wounded in the pass etc. where you come into place is we are short on staff and fund raising lately and would need to regenerate money back through the program by adding you to the pay roll and you give certain percentage back. You can do this once a month for 5days. Things that are needed will be an active bank account that has been on for 6 months or more and also mobil deposit. Reason we don't send cash through routing numbers nor checks is because people tend to fabricate on getting the money and lie and we are a government funded business so when someone thinks they can get

Figure 40: This private message is sent to victims of the fake VVA Snapchat scam.

(text continued from page 46)

Snapchat

Figures 36-39 show images that appear in sequence on as a story on Snapchat by a scammer using the account names "riahhbby" and "MariahJ" ("riahhbby" was renamed to "MariahJ" while VVA was documenting this incident). Figure 40 shows a conversation where VVA's communications staff was asking the scammer about the "opportunity." The text with the blue line to the left of it is the scammer, pretending to be a representative of VVA, and the text with the red line to the left of it is VVA's staff.

(text continued on page 51)

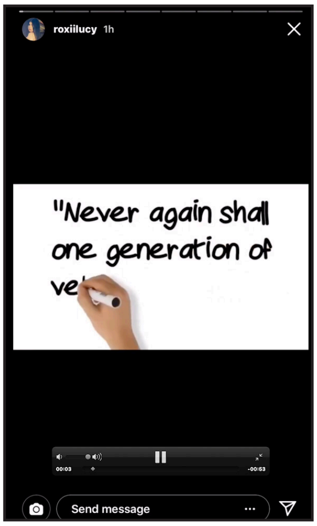
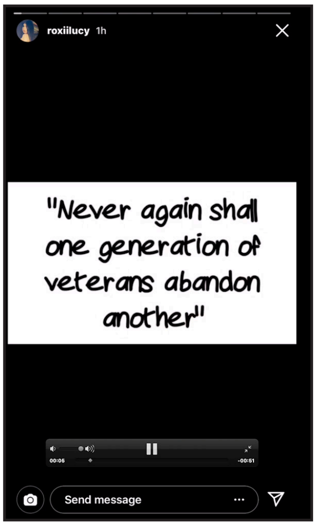


Figure 41



"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another"

Figure 42

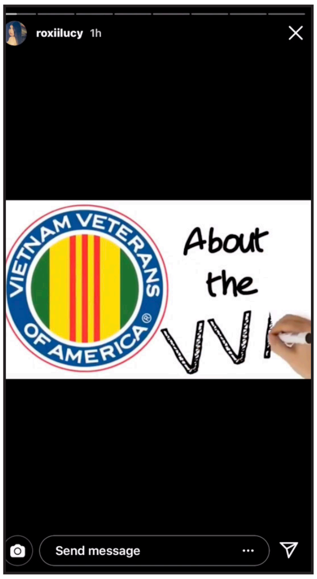


Figure 43

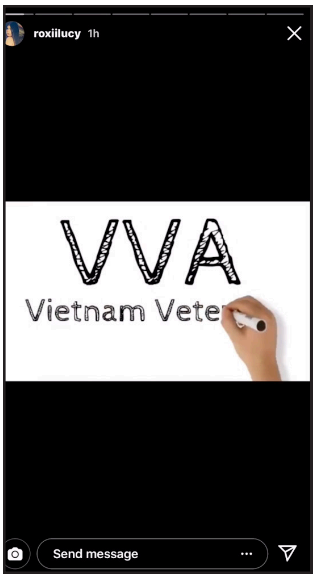


Figure 44

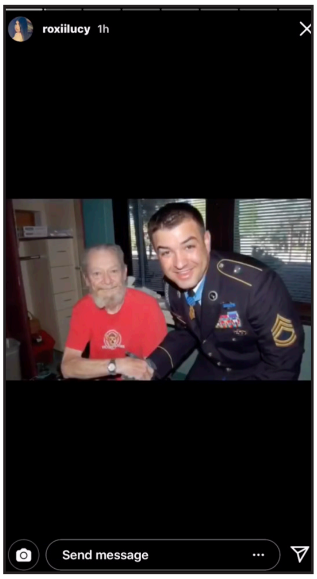


Figure 45

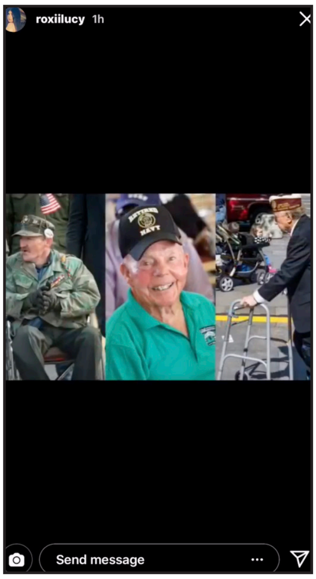
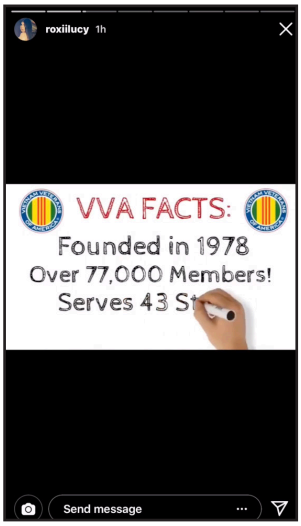
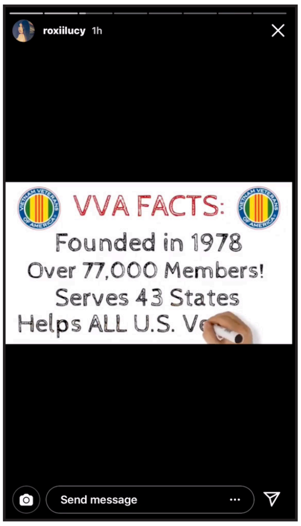


Figure 46



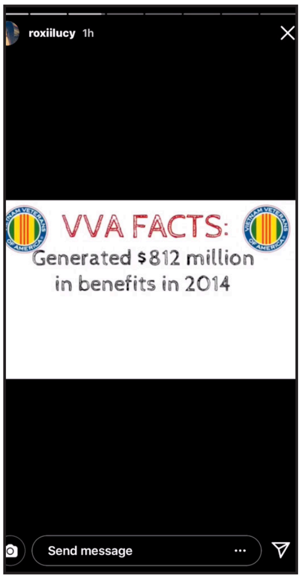
VVA FACTS:
Founded in 1978
Over 77,000 Members!
Serves 43 St

Figure 47



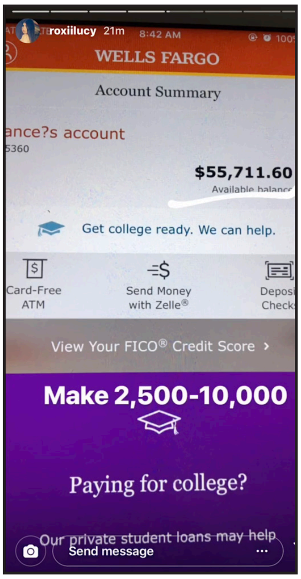
VVA FACTS:
Founded in 1978
Over 77,000 Members!
Serves 43 States
Helps ALL U.S. Ve

Figure 48



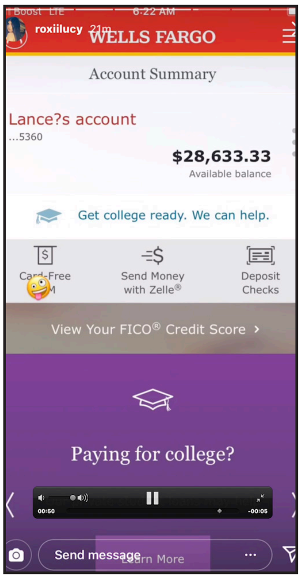
VVA FACTS:
Generated $812 million
in benefits in 2014

Figure 49



WELLS FARGO
Account Summary
ance?s account
5360
$55,711.60
Available balance
Get college ready. We can help.
Make 2,500-10,000
Paying for college?
Our private student loans may help

Figure 50



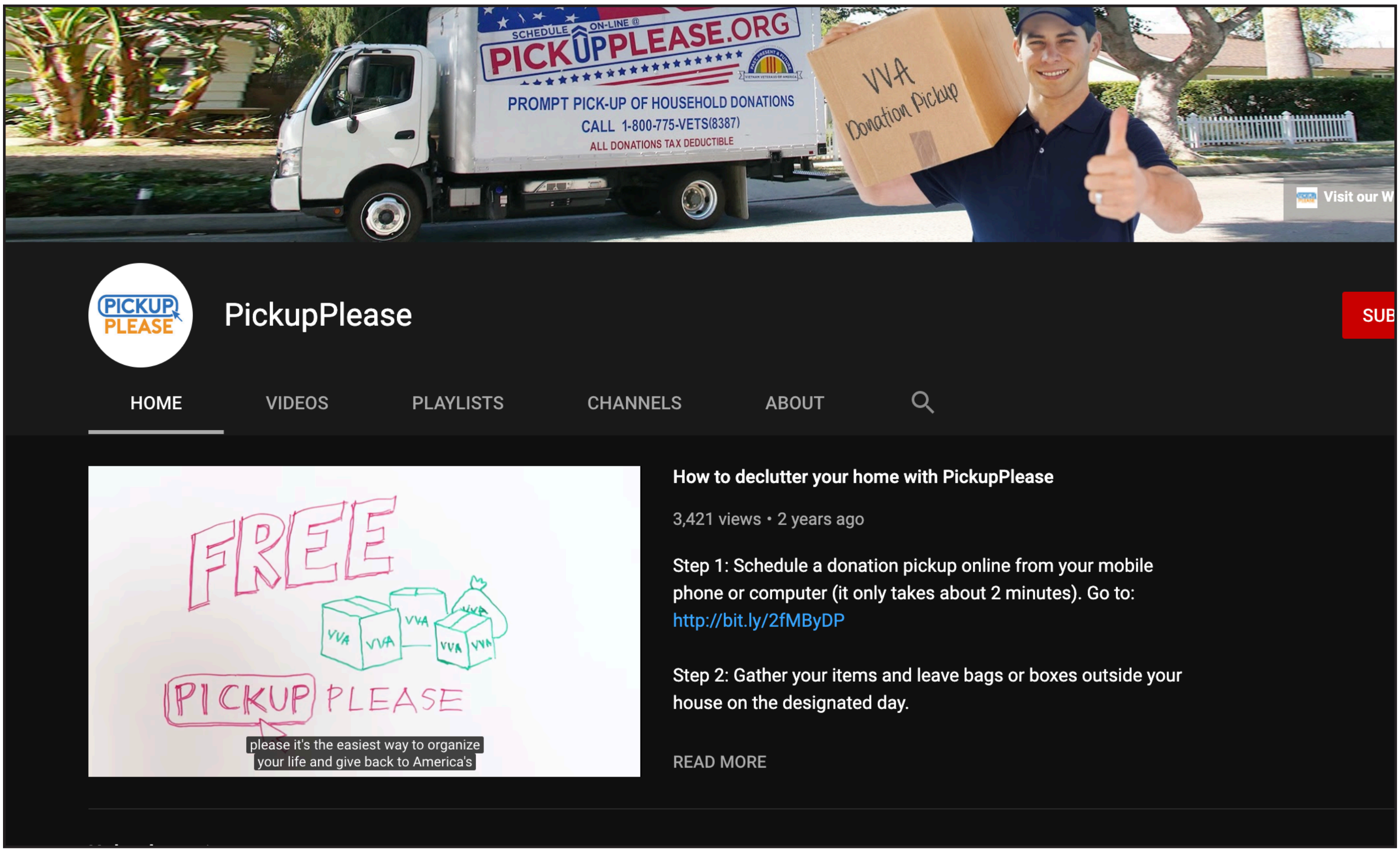
WELLS FARGO
Account Summary
Lance?s account
...5360
$28,633.33
Available balance
Get college ready. We can help.
Paying for college?

Figure 51

(text continued from page 49)

Instagram

The Instagram account “roxiilucy,” which has over 28,300 followers and is currently still active, has been used to engage in a scam very similar to the one described above that occurred on Snapchat. However, instead of simply posting a still image within its story that features VVA’s logo, it uses a high-production-quality video that describes the organization in detail (Figures 41-51). The video was lifted from YouTube and originally produced by one of VVA’s legitimate fundraising partners (Figure 52).[87] This account’s large follower count (and favorable follower-to-following ratio[88]), combined with the video’s impressive quality, greatly increases the perceived legitimacy of the scammer in the eyes of potential victims. Like the Snapchat scam, the Instagram scammer uses screenshots showing large bank-account balances as a way of trying to fool potential victims into believing they can make money by acting as an intermediary for payroll and/or donation deposits for VVA.


SCHEDULE ON-LINE ®
PICKUPPLEASE.ORG
PROMPT PICK-UP OF HOUSEHOLD DONATIONS
CALL 1-800-775-VETS(8387)
ALL DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE
VVA
Donation Pickup
Visit our W
PICKUP PLEASE
SUB
HOME
VIDEOS
PLAYLISTS
CHANNELS
ABOUT
FREE
VVA
PICKUP PLEASE
please it's the easiest way to organize
your life and give back to America's
READ MORE

PickupPlease

How to declutter your home with PickupPlease

3,421 views • 2 years ago

Step 1: Schedule a donation pickup online from your mobile phone or computer (it only takes about 2 minutes). Go to: http://bit.ly/2fMByDP

Step 2: Gather your items and leave bags or boxes outside your house on the designated day.

Figure 52: "Pickup Please" as an official affiliate of VVA. The video depicted in Figures 41-49 was illegally scraped from their approved YouTube channel.

CHAPTER 2: The Bulgarian and Russian Entity: "Veterans of Vietnam" and Their Facebook Group, "American Veterans of Vietnam"

On April 1, 2019, we discovered another foreign entity that is specifically targeting Vietnam veterans. A Facebook page called "Veterans of Vietnam,"[89] which was created on August 20, 2014, and remains operational at the time of the preparation of this report, had three admins revealed on their Info and Ads tab: two admins in Bulgaria and one in Russia[90] (Figure 53).

"Veterans of Vietnam" appears to have remained quite active for nearly four years, judging by a current view of its page, and features frequent posts from its creation through February 18, 2018. Most of the posting includes photos from the Vietnam war, which is interspersed with advertisements for Vietnam-veteran-themed t-shirts and memorabilia. These characteristics appear to have been consistent since the page was launched in August 2014. As of July 10, 2019, there's one Bulgarian and one Italian admin. This change coincided with a report about Russians working with Italy's nationalist party to interfere in Italy's elections, though this may be an unrelated coincidence.[91]

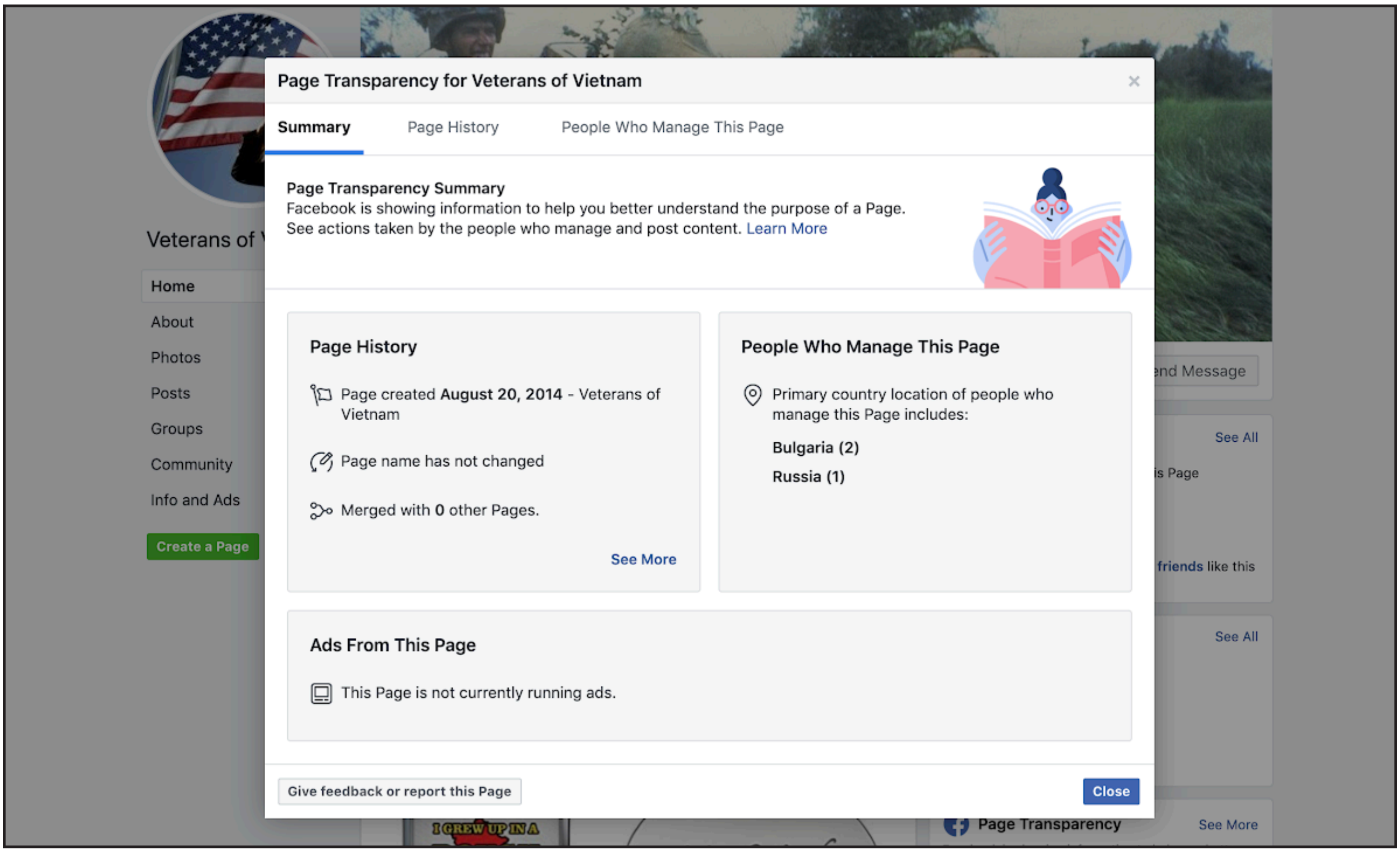
There are no visible posts on the page that are dated between February 19, 2018, and September 29, 2018; on September 30, 2018, two posts were added. Since then, the page appears to have been inactive, at least openly. However, gaps between post dates or perceived inactivity may also be in part due to posts being removed by admins.

Why there are periods of inactivity is unknown, although the page created the closed Facebook group American Veterans of Vietnam, so it is possible that the admins of the original page remain active. A "closed Facebook group" is a group that reveals posts only to Facebook users whom the admins allow to enter into the group. Unlike with Facebook pages, where admins tightly control what appears, Facebook groups are designed around the idea of community-led discussion, which allows any member to post publicly. Admins and moderators, though, can delete posts and comments within the group, shaping discussions as they see fit.

Non-members of the American Veterans of Vietnam Facebook group can see only a summary of the group's private activity — for example: "6 new posts today, 245 posts in the last 30 days, 2,430 members, 40 new members in the last 30 days" (Figure 54).[92] The group was created by the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page on July 11, 2017. While the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page is an admin for the American Veterans of Vietnam Facebook group, the group also has three moderators who are using personal accounts.[93] The moderators of this group self-identify as being from: Newark, Delaware; Perth, United Kingdom; and Deer Park, Texas.

Twenty days after the group was created, the admins posted the following message on the group page: "We need moderators to help us keep this group clean of spammers. If you want to be one, comment below"[94] (Figure 55). It is unclear if the Bulgarian and Russian admins were already in control of the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page at the time this request was made. One possibility is that this post may have been made by an American administrator, who through this offer inadvertently opened up the group and page to a takeover by the Bulgarian and Russian entities, making the Facebook page a "sockpuppet." Another possibility is that this solicitation for moderators was a way for the Bulgarian and Russian admins to build credibility for their targeted American audience and to reduce their own workload. The Mueller report says that the IRA "recruited moderators of … social media groups to promote IRA-generated content,"[95] so this request for moderators may be consistent with that, finding "useful idiots" — as they are known in political jargon — to do Russia's bidding.[96]

(text continued on page 58)



Page Transparency for Veterans of Vietnam

Summary | Page History | People Who Manage This Page

Page Transparency Summary

Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. Learn More

Page History

Page created **August 20, 2014** - Veterans of Vietnam

Page name has not changed

Merged with **0** other Pages.

See More

People Who Manage This Page

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

Bulgaria (2)

Russia (1)

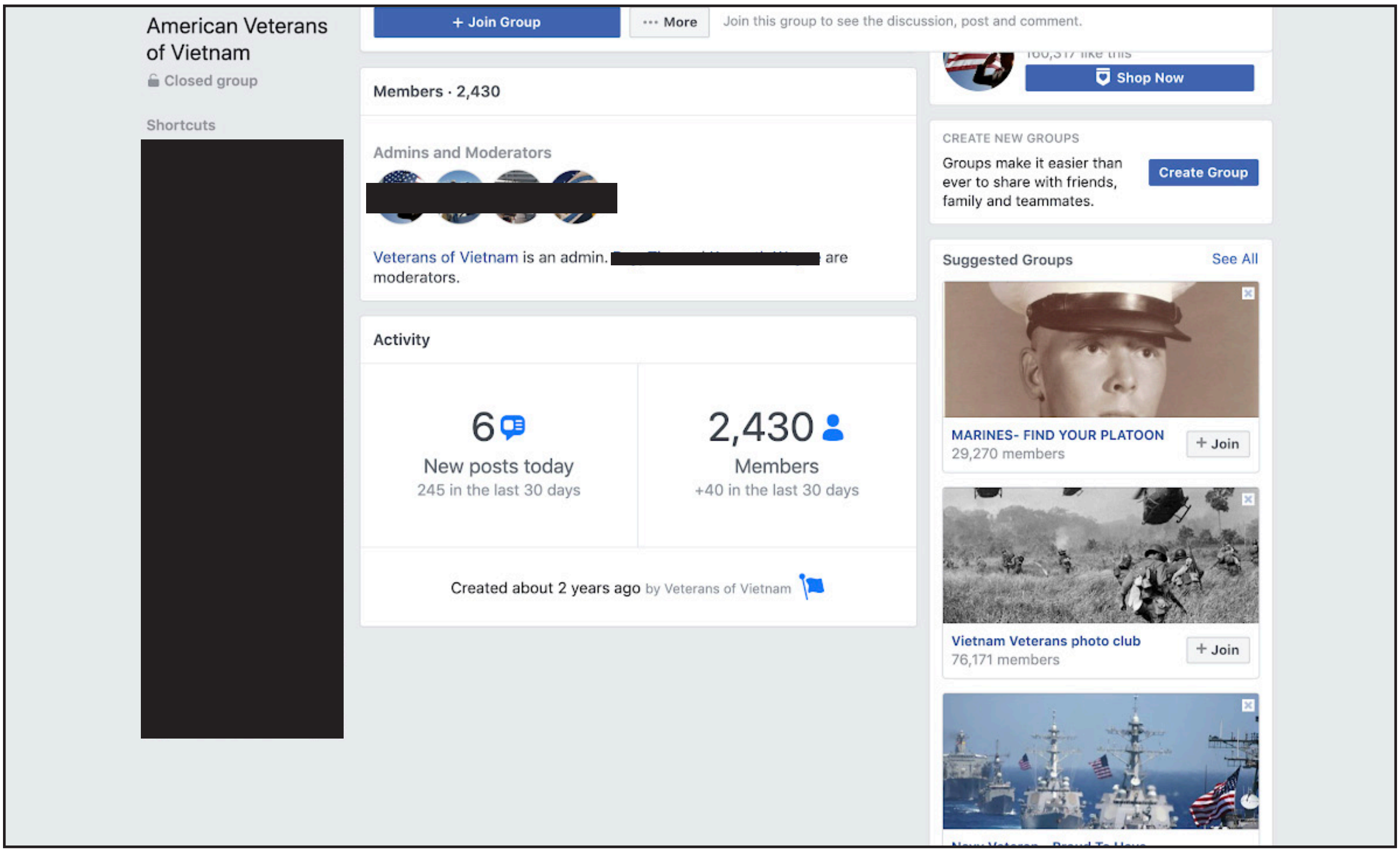
Ads From This Page

This Page is not currently running ads.

Give feedback or report this Page

Close

Figure 53: Screenshot April 28, 2019. The "Page Transparency" tab for the Facebook page "Veterans of Vietnam" reveals that it was created on August 20, 2014, and had two admins in Bulgaria and one in Russia. On June 6, 2019, the Russian admin was no longer listed on the page.



American Veterans of Vietnam
Closed group

Shortcuts

[redacted]

+ Join Group · ··· More · Join this group to see the discussion, post and comment.

Shop Now

Members · 2,430

Admins and Moderators

[redacted]

Veterans of Vietnam is an admin. [redacted] are moderators.

Activity

6 New posts today
245 in the last 30 days

2,430 Members
+40 in the last 30 days

Created about 2 years ago by Veterans of Vietnam

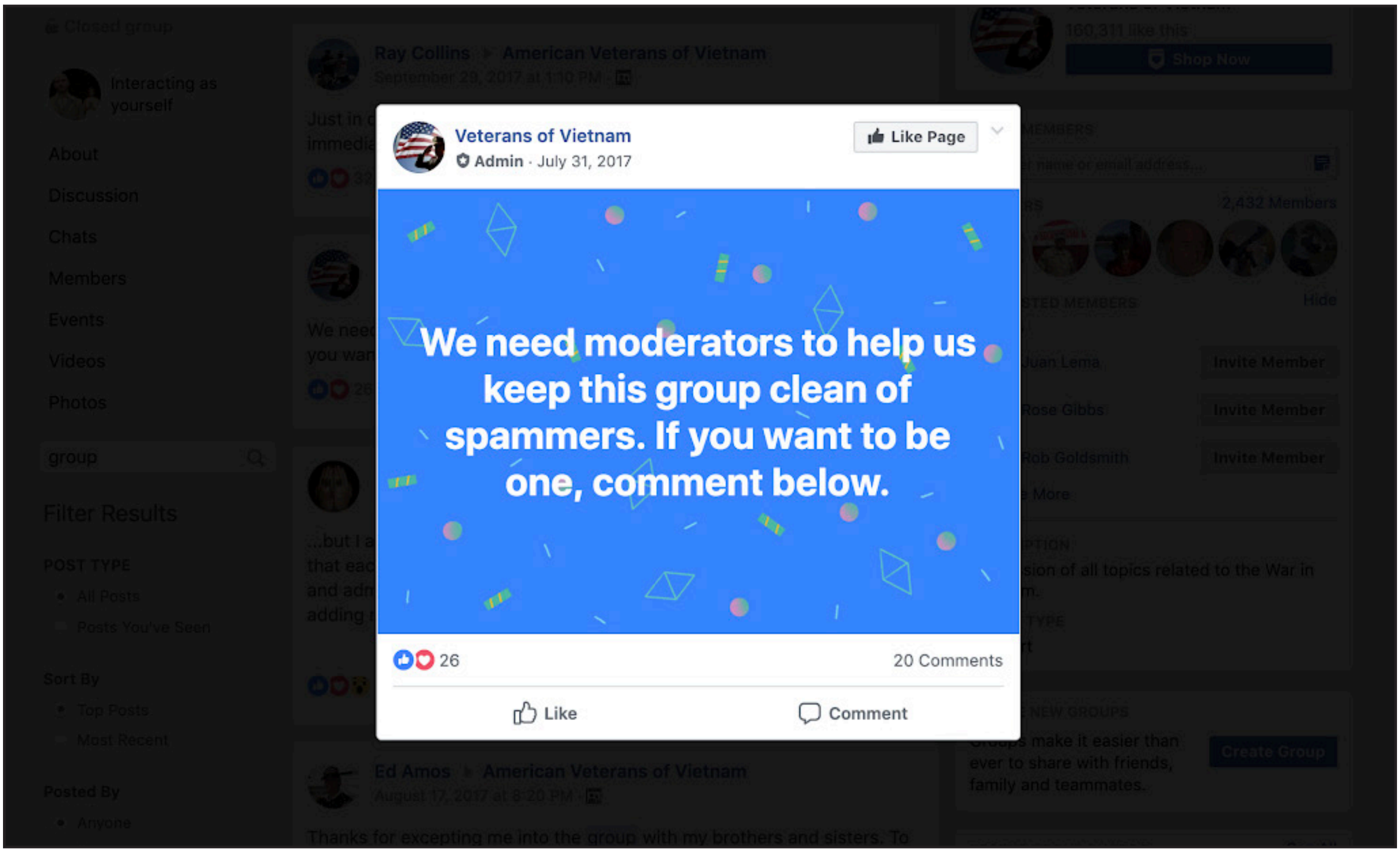
CREATE NEW GROUPS
Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates.
Create Group

Suggested Groups · See All

MARINES- FIND YOUR PLATOON
29,270 members
+ Join

Vietnam Veterans photo club
76,171 members
+ Join

Figure 54: Moderators for the "American Veterans of Vietnam" group includes the "Veterans of Vietnam" page and three personal accounts that appear to be well-meaning individuals who do not realize they're working for Russian and Bulgarian admins.



Veterans of Vietnam
Admin · July 31, 2017
Like Page

We need moderators to help us keep this group clean of spammers. If you want to be one, comment below.

26 · 20 Comments
Like · Comment

Closed group
Interacting as yourself
About
Discussion
Chats
Members
Events
Videos
Photos
group
Filter Results
POST TYPE
All Posts
Posts You've Seen
Sort By
Top Posts
Most Recent
Posted By
Anyone

Ray Collins ▸ American Veterans of Vietnam
September 29, 2017 at 1:10 PM

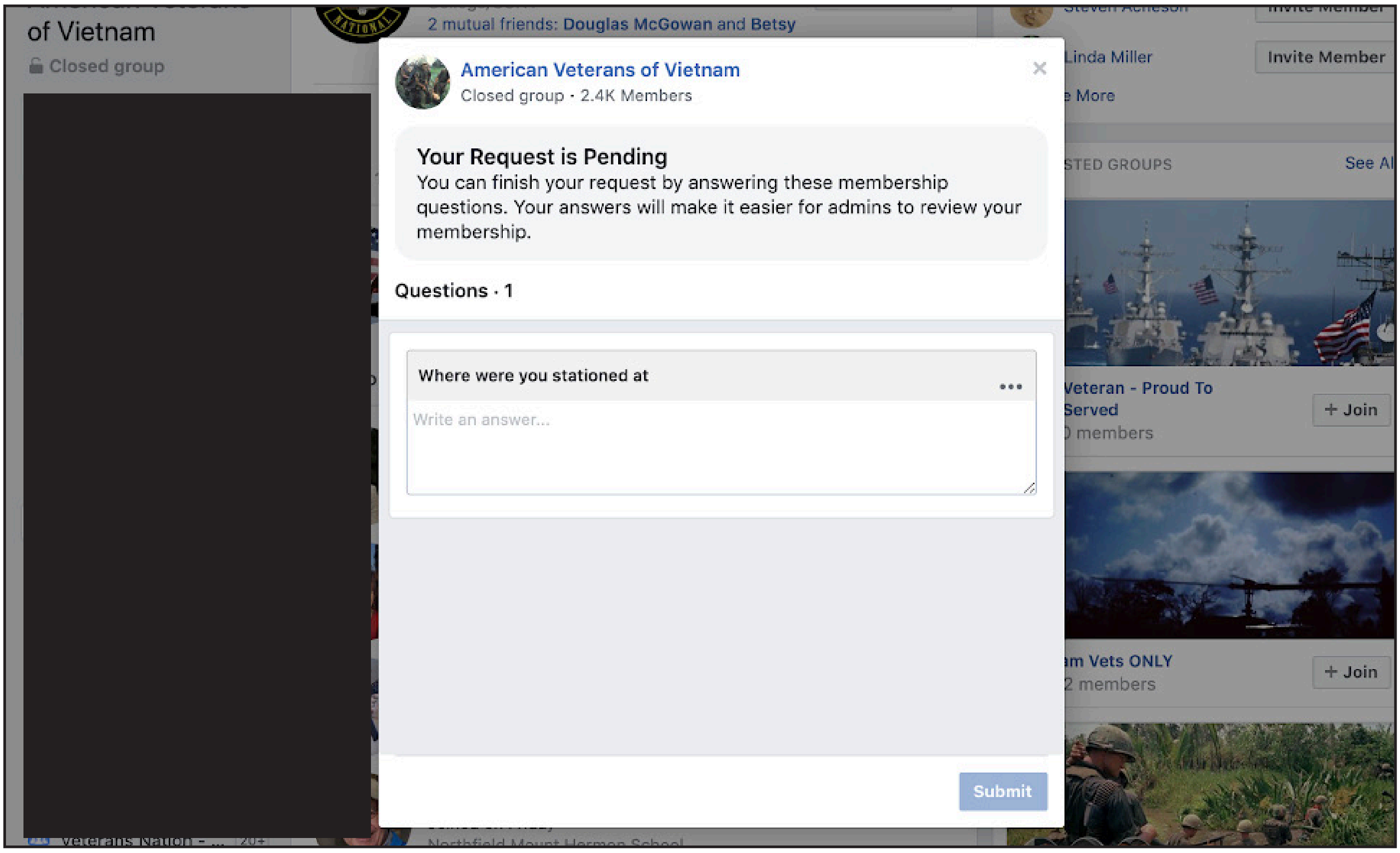
Ed Amos ▸ American Veterans of Vietnam
August 17, 2017 at 8:20 PM
Thanks for excepting me into the group with my brothers and sisters. To

160,311 like this
Shop Now

2,432 Members
Hide
Juan Lema · Invite Member
Rose Gibbs · Invite Member
Rob Goldsmith · Invite Member

CREATE NEW GROUPS
Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates.
Create Group

Figure 55: An admin of the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page posted in the American Veterans of Vietnam group soliciting for volunteers to serve as moderators for the group. Moderators are subordinate to admins but are able to add/remove Facebook users from the group, as well as delete posts and comments within the group.



of Vietnam

Closed group

[redacted]

2 mutual friends: Douglas McGowan and Betsy

American Veterans of Vietnam

Closed group · 2.4K Members

Your Request is Pending

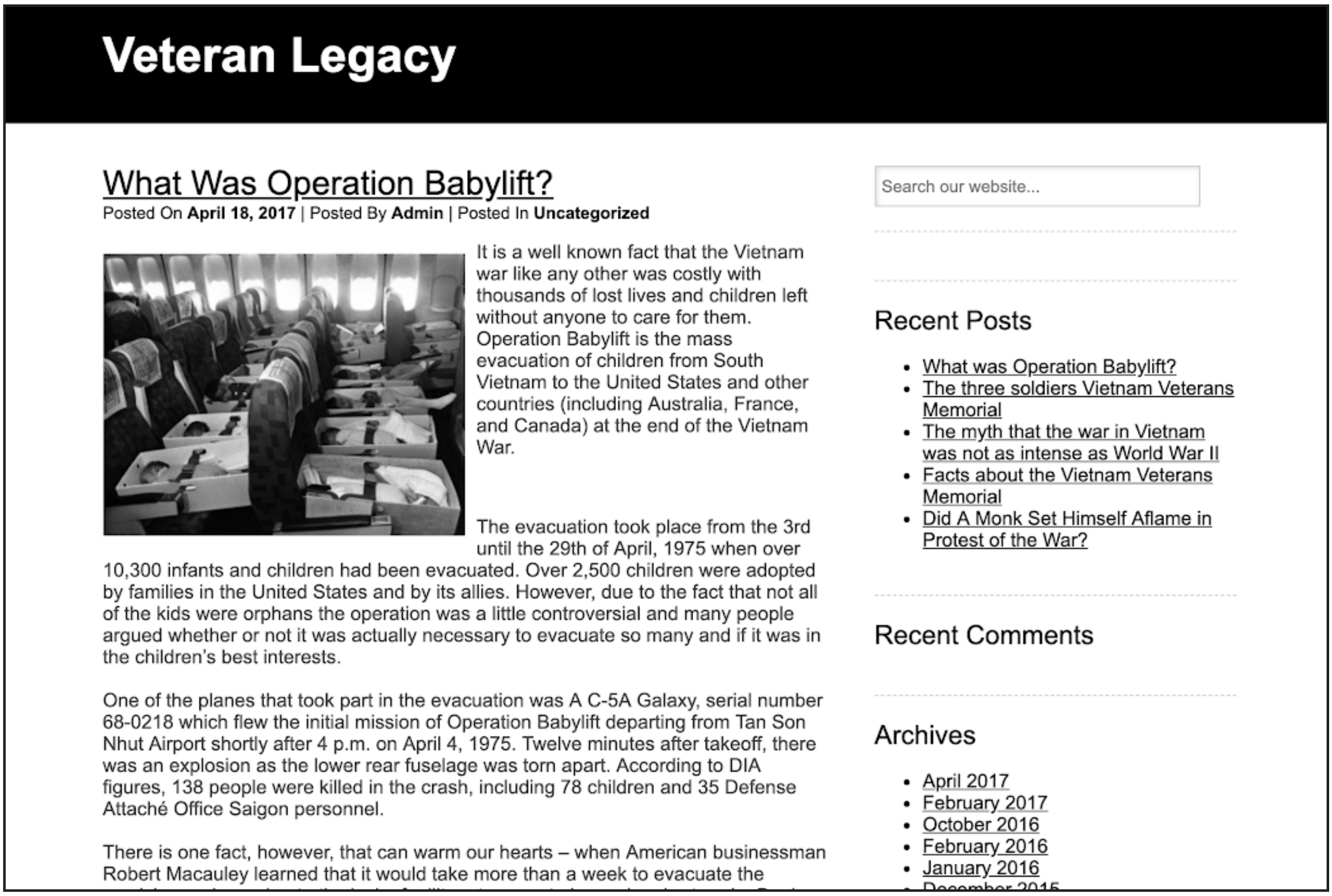
You can finish your request by answering these membership questions. Your answers will make it easier for admins to review your membership.

Questions · 1

Where were you stationed at

Write an answer...

Figure 56: When requesting membership in the closed Facebook group American Veterans of Vietnam, veterans must first share the location where they were stationed with the group administrator and moderators.



Veteran Legacy

What Was Operation Babylift?

Posted On **April 18, 2017** | Posted By **Admin** | Posted In **Uncategorized**

It is a well known fact that the Vietnam war like any other was costly with thousands of lost lives and children left without anyone to care for them. Operation Babylift is the mass evacuation of children from South Vietnam to the United States and other countries (including Australia, France, and Canada) at the end of the Vietnam War.

The evacuation took place from the 3rd until the 29th of April, 1975 when over 10,300 infants and children had been evacuated. Over 2,500 children were adopted by families in the United States and by its allies. However, due to the fact that not all of the kids were orphans the operation was a little controversial and many people argued whether or not it was actually necessary to evacuate so many and if it was in the children's best interests.

One of the planes that took part in the evacuation was A C-5A Galaxy, serial number 68-0218 which flew the initial mission of Operation Babylift departing from Tan Son Nhut Airport shortly after 4 p.m. on April 4, 1975. Twelve minutes after takeoff, there was an explosion as the lower rear fuselage was torn apart. According to DIA figures, 138 people were killed in the crash, including 78 children and 35 Defense Attaché Office Saigon personnel.

There is one fact, however, that can warm our hearts – when American businessman Robert Macauley learned that it would take more than a week to evacuate the

Recent Posts

- What was Operation Babylift?
- The three soldiers Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- The myth that the war in Vietnam was not as intense as World War II
- Facts about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Did A Monk Set Himself Aflame in Protest of the War?

Recent Comments

Archives

- April 2017
- February 2017
- October 2016
- February 2016
- January 2016
- December 2015

Figure 57: "What Was Operation Babylift?" is an article that was largely plagiarized from Wikipedia by VeteranLegacy.com.

(text continued from page 54)

This option seems more likely, as the veteran-focused merchandise advertised on the page is similar to that of other pages with foreign admins, and the behavior of the page and group appears to be consistent before and after the date of the post. This request for moderators is also consistent with behavior that we've monitored from similar veteran-focused pages/groups with administrators from Kosovo.

In order to join the Facebook group, a user must answer the prompt "where were you stationed at" before an admin or moderator approves membership (Figure 56). Facebook users can request membership in the group while interacting via their personal account, or through a page for which they are an administrator. VVA's official page requested membership, which was denied — though a request for membership using the personal account of the author of this report was approved. Once membership in the group is granted, users can see all posts by other members of the group.

This membership-request question is the first point at which the Russian and Bulgarian entity are able to solicit personal information from individual veterans. The information could later be used as ammunition for additional personal targeting for disinformation, impersonation, and other types of fraud.

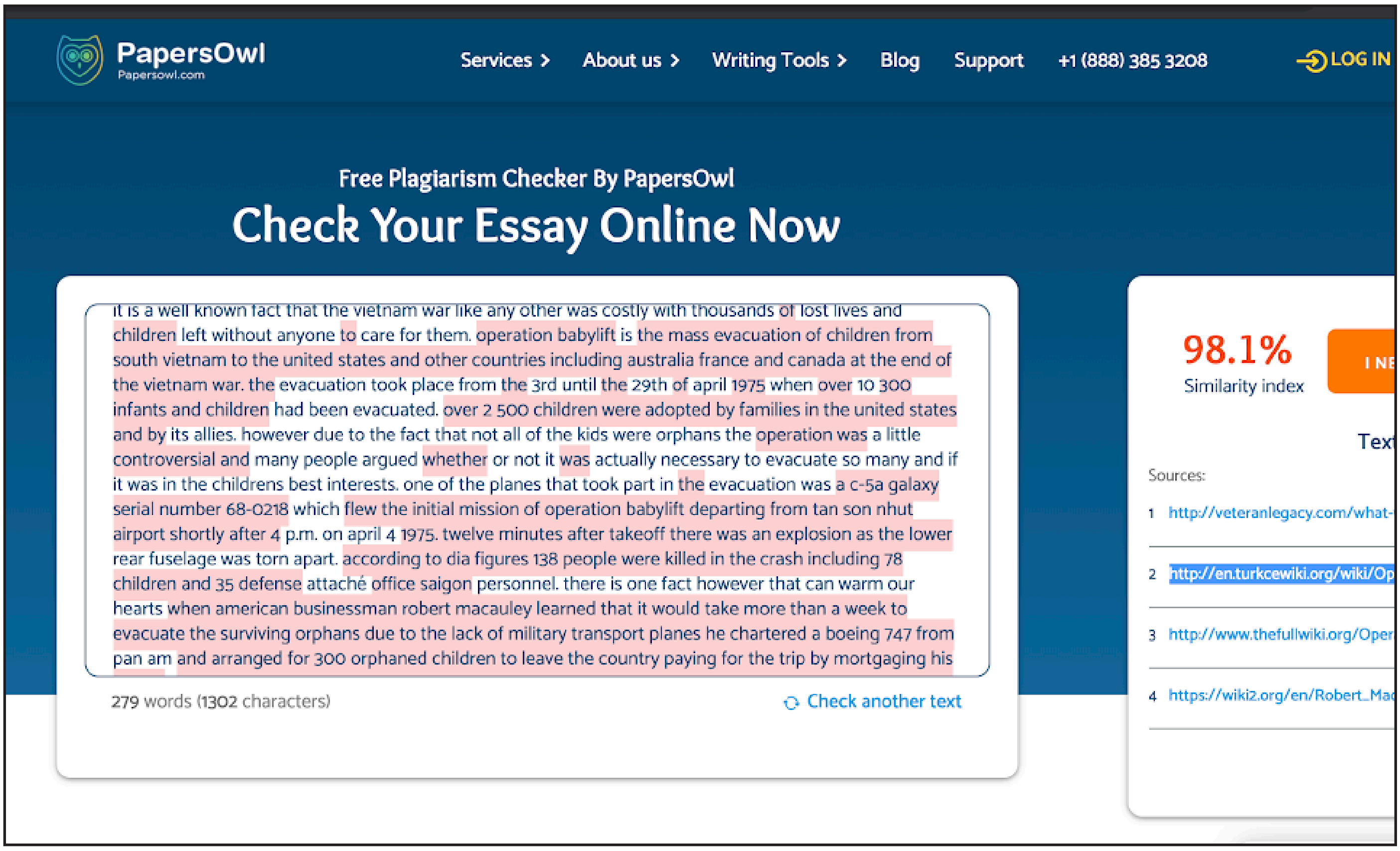
Despite the deception of the Bulgarian and Russian admins, within the group there is a genuine and organic sense of community among American veterans. Vietnam veterans frequently share photos and videos related to the Vietnam war and are looking to reconnect with the people with whom they served. The content and comments are generally apolitical and are shared in good faith from a variety of sources: personal photos, as well as other public Facebook pages and posts. Some apparently actual Vietnam veterans seem to visit the group and post multiple times per day, often with lighthearted jokes and personal stories. They post positive news articles, such as coverage of the recently enacted expansion of caregiver benefits. Vietnam veterans in the group share touching memorials for lost friends and heartfelt tributes to Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action.

An authentic, positive community atmosphere is what veterans seek out online, and foreign entities are taking advantage of this. As a community, these veterans along with the recruited moderators seem to have made genuine efforts to purge the group of identifiable spammers, trolls, and non-veterans. However, the thousands of veterans in this online community are completely unaware of the fact that Bulgarian and Russian administrators have control of the Facebook page and that the foreign-controlled page acts as the administrator for the group. The volunteer moderators, who appear to have authentic personal accounts, have limited control over the page. The administrator privileges maintained by the Bulgarians and Russians who run the "Veterans of Vietnam" page supercede the privileges of the recruited moderators.

The veterans in this online community are unaware that the photos and stories they share can then be harvested by the Bulgarian and Russian admins for use as propaganda. These unsuspecting Facebook users don't understand that when sharing their content, this material can be used by foreign admins to gain credibility and deceive American audiences.

Despite the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page's relative recent inactivity, the Bulgarian and Russian admins may still be quietly observing the community within the group to monitor what content draws the greatest or most divisive responses. Thanks in part to the restrictive private-group settings, they could potentially experiment with new tactics, techniques, and procedures, or TTPs, on these Vietnam veterans to test and develop more effective subversive activity, either through the page or via imitative or sockpuppet accounts meant to appear as if they belong to individual, real Vietnam veterans.

(text continued on page 60)



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it is a well known fact that the vietnam war like any other was costly with thousands of lost lives and children left without anyone to care for them. operation babylift is the mass evacuation of children from south vietnam to the united states and other countries including australia france and canada at the end of the vietnam war. the evacuation took place from the 3rd until the 29th of april 1975 when over 10 300 infants and children had been evacuated. over 2 500 children were adopted by families in the united states and by its allies. however due to the fact that not all of the kids were orphans the operation was a little controversial and many people argued whether or not it was actually necessary to evacuate so many and if it was in the childrens best interests. one of the planes that took part in the evacuation was a c-5a galaxy serial number 68-0218 which flew the initial mission of operation babylift departing from tan son nhut airport shortly after 4 p.m. on april 4 1975. twelve minutes after takeoff there was an explosion as the lower rear fuselage was torn apart. according to dia figures 138 people were killed in the crash including 78 children and 35 defense attaché office saigon personnel. there is one fact however that can warm our hearts when american businessman robert macauley learned that it would take more than a week to evacuate the surviving orphans due to the lack of military transport planes he chartered a boeing 747 from pan am and arranged for 300 orphaned children to leave the country paying for the trip by mortgaging his

279 words (1302 characters)

Check another text

98.1%
Similarity index

Sources:

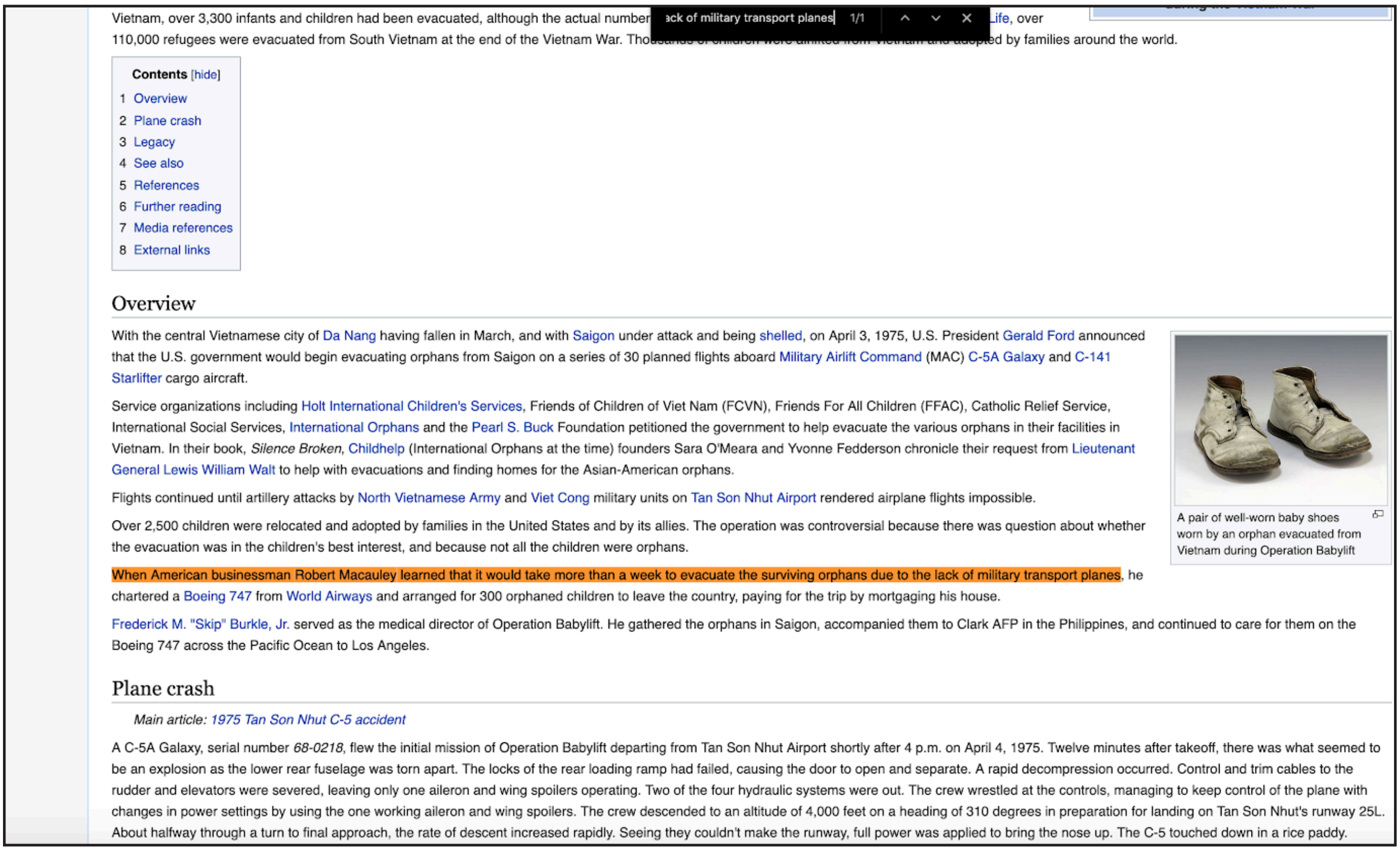
1 http://veteranlegacy.com/what-

2 http://en.turkcewiki.org/wiki/Op

3 http://www.thefullwiki.org/Oper

4 https://wiki2.org/en/Robert_Mac

Figure 58: PapersOwl.com's free plagiarism checker highlights copied text. The site determined that 62.7 percent of the "What Was Operation Babylift?" article was pulled from Wikipedia.



Vietnam, over 3,300 infants and children had been evacuated, although the actual number Life, over 110,000 refugees were evacuated from South Vietnam at the end of the Vietnam War. Tho ed by families around the world.

Contents [hide]
1 Overview
2 Plane crash
3 Legacy
4 See also
5 References
6 Further reading
7 Media references
8 External links

Overview

With the central Vietnamese city of Da Nang having fallen in March, and with Saigon under attack and being shelled, on April 3, 1975, U.S. President Gerald Ford announced that the U.S. government would begin evacuating orphans from Saigon on a series of 30 planned flights aboard Military Airlift Command (MAC) C-5A Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter cargo aircraft.

Service organizations including Holt International Children's Services, Friends of Children of Viet Nam (FCVN), Friends For All Children (FFAC), Catholic Relief Service, International Social Services, International Orphans and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation petitioned the government to help evacuate the various orphans in their facilities in Vietnam. In their book, *Silence Broken*, Childhelp (International Orphans at the time) founders Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Fedderson chronicle their request from Lieutenant General Lewis William Walt to help with evacuations and finding homes for the Asian-American orphans.

Flights continued until artillery attacks by North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong military units on Tan Son Nhut Airport rendered airplane flights impossible.

Over 2,500 children were relocated and adopted by families in the United States and by its allies. The operation was controversial because there was question about whether the evacuation was in the children's best interest, and because not all the children were orphans.

When American businessman Robert Macauley learned that it would take more than a week to evacuate the surviving orphans due to the lack of military transport planes, he chartered a Boeing 747 from World Airways and arranged for 300 orphaned children to leave the country, paying for the trip by mortgaging his house.

A pair of well-worn baby shoes worn by an orphan evacuated from Vietnam during Operation Babylift

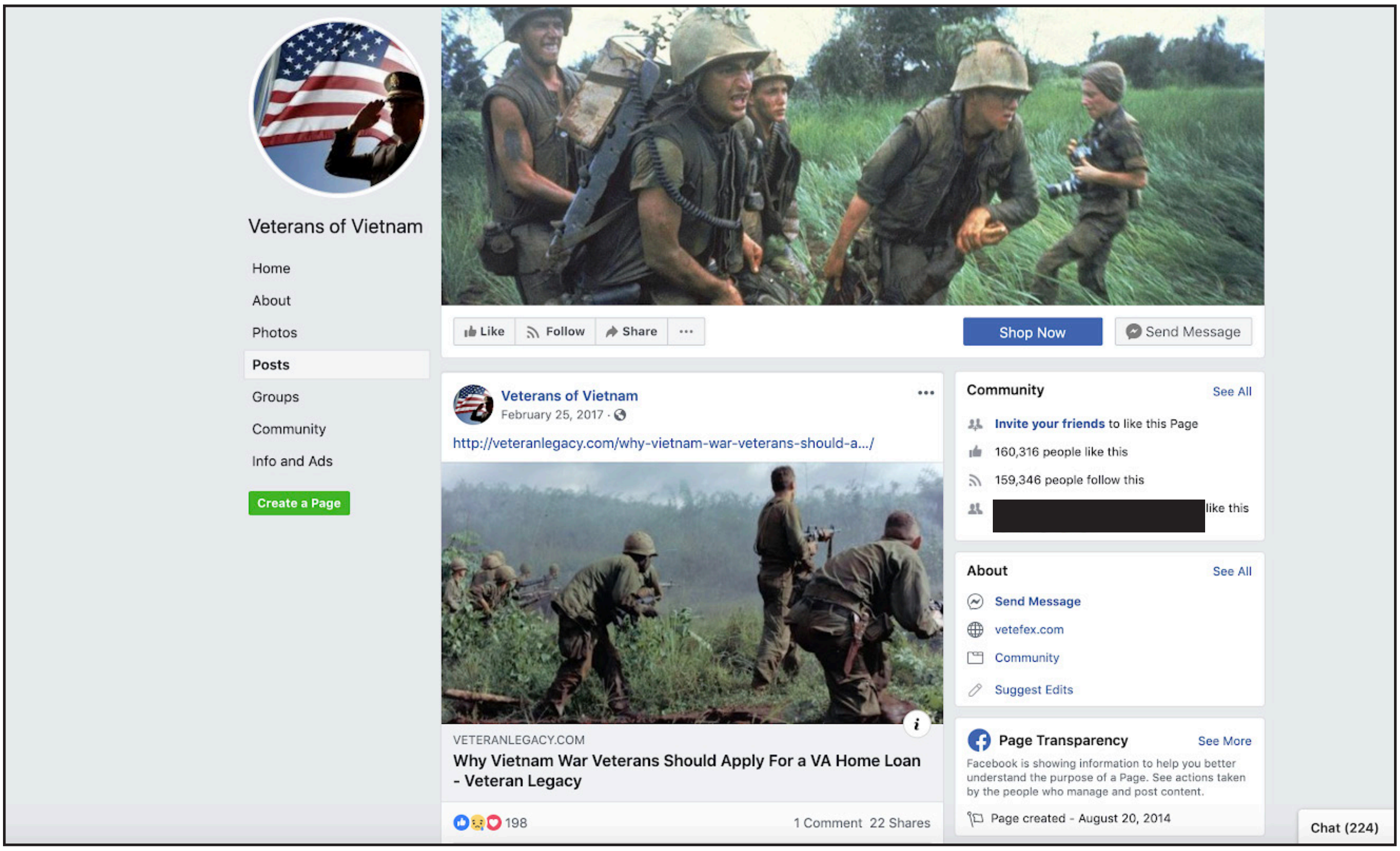
Frederick M. "Skip" Burkle, Jr. served as the medical director of Operation Babylift. He gathered the orphans in Saigon, accompanied them to Clark AFP in the Philippines, and continued to care for them on the Boeing 747 across the Pacific Ocean to Los Angeles.

Plane crash

Main article: 1975 Tan Son Nhut C-5 accident

A C-5A Galaxy, serial number *68-0218*, flew the initial mission of Operation Babylift departing from Tan Son Nhut Airport shortly after 4 p.m. on April 4, 1975. Twelve minutes after takeoff, there was what seemed to be an explosion as the lower rear fuselage was torn apart. The locks of the rear loading ramp had failed, causing the door to open and separate. A rapid decompression occurred. Control and trim cables to the rudder and elevators were severed, leaving only one aileron and wing spoilers operating. Two of the four hydraulic systems were out. The crew wrestled at the controls, managing to keep control of the plane with changes in power settings by using the one working aileron and wing spoilers. The crew descended to an altitude of 4,000 feet on a heading of 310 degrees in preparation for landing on Tan Son Nhut's runway 25L. About halfway through a turn to final approach, the rate of descent increased rapidly. Seeing they couldn't make the runway, full power was applied to bring the nose up. The C-5 touched down in a rice paddy.

Figure 59: This is the Wikipedia page that was plagiarized by VeteranLegacy.com for the "What Was Operation Babylift?" article.



Veterans of Vietnam
February 25, 2017 ·

http://veteranlegacy.com/why-vietnam-war-veterans-should-a.../

VETERANLEGACY.COM
Why Vietnam War Veterans Should Apply For a VA Home Loan - Veteran Legacy

198 1 Comment 22 Shares

Invite your friends to like this Page
160,316 people like this
159,346 people follow this
[redacted] like this

Send Message
vetefex.com
Community
Suggest Edits

Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content.

Page created - August 20, 2014

Figure 60: "Veterans of Vietnam" often shared the same content multiple times, yet because these articles appeared to come from a legitimate source of information, they continued to benefit from shares with each post.

(text continued from page 58)

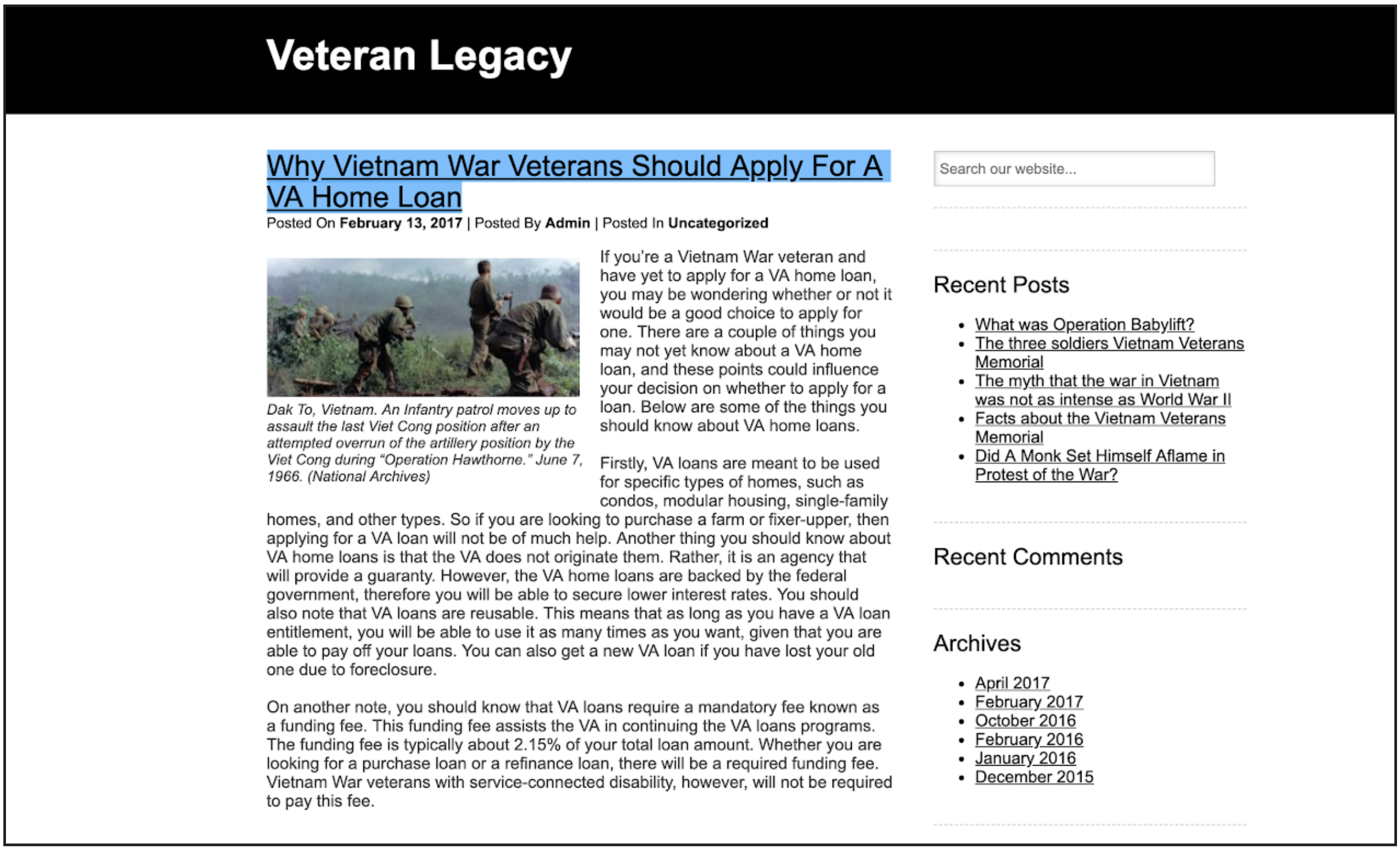
Creation of an Online Ecosystem: Russian and Bulgarian Admins Have Websites Dedicated to Adding Legitimacy to Their Facebook Page

The "Veterans of Vietnam" entity is not limited to a presence on Facebook. The admins appear to have built three websites exclusively to develop written content for the Facebook page. Blog-style posts were made on VeteranLegacy.com,[97] AllAboutVietnamWar.com,[98] and VietnamVetsCorner.com on topics that Vietnam veterans frequently engage with.

Only VeteranLegacy.com remains online in its original form with easily accessible records via the WHOIS service, which reveals that the page was registered through GoDaddy.com on December 7, 2015.[99] The other two pages appear to have been taken down and their records possibly scrubbed, perhaps by their respective admins or by their website's registrar.

These three websites appear to have been actively developing new, original content from December 2015 until April 18, 2017, but there have been no posts since. It is unclear what may have triggered this period of inactivity.

For historical context: April 18, 2017, was one month before Special Counsel Robert Mueller was appointed by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 election, so there is no reason to believe that the Mueller investigation led them to cease operations.[100] While other Russian pages identified in the Mueller report were paying for Facebook ads through May 2017, the "VeteranLegacy.com" page never purchased any ads, so it likely faced far less scrutiny. April 2017 was also five months before VVA began publicly combating the first Bulgarian entity that we discovered creating impostor pages and websites.



Veteran Legacy

Why Vietnam War Veterans Should Apply For A VA Home Loan

Posted On **February 13, 2017** | Posted By **Admin** | Posted In **Uncategorized**

Dak To, Vietnam. An Infantry patrol moves up to assault the last Viet Cong position after an attempted overrun of the artillery position by the Viet Cong during "Operation Hawthorne." June 7, 1966. (National Archives)

If you're a Vietnam War veteran and have yet to apply for a VA home loan, you may be wondering whether or not it would be a good choice to apply for one. There are a couple of things you may not yet know about a VA home loan, and these points could influence your decision on whether to apply for a loan. Below are some of the things you should know about VA home loans.

Firstly, VA loans are meant to be used for specific types of homes, such as condos, modular housing, single-family homes, and other types. So if you are looking to purchase a farm or fixer-upper, then applying for a VA loan will not be of much help. Another thing you should know about VA home loans is that the VA does not originate them. Rather, it is an agency that will provide a guaranty. However, the VA home loans are backed by the federal government, therefore you will be able to secure lower interest rates. You should also note that VA loans are reusable. This means that as long as you have a VA loan entitlement, you will be able to use it as many times as you want, given that you are able to pay off your loans. You can also get a new VA loan if you have lost your old one due to foreclosure.

On another note, you should know that VA loans require a mandatory fee known as a funding fee. This funding fee assists the VA in continuing the VA loans programs. The funding fee is typically about 2.15% of your total loan amount. Whether you are looking for a purchase loan or a refinance loan, there will be a required funding fee. Vietnam War veterans with service-connected disability, however, will not be required to pay this fee.

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Recent Posts

- What was Operation Babylift?
- The three soldiers Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- The myth that the war in Vietnam was not as intense as World War II
- Facts about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Did A Monk Set Himself Aflame in Protest of the War?

Recent Comments

Archives

- April 2017
- February 2017
- October 2016
- February 2016
- January 2016
- December 2015

Figure 61

However, April 2017 was the month that Facebook published a report on how to identify "Information Operations" on social media, which may have driven these admins underground.[101]

Unlike the Bulgarian entity affiliated with the vvets.eu and vietnam-veterans.org websites, the "Veterans of Vietnam" entity appears to have refrained from simply copying-and-pasting entire articles from MilVet-focused news and VA websites. Some articles appear to be unique, while others are largely plagiarized from Wikipedia and other online sources. The free online plagiarism tool from PapersOwl.com was helpful for tracing content posted on the website VeteranLegacy.com to its original source[102] (Figures 57-59). One plagiarized resource that we found was particularly suspicious. The text of the post "Why Vietnam War Veterans Should Apply For A VA Home Loan" by VeteranLegacy.com posted on February 13, 2017,[103] appears to have been at least in part lifted from the Russian website[104] Knowledgebook.ru (among other sources) (Figures 60-63).[105]

Knowledgebook.ru's website is still working, but their affiliated Twitter[106] account and Facebook page[107] have both been suspended, which could indicate that these social-media accounts were connected to a known disinformation campaign. The text of the Knowledgebook.ru page that corresponds to the VeteranLegacy.com article appears to have originally been written by an India-based content-marketing specialist,[108,109,110] who published an identical article for the American-based website WealthHow.com. WealthHow.com[111] is a division of the American company Buzzle.com, Inc, a guest-blogging network that is headquartered in California.[112]

In other words: Benign content created in India for an American company's website was plagiarized by what evidence suggests may be a Russian disinformation website. A Russian-and-Bulgarian-based entity then used this plagiarized content to deceive Americans on Facebook into believing that the Russian and Bulgarian admins were actually American veterans of the Vietnam War who were spreading useful information about VA benefits. Posting about VA benefits was done to build an audience that trusted the deceptive foreign admins, who could later use that audience to spread disinformation, harvest data, and inflame Americans' political divisions.

VeteranLegacy.com articles and "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook posts have been shared both by authentic MilVet-focused social-media accounts, as well as those that appear to be controlled by foreign entities. Notable posts of VeteranLegacy.com articles by Facebook pages other than the "Veterans of Vietnam" are described below:[113]

1. The VeteransLegacy.com article "The Myth That The War In Vietnam Was Not As Intense As World War II"[114] was posted a total of 23 times on social-media pages and received a total of 651 shares.[115]

   1.1 On July 3, 2017, the Facebook page "America's Veterans Are Loved" shared a "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook status,[116] with the article "The Myth That The War In Vietnam Was Not As Intense As World War II." From this single post by the "America's Veterans Are Loved" page, the status and article received 23 additional Facebook shares. The page also shared several other statuses and articles from "Veterans of Vietnam."[117]

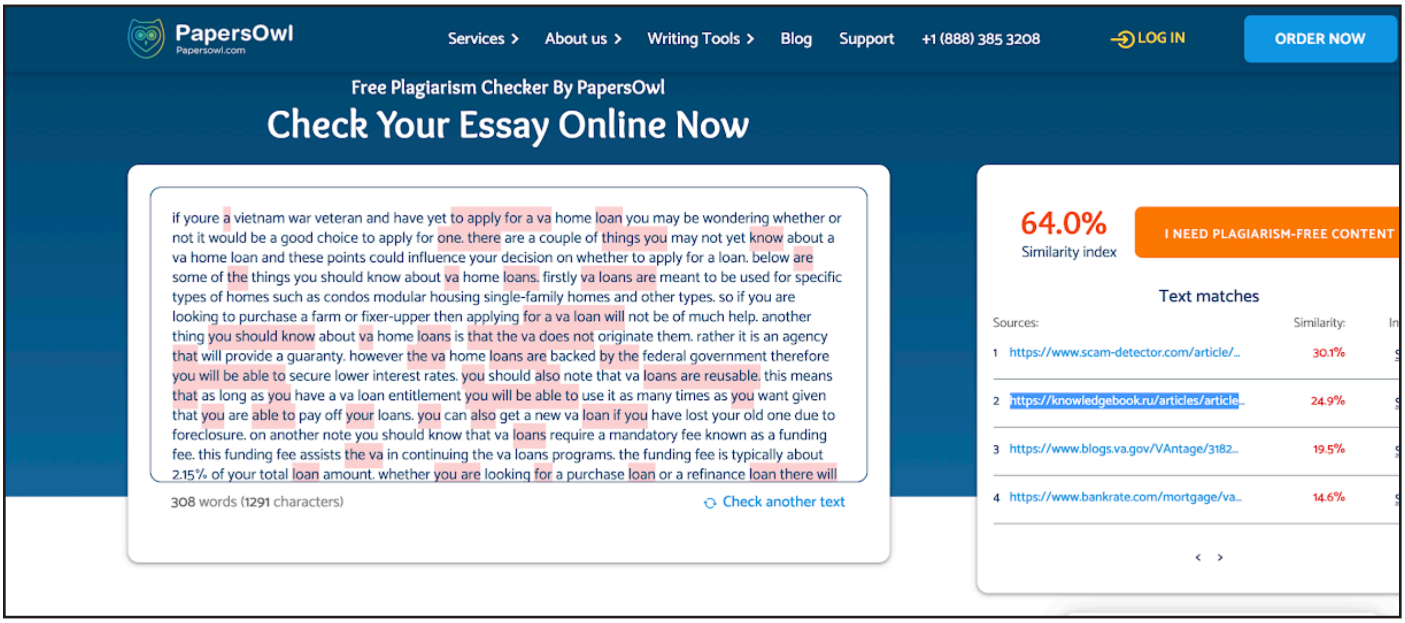
   "America's Veterans Are Loved" was created on November 21, 2014, and has four admins in the US — according to the page's Info and Ads tab — though grammatical and spelling errors in certain posts raise the possibility that at least one of these admins is not a native English speaker. This page has shared content developed by the Russian page "Being Patriotic," both before[118] and after[119] the 2016 election, though that may have been done unknowingly by Americans. The page has 323,602 likes, and it posts multiple times each day. The page shares statuses and articles from a variety of reputable news sources, as well as partisan right-leaning outlets and content producers. Recent political content attacks President Trump's critics,[120] while content from the days before the 2016 election endorsed candidate Trump[121] and attacked Secretary Hillary Clinton at length.[122] The page ties Secretary Clinton to the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), saying that together they want to "ban" the American flag.[123] The page refers to MSNBC, CNN, VOX, ESPN, the *New York Times*, WSJ, NBC, and CBS as "domestic terrorists."[124] The page also shared some of the same content as the Bulgarian entity, such as the barn photo, displayed in Figures 15 and 16. This suggests that foreign and domestic pages share common sources of content or are copying one another.

2. The VeteranLegacy.com article "Lessons From Vietnam War"[125] was posted six times, and received 172 total shares on Facebook.

   2.1 On January 8, 2016, the Facebook page representing the nonprofit Veterans4Warriors[126] shared a Veterans of Vietnam status[127] with a VeteranLegacy.com article (Figure 64).

   2.2 On January 10, 2016, the Facebook page "Veterans Nation," with 198,763 likes, shared[128] a VeteransLegacy article. This post was then shared 17 additional times from the "Veterans Nation" page (Figure 65). The "Veterans Nation" page was created on January 4, 2015, and according to the Info and Ads tab at the time of this investigation had 15 admins operating from Vietnam. This is a page that we have monitored and documented for several months. A screen-capture of this page on September 12, 2018, shows that at that time it had eight admins in Vietnam, one admin in Brazil, and one admin in Ukraine (Figure 66). A second screenshot dated October 15, 2018, shows this page having nine admins in Vietnam (Figure 67). These irregularities may be a sign of international efforts to deceive American veterans — otherwise, it could mean that admins are able to spoof their location and trick Facebook into displaying a country of origin that does not match their geographic location.

(text continued on page 64)



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if youre a vietnam war veteran and have yet to apply for a va home loan you may be wondering whether or not it would be a good choice to apply for one. there are a couple of things you may not yet know about a va home loan and these points could influence your decision on whether to apply for a loan. below are some of the things you should know about va home loans. firstly va loans are meant to be used for specific types of homes such as condos modular housing single-family homes and other types. so if you are looking to purchase a farm or fixer-upper then applying for a va loan will not be of much help. another thing you should know about va home loans is that the va does not originate them. rather it is an agency that will provide a guaranty. however the va home loans are backed by the federal government therefore you will be able to secure lower interest rates. you should also note that va loans are reusable. this means that as long as you have a va loan entitlement you will be able to use it as many times as you want given that you are able to pay off your loans. you can also get a new va loan if you have lost your old one due to foreclosure. on another note you should know that va loans require a mandatory fee known as a funding fee. this funding fee assists the va in continuing the va loans programs. the funding fee is typically about 2.15% of your total loan amount. whether you are looking for a purchase loan or a refinance loan there will

308 words (1291 characters)

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Text matches

Sources:		Similarity:
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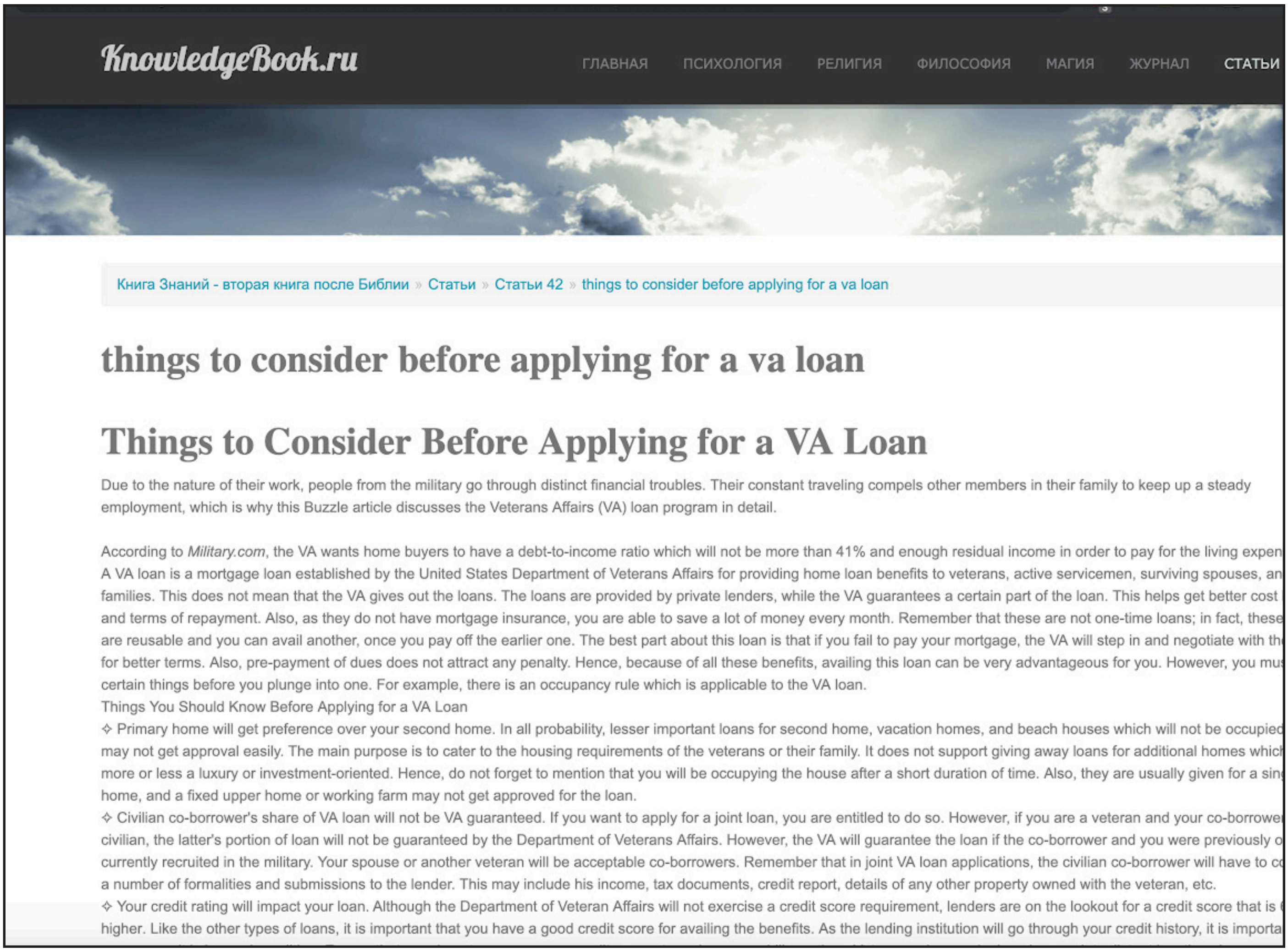
2	https://knowledgebook.ru/articles/article...	24.9%
3	https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/3182...	19.5%
4	https://www.bankrate.com/mortgage/va...	14.6%

Figure 62: The text from the "Why Vietnam War Veterans Should Apply For A VA Home Loan" article on the VeteranLegacy.com website is entered into the plagiarism checker on PapersOwl.com. The plagiarism checker determined that as much as 24.9 percent of the text was lifted from the Russian website knowledgebook.ru.



Книга Знаний - вторая книга после Библии » Статьи » Статьи 42 » things to consider before applying for a va loan

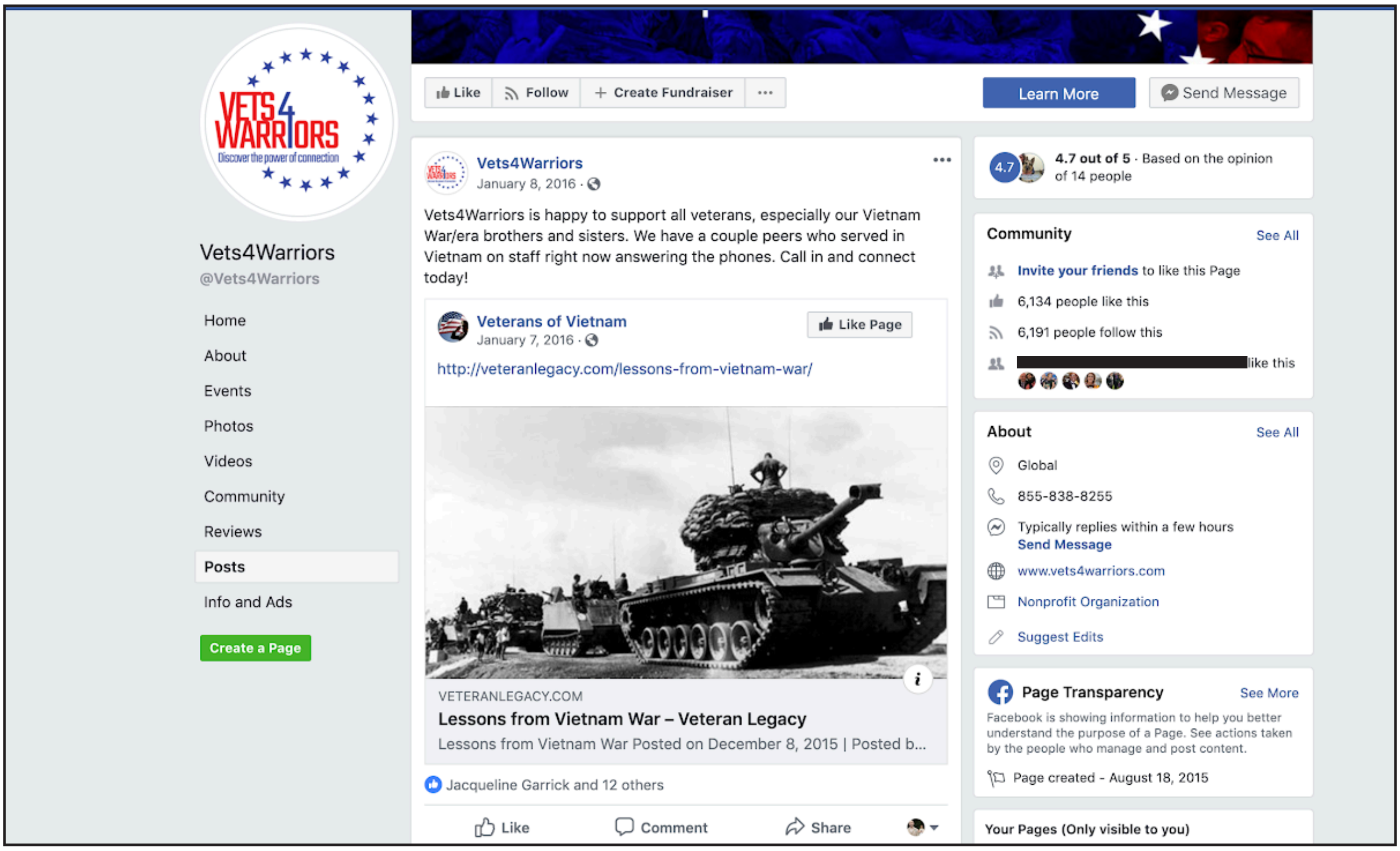
things to consider before applying for a va loan

Things to Consider Before Applying for a VA Loan

Due to the nature of their work, people from the military go through distinct financial troubles. Their constant traveling compels other members in their family to keep up a steady employment, which is why this Buzzle article discusses the Veterans Affairs (VA) loan program in detail.

According to *Military.com*, the VA wants home buyers to have a debt-to-income ratio which will not be more than 41% and enough residual income in order to pay for the living expen
A VA loan is a mortgage loan established by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for providing home loan benefits to veterans, active servicemen, surviving spouses, an
families. This does not mean that the VA gives out the loans. The loans are provided by private lenders, while the VA guarantees a certain part of the loan. This helps get better cost
and terms of repayment. Also, as they do not have mortgage insurance, you are able to save a lot of money every month. Remember that these are not one-time loans; in fact, these
are reusable and you can avail another, once you pay off the earlier one. The best part about this loan is that if you fail to pay your mortgage, the VA will step in and negotiate with th
for better terms. Also, pre-payment of dues does not attract any penalty. Hence, because of all these benefits, availing this loan can be very advantageous for you. However, you mus
certain things before you plunge into one. For example, there is an occupancy rule which is applicable to the VA loan.
Things You Should Know Before Applying for a VA Loan
✧ Primary home will get preference over your second home. In all probability, lesser important loans for second home, vacation homes, and beach houses which will not be occupied
may not get approval easily. The main purpose is to cater to the housing requirements of the veterans or their family. It does not support giving away loans for additional homes which
more or less a luxury or investment-oriented. Hence, do not forget to mention that you will be occupying the house after a short duration of time. Also, they are usually given for a sin
home, and a fixed upper home or working farm may not get approved for the loan.
✧ Civilian co-borrower's share of VA loan will not be VA guaranteed. If you want to apply for a joint loan, you are entitled to do so. However, if you are a veteran and your co-borrowe
civilian, the latter's portion of loan will not be guaranteed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, the VA will guarantee the loan if the co-borrower and you were previously o
currently recruited in the military. Your spouse or another veteran will be acceptable co-borrowers. Remember that in joint VA loan applications, the civilian co-borrower will have to co
a number of formalities and submissions to the lender. This may include his income, tax documents, credit report, details of any other property owned with the veteran, etc.
✧ Your credit rating will impact your loan. Although the Department of Veteran Affairs will not exercise a credit score requirement, lenders are on the lookout for a credit score that is
higher. Like the other types of loans, it is important that you have a good credit score for availing the benefits. As the lending institution will go through your credit history, it is importa

Figure 63



Vets4Warriors
@Vets4Warriors

Vets4Warriors
January 8, 2016 ·

Vets4Warriors is happy to support all veterans, especially our Vietnam War/era brothers and sisters. We have a couple peers who served in Vietnam on staff right now answering the phones. Call in and connect today!

Veterans of Vietnam
January 7, 2016 ·

http://veteranlegacy.com/lessons-from-vietnam-war/

VETERANLEGACY.COM
Lessons from Vietnam War – Veteran Legacy
Lessons from Vietnam War Posted on December 8, 2015 | Posted b...

Jacqueline Garrick and 12 others

4.7 out of 5 · Based on the opinion of 14 people

Community See All
Invite your friends to like this Page
6,134 people like this
6,191 people follow this
[redacted] like this

About See All
Global
855-838-8255
Typically replies within a few hours
Send Message
www.vets4warriors.com
Nonprofit Organization
Suggest Edits

Page Transparency See More
Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content.
Page created - August 18, 2015

Your Pages (Only visible to you)

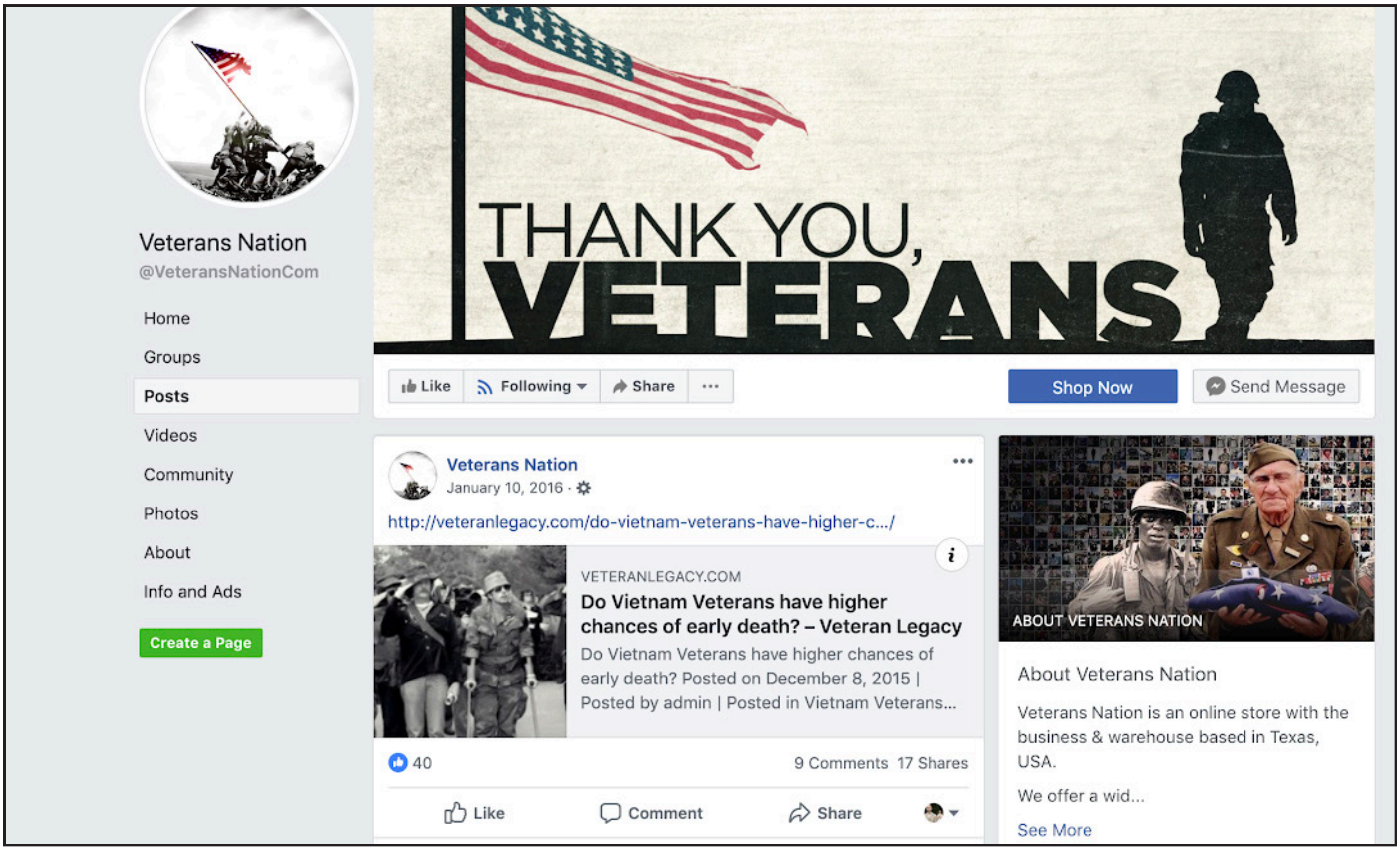
Figure 64: “Vets4Warriors”, a legitimate veterans organization, unknowingly shared Russian-generated content.

(text continued from page 62)

The affiliated website VeteranNations.com makes contradictory claims regarding the business’s origin. On one single page of the website, VeteranNations.com says it is headquartered in “California, USA,” with “specialty items in other countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and China” and their main warehouse in Vietnam.[129] The promotion of this website and sales of MilVet-related trinkets appears to be the primary purpose of the “Veterans Nation” Facebook page, though this could be a ruse to build an audience that will later be inundated with propaganda.

The page created the Facebook group Veterans Nation - Honoring All Who Served on June 26, 2018, which now has 10,206 members.[130] It also has an affiliated Instagram account “@usveteransnation,” which has in the past shared content produced by the Russian entities Veterans Come First,[131,132] and Being Patriotic several times (Figure 68).[133,134,135]

The only personal account that also has administrator privileges for the Facebook group appears to be a fake Vietnam-based account operating under the pseudonym “Kelvin Henry.”[136] This personal account is made to look like it belongs to a male American veteran and uses various uploads of patriotic and military-themed graphics, but originally the account began with a female model’s image for its profile photos. The account also “likes” several obscure Vietnamese pages.



Veterans Nation
January 10, 2016

http://veteranlegacy.com/do-vietnam-veterans-have-higher-c.../

VETERANLEGACY.COM

Do Vietnam Veterans have higher chances of early death? – Veteran Legacy

Do Vietnam Veterans have higher chances of early death? Posted on December 8, 2015 | Posted by admin | Posted in Vietnam Veterans...

40 · 9 Comments 17 Shares

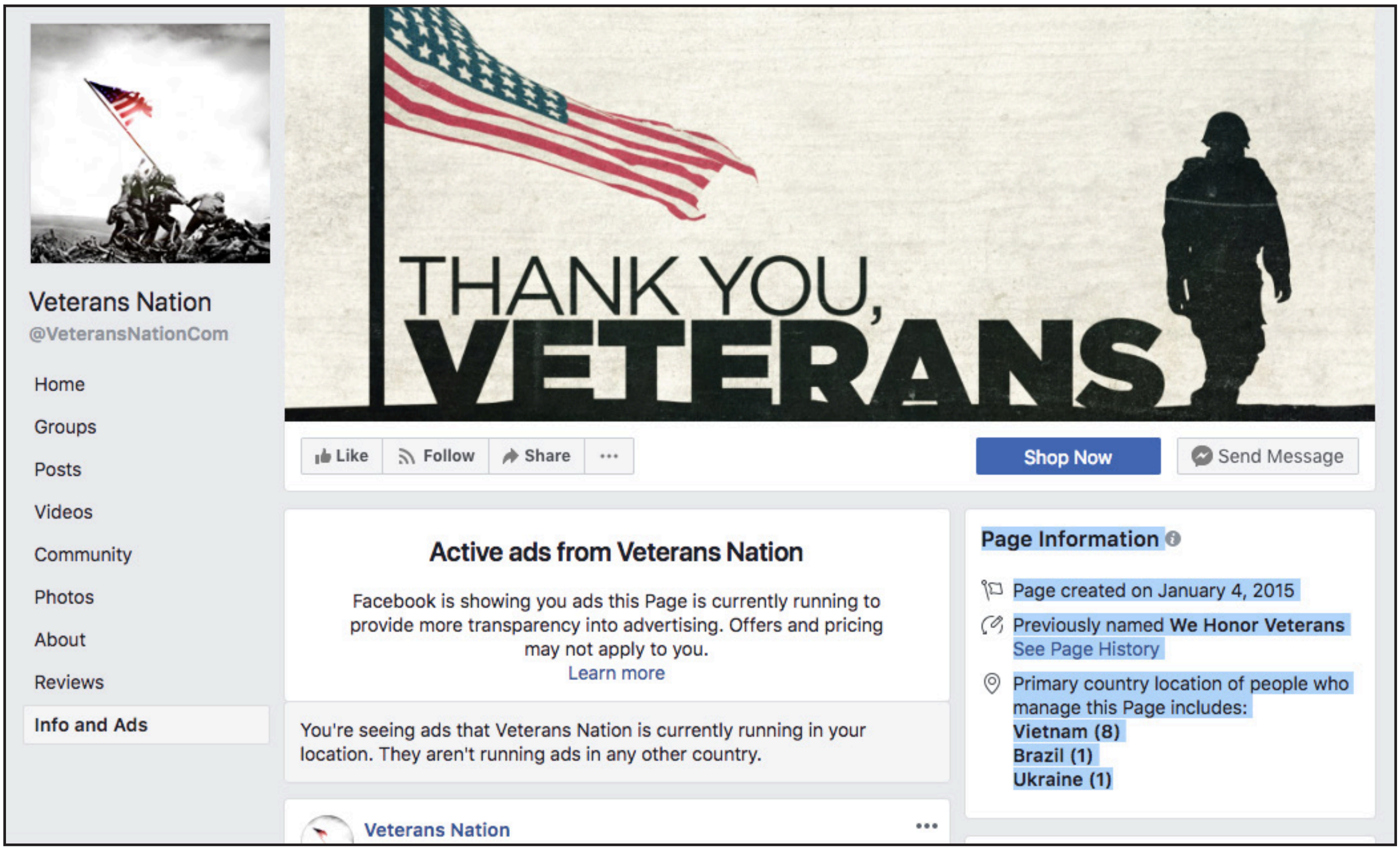
About Veterans Nation

Veterans Nation is an online store with the business & warehouse based in Texas, USA.

We offer a wid...

See More

Figure 65: "Veterans Nation" shared content that was developed for the Russian and Bulgarian page "Veterans of Vietnam," though it is unclear if this was coordinated between the two pages.



Active ads from Veterans Nation

Facebook is showing you ads this Page is currently running to provide more transparency into advertising. Offers and pricing may not apply to you.
Learn more

You're seeing ads that Veterans Nation is currently running in your location. They aren't running ads in any other country.

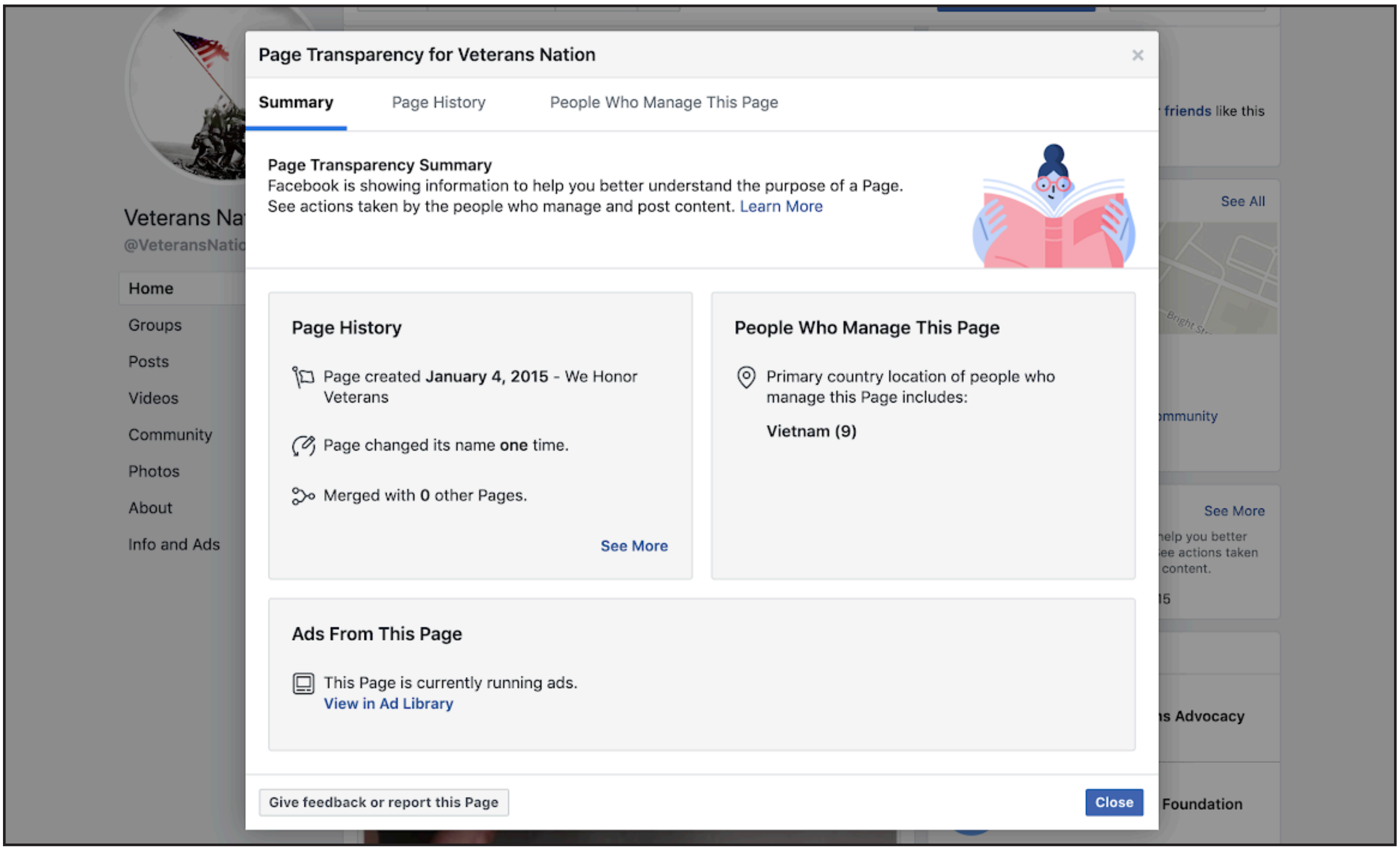
Page Information

Page created on January 4, 2015

Previously named **We Honor Veterans**
See Page History

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:
Vietnam (8)
Brazil (1)
Ukraine (1)

Figure 66: "Veterans Nation" does not share admin countries of origin with the Russian and Bulgarian "Veterans of Vietnam" page, but it does have an unusual collection of admins that span three continents with very different cultures and native languages.



Page Transparency for Veterans Nation

Summary | Page History | People Who Manage This Page

Page Transparency Summary
Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. Learn More

Page History

Page created **January 4, 2015** - We Honor Veterans

Page changed its name **one** time.

Merged with **0** other Pages.

See More

People Who Manage This Page

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

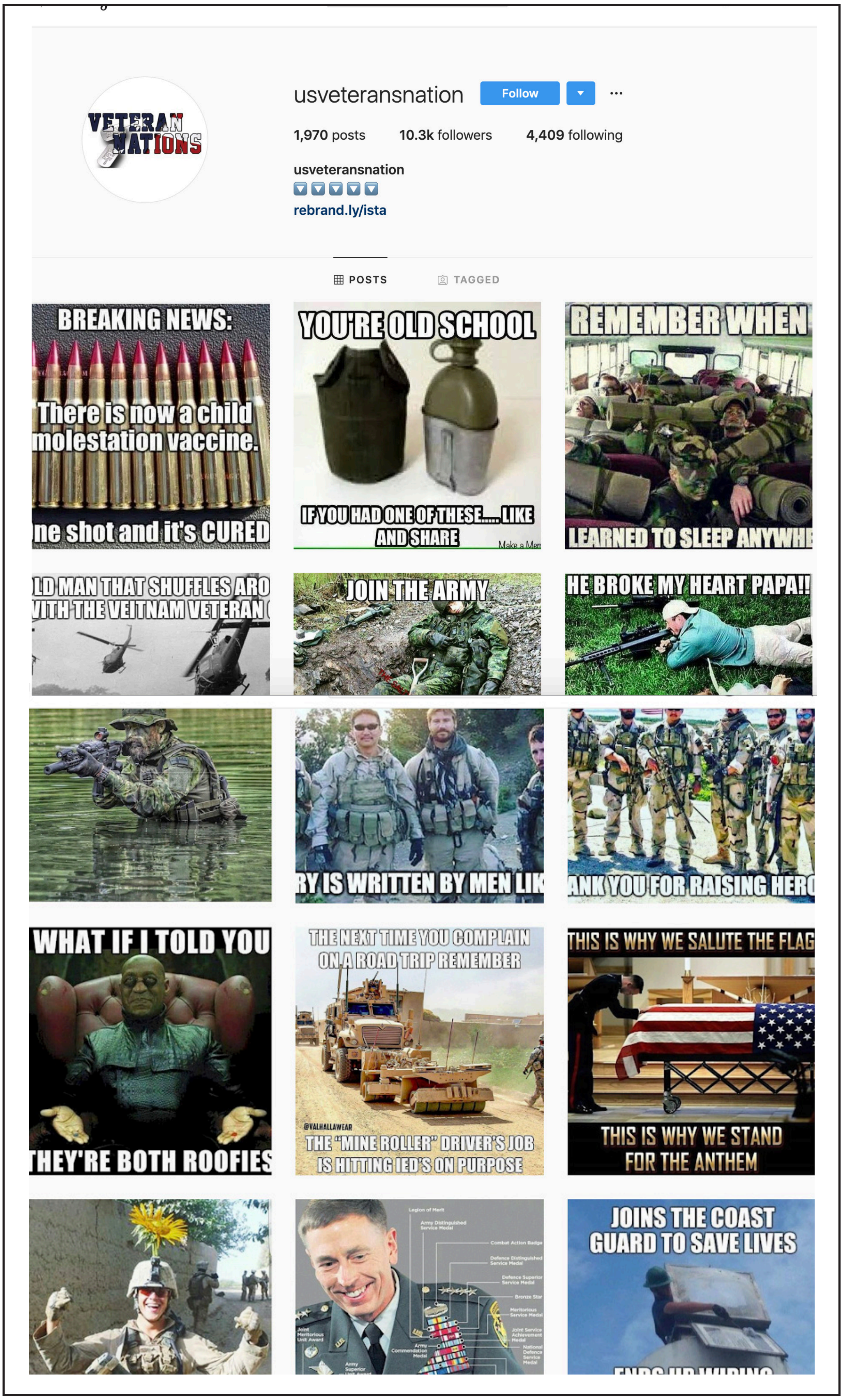
Vietnam (9)

Ads From This Page

This Page is currently running ads.
View in Ad Library

Give feedback or report this Page | Close

Figure 67: Page admins for “Veterans Nation” shifted over time from being in Brazil, Ukraine, and Vietnam, to only Vietnam.



usveteransnation Follow ▾ ···

1,970 posts 10.3k followers 4,409 following

usveteransnation

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rebrand.ly/ista

POSTS TAGGED

VETERAN NATIONS
BREAKING NEWS:
There is now a child molestation vaccine.
ne shot and it's CURED
YOU'RE OLD SCHOOL
IF YOU HAD ONE OF THESE.... LIKE AND SHARE
REMEMBER WHEN
LEARNED TO SLEEP ANYWHE
LD MAN THAT SHUFFLES ARO
VITH THE VEITNAM VETERAN
JOIN THE ARMY
HE BROKE MY HEART PAPA!!
RY IS WRITTEN BY MEN LIK
ANK YOU FOR RAISING HERO
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU
THEY'RE BOTH ROOFIES
THE NEXT TIME YOU COMPLAIN ON A ROAD TRIP REMEMBER
@VALHALLAWEAR
THE "MINE ROLLER" DRIVER'S JOB IS HITTING IED'S ON PURPOSE
THIS IS WHY WE SALUTE THE FLAG
THIS IS WHY WE STAND FOR THE ANTHEM
JOINS THE COAST GUARD TO SAVE LIVES

Figure 68: The Instagram account that is associated with the "Veterans Nation" Facebook page is "@usveteransnation." This instagram account has shared Russian-generated content, including from the IRA-affiliated page "Being Patriotic." Note how the logo on the top left alters the name to Veteran Nations; this kind of discrepancy is common in fraudulent accounts, websites, and Facebook pages.

CHAPTER 3: Creation of Fake Veterans Organizations

While Vietnam Veterans and VVA have specifically been targeted by foreign-born impostors in cyber-environments, the broader MilVets community is targeted as well. Foreign elements have created fake organizations that are designed to appear as if they provide services to MilVets, are "organic" communities (grown through unpaid posts and comments) of American MilVets, and are affiliated with real MilVet organizations. They accomplish this by using names, websites, logos, and symbols that are recognized and trusted by MilVets and the broader American public.

"We Are Veterans" and "We are Veterans"

"We Are Veterans" (with capitalized "A" in the word "Are")[137] is a foreign-born impostor Facebook page that is made to look like it is affiliated with the legitimate American organization We Honor Veterans (Figures 69 and 70).

"We are Veterans"[138] (with lowercase "a" in the word "are") is also a foreign-born impostor page that attempts to use We Honor Veterans to build its credibility.

The real organization We Honor Veterans is headquartered in Alexandria, VA, and is a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). We Honor Veterans works in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs with the honorable mission of ensuring that veterans in hospice care do not die alone.[139] The organization's logo consists of a V, the left half of which is a solid-blue field and the right made up of four red stripes, which evokes an image of the American flag. Partially above the V and between its two halves is a gold star.

The "We Are Veterans" Facebook page uses the blue and red "V" from the We Honor Veterans logo, swapping the gold star for a gold silhouette of the profile of a bald eagle with wings and talons outstretched.[140]

The "We Are Veterans" Facebook page was created on March 14, 2017, and all nine page admins are based in Vietnam. It currently has 67,248 followers. The "About" tab includes non-native English and reads: "Our site is legit and it's located in U.S. Therefore, all of our items are printed in USA. Thank veterans who has had long service or experience in a particular occupation or field *[sic]*." To confuse matters, the website on the "About" page belongs to the legitimate We Honor Veterans organization, but rather than link to the homepage, it links to We Honor Veterans' PowerPoint repository.[141]

"We Are Veterans" has posted known Russian-generated content, such as memes developed by "Veterans Come First" (Figure 73) and "Remember.Military." The page appears to have started with a focus on selling memorabilia, but recent activity indicates that the page is now just focused on building an audience.

The "We Are Veterans" page has shared explicitly political content, though considering it is entirely controlled by admins outside the US, it's unclear why this does not violate Facebook's policies regarding foreign interference in political campaigns. The first pro-Trump meme that was shared by this page was posted June 14, 2019[142] (Figure 71). A second pro-Trump post on June 23, 2019, using the slogan "Make America great again!" quickly garnered 150 shares[143] (Figure 72). "We Are Veterans" has also run ads deemed to be "about social issues, elections, or politics" (Figure 74). One of these ads was removed for a violation.[144]

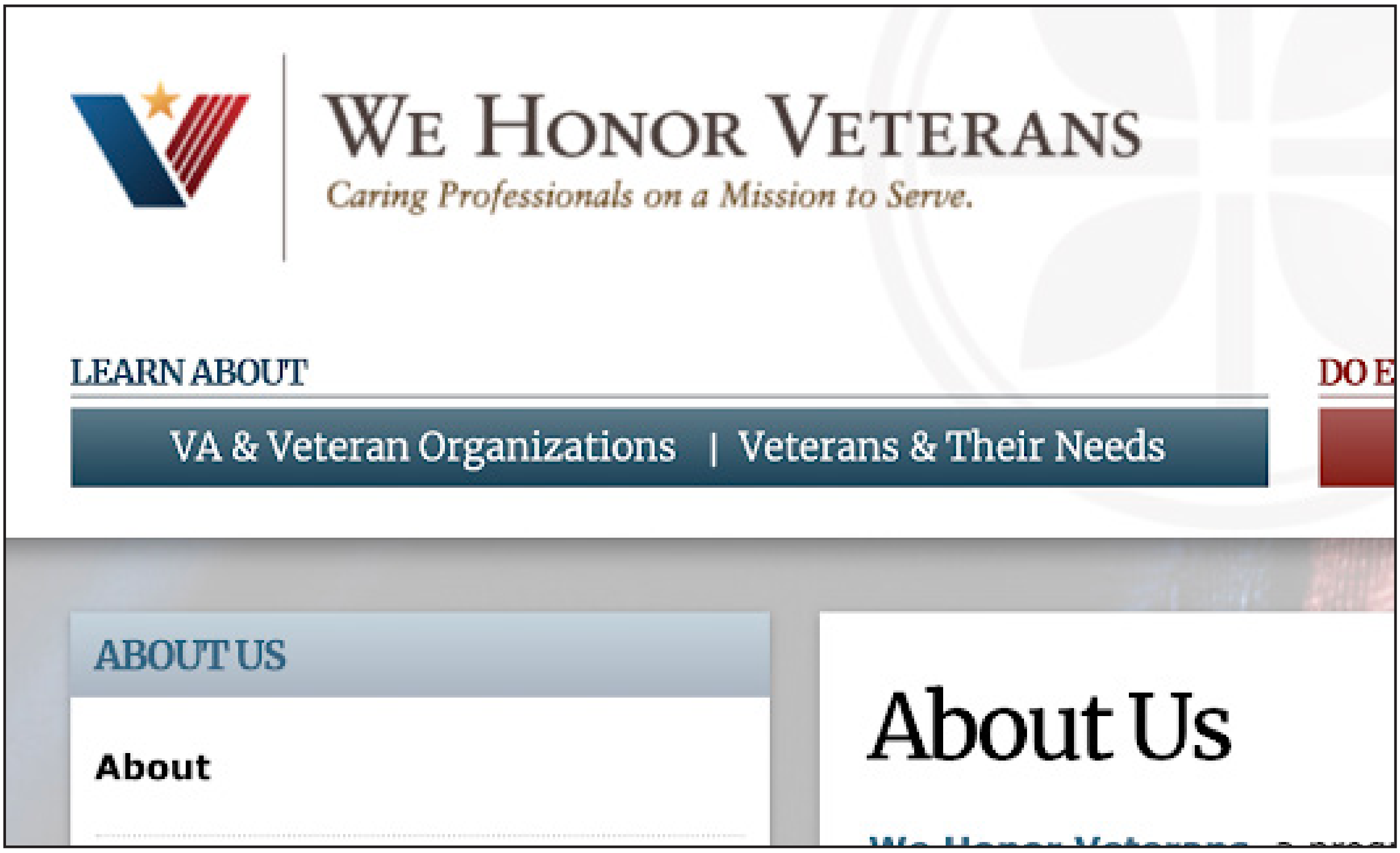

We Honor Veterans
Caring Professionals on a Mission to Serve.
LEARN ABOUT
DO E
VA & Veteran Organizations | Veterans & Their Needs
ABOUT US
About
About Us

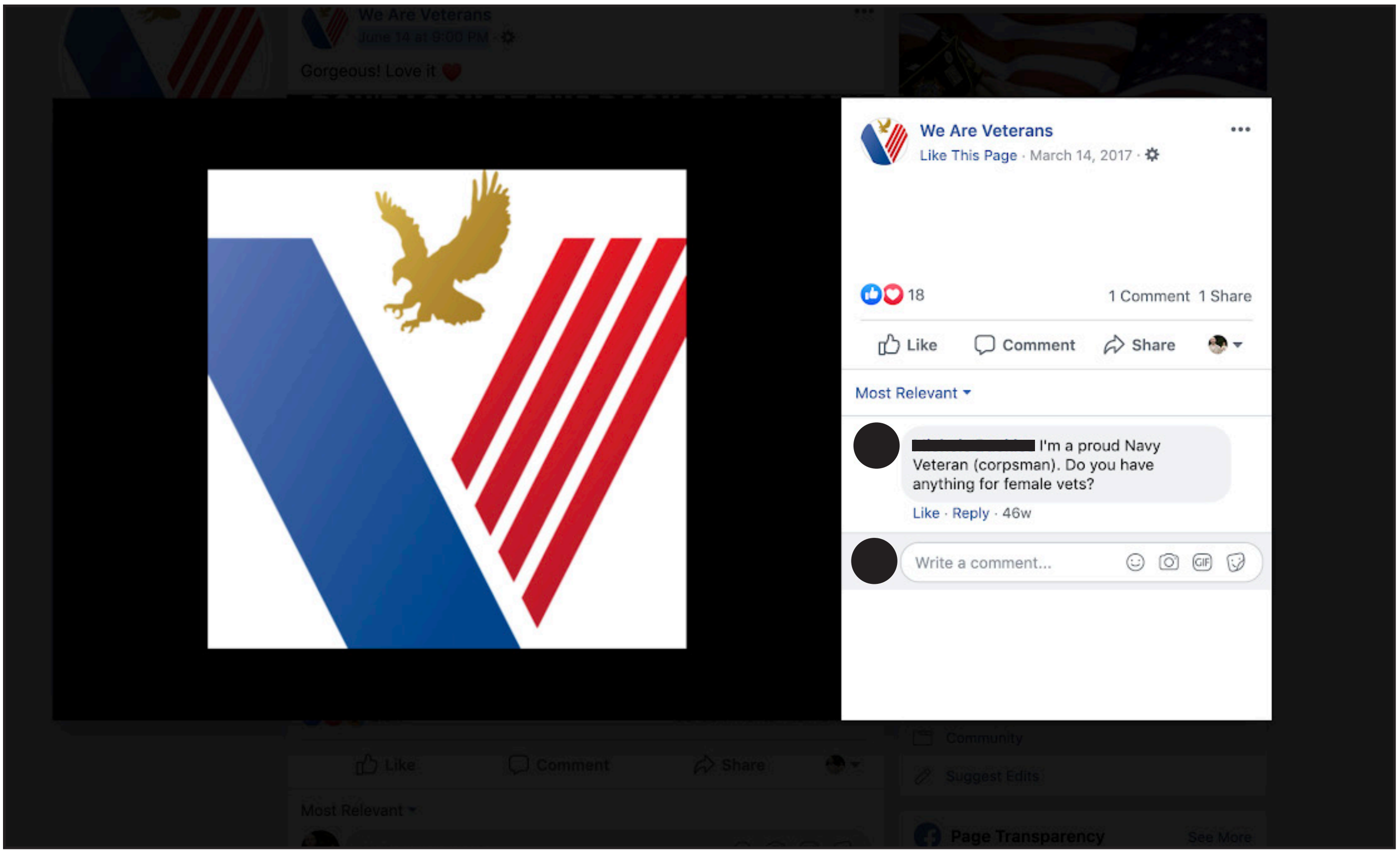
Figure 69: This is the original logo of the legitimate organization We Honor Veterans, which was modified and co-opted by the foreign-born "We Are Veterans" Facebook page.

"We Are Veterans" has not relied on a single online store, like many similar pages. Instead, it has shared links to several different online stores, including paid ads for the following links:

1. https://zalooo.com/products/blnvit
2. https://zalooo.com/products/ttbmm
3. https://helutee.com/believ
4. https://helutee.com/vetpra
5. https://helutee.com/amlibo
6. https://bit.ly/2OQWmr6
7. https://helutee.com/alusma
8. https://helutee.com/mrjob
9. https://helutee.com/marineiam

In between selling merchandise deemed by Facebook to be "of political importance," the page has also been posting known-Russian-IRA created memes.[145]

The "We are Veterans" (with the lowercase "a") Facebook page has only one admin, who is based in Vietnam.[146] The page was created on February 26, 2016, with the name "We are a Veteran," which indicates that it was created by a non-native English speaker. The page was later renamed to "We are Veterans" on August 18, 2016. The page's m.me URL[147] is "wehonorveterans.us/,"[148,149] which is meant to make people believe that it is associated with the legitimate wehonorveterans.org website. "We are Veterans" has 113,686 followers.



We Are Veterans

Like This Page · March 14, 2017

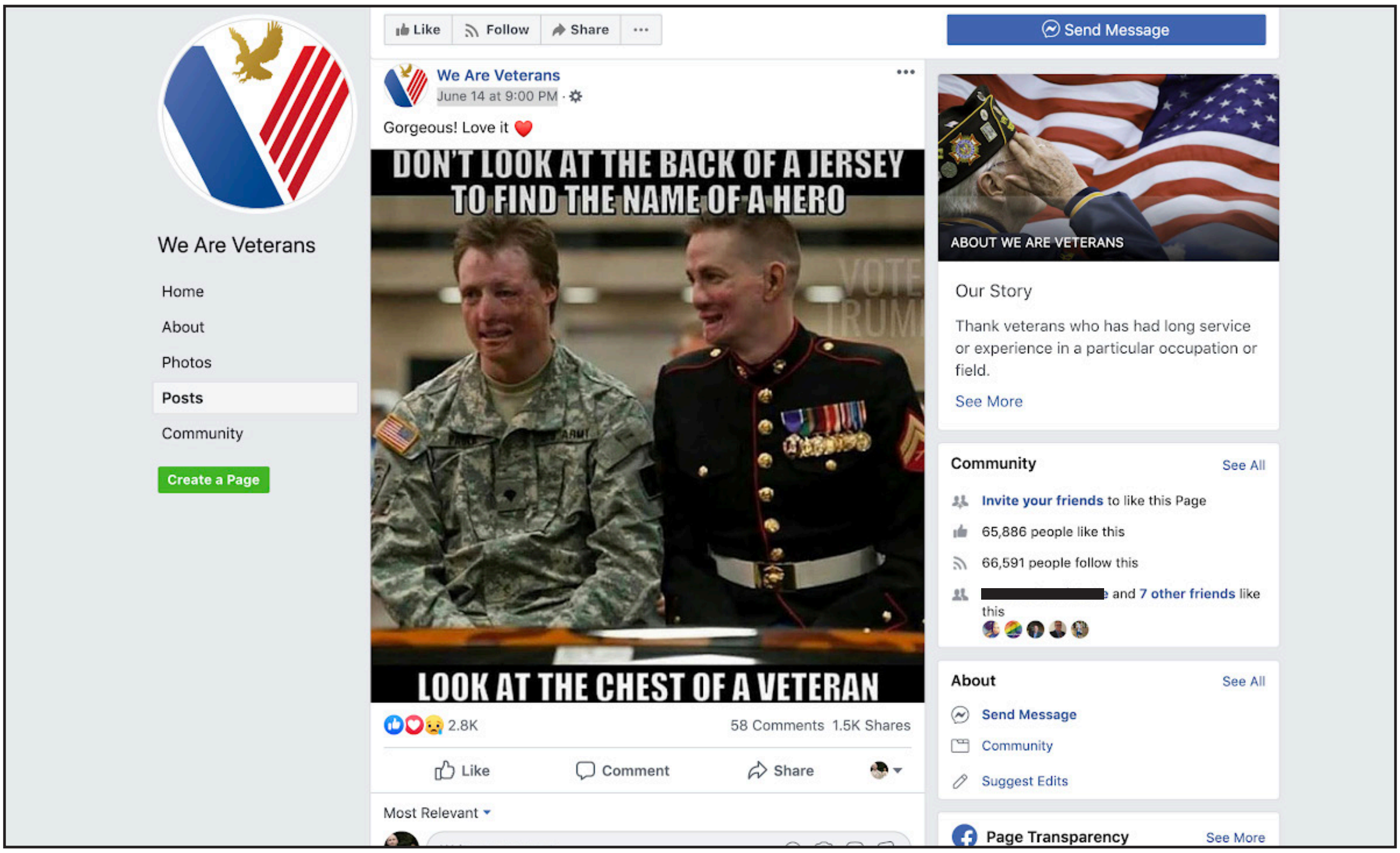
18

1 Comment 1 Share

[redacted] I'm a proud Navy Veteran (corpsman). Do you have anything for female vets?

Like · Reply · 46w

Figure 70: "We Are Veterans" ripped off a logo for We Honor Veterans.



We Are Veterans

June 14 at 9:00 PM

Gorgeous! Love it ❤

DON'T LOOK AT THE BACK OF A JERSEY TO FIND THE NAME OF A HERO
VOTE TRUM
LOOK AT THE CHEST OF A VETERAN

2.8K

58 Comments 1.5K Shares

Our Story

Thank veterans who has had long service or experience in a particular occupation or field.

See More

Community — See All

Invite your friends to like this Page

65,886 people like this

66,591 people follow this

[redacted] and 7 other friends like this

About — See All

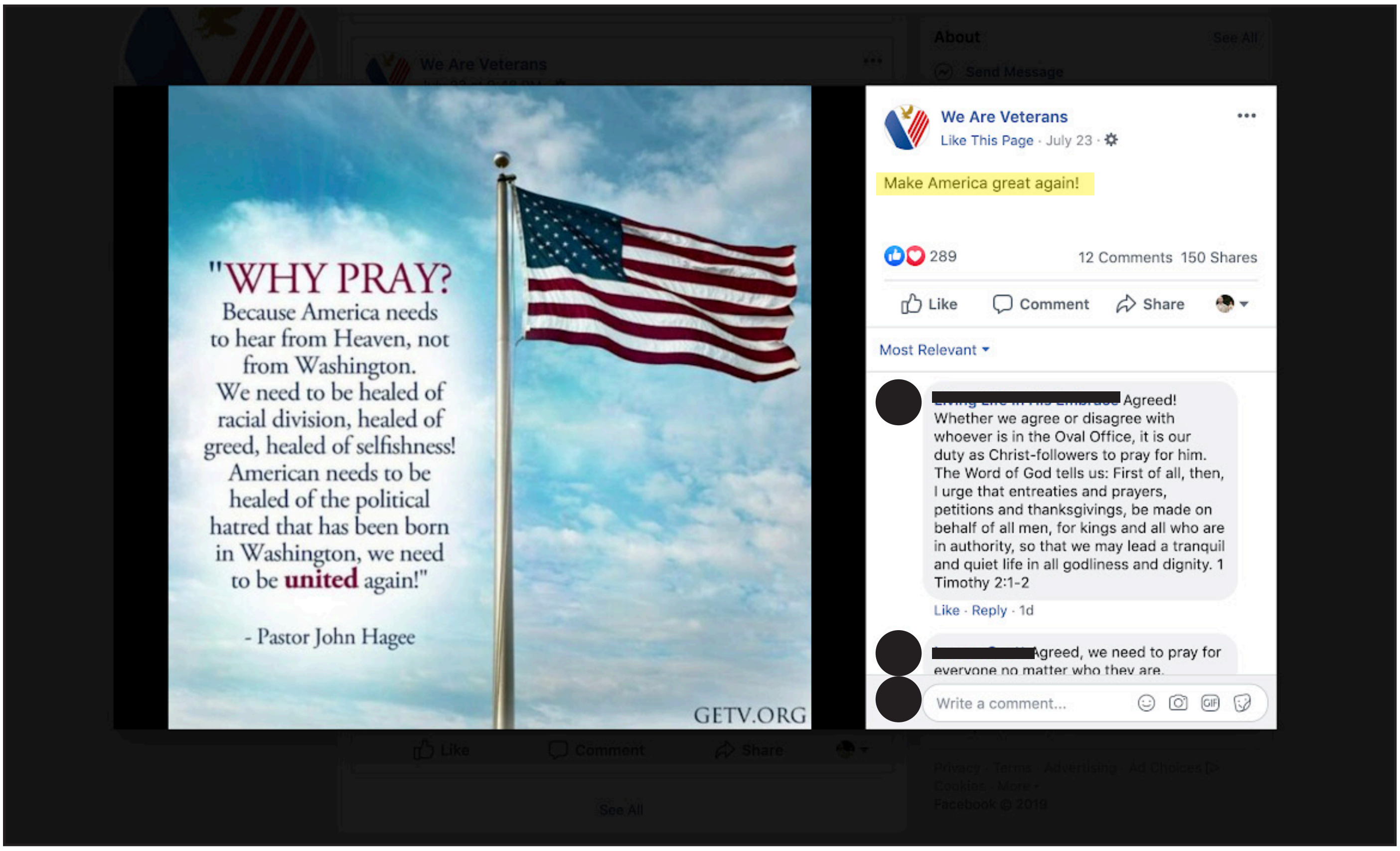
Send Message

Community

Suggest Edits

Page Transparency — See More

Figure 71: "Vote Trum[p]" is watermarked in the photo. The stock image in this photo, featuring Marine veteran Aaron Mankin (right), has also been used by the known-IRA entity Tea Party News.



"WHY PRAY? Because America needs to hear from Heaven, not from Washington. We need to be healed of racial division, healed of greed, healed of selfishness! American needs to be healed of the political hatred that has been born in Washington, we need to be **united** again!"

- Pastor John Hagee

GETV.ORG

We Are Veterans
Like This Page · July 23 ·

Make America great again!

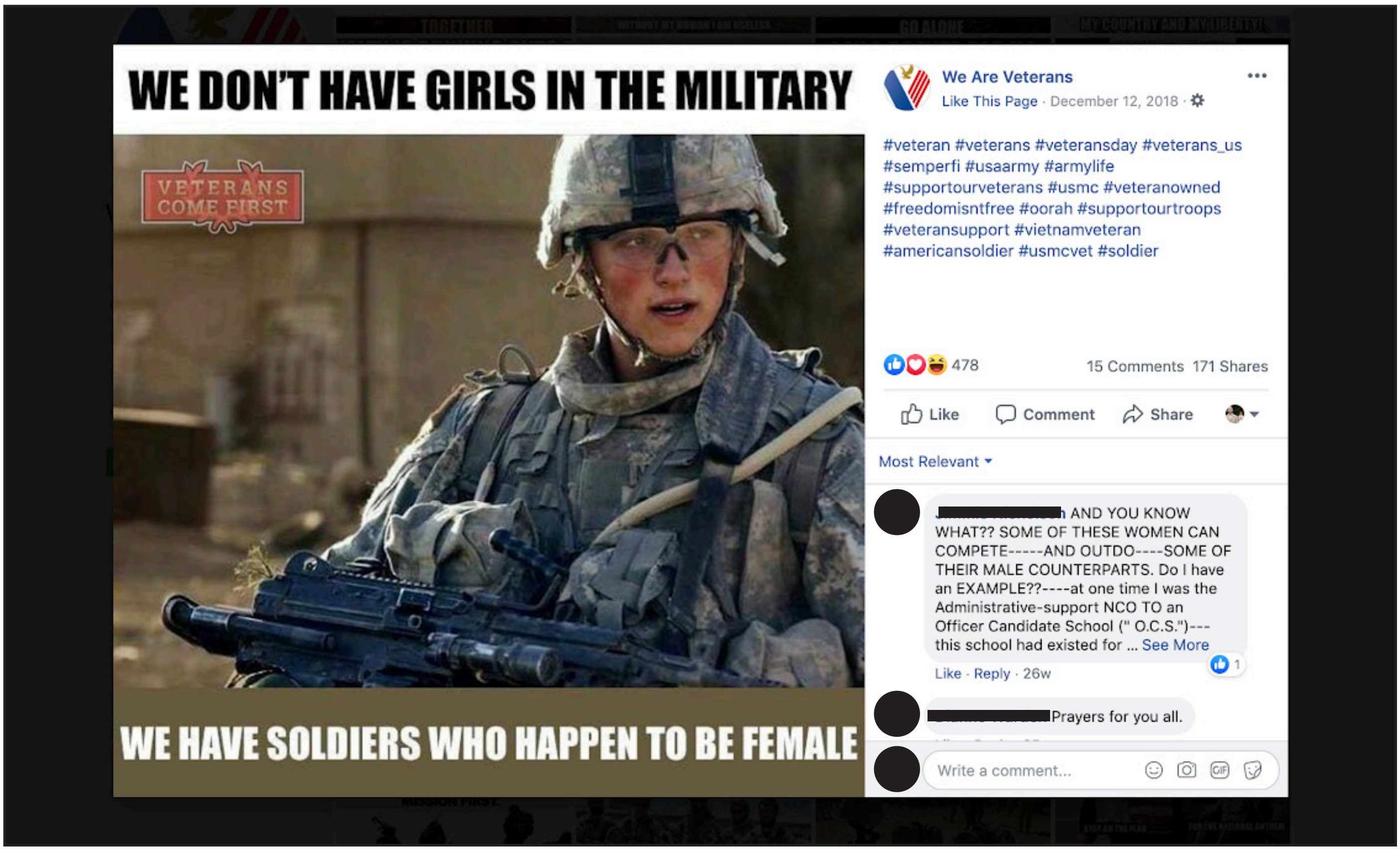
289 12 Comments 150 Shares

[redacted] Agreed! Whether we agree or disagree with whoever is in the Oval Office, it is our duty as Christ-followers to pray for him. The Word of God tells us: First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Like · Reply · 1d

[redacted] Agreed, we need to pray for everyone no matter who they are.

Figure 72: The Trump campaign's "Make America great again" (MAGA) slogan was shared in the comment with this post.



WE DON'T HAVE GIRLS IN THE MILITARY
VETERANS COME FIRST
WE HAVE SOLDIERS WHO HAPPEN TO BE FEMALE

We Are Veterans
Like This Page · December 12, 2018 ·

#veteran #veterans #veteransday #veterans_us #semperfi #usaarmy #armylife #supportourveterans #usmc #veteranowned #freedomisntfree #oorah #supportourtroops #veteransupport #vietnamveteran #americansoldier #usmcvet #soldier

478 15 Comments 171 Shares

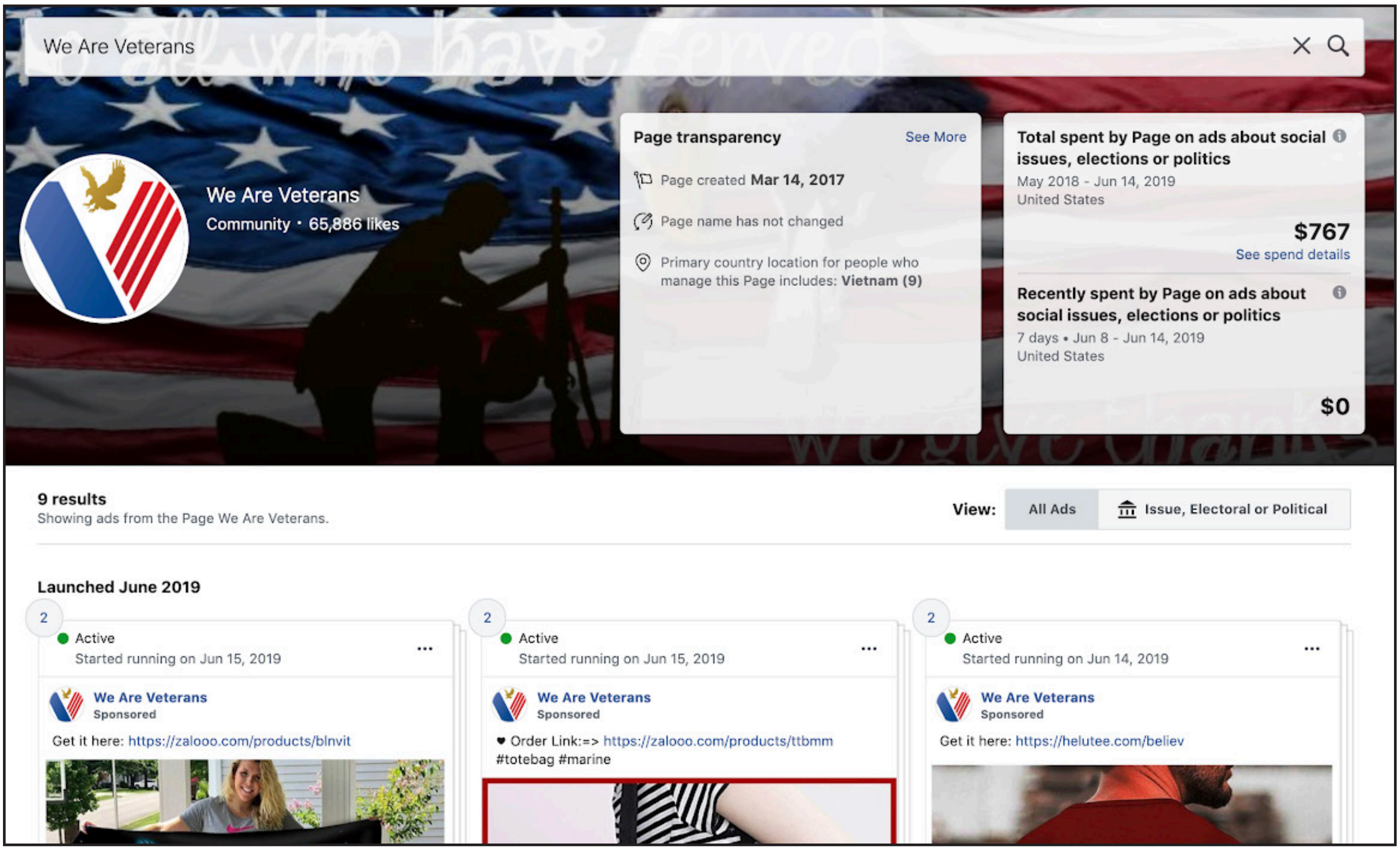
Like
Comment
Share
Most Relevant

[redacted] AND YOU KNOW WHAT?? SOME OF THESE WOMEN CAN COMPETE-----AND OUTDO----SOME OF THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS. Do I have an EXAMPLE??----at one time I was the Administrative-support NCO TO an Officer Candidate School (" O.C.S.")--- this school had existed for ... See More

Like · Reply · 26w

[redacted] Prayers for you all.

Figure 73



We Are Veterans

We Are Veterans
Community · 65,886 likes

Page transparency See More

Page created **Mar 14, 2017**

Page name has not changed

Primary country location for people who manage this Page includes: **Vietnam (9)**

Total spent by Page on ads about social issues, elections or politics
May 2018 - Jun 14, 2019
United States

$767
See spend details

Recently spent by Page on ads about social issues, elections or politics
7 days • Jun 8 - Jun 14, 2019
United States

$0

9 results
Showing ads from the Page We Are Veterans.

View: All Ads | Issue, Electoral or Political

Launched June 2019

2
● Active
Started running on Jun 15, 2019
We Are Veterans
Sponsored
Get it here: https://zalooo.com/products/blnvit

2
● Active
Started running on Jun 15, 2019
We Are Veterans
Sponsored
♥ Order Link:=> https://zalooo.com/products/ttbmm
#totebag #marine

2
● Active
Started running on Jun 14, 2019
We Are Veterans
Sponsored
Get it here: https://helutee.com/believ

Figure 74: The "We Are Veterans" Facebook page has nine admins in Vietnam and none in the US. It has spent $767 on ads related to "social issues, elections or politics."

CHAPTER 4: The Content Used by Foreign Admins to Build an Audience Focuses on American Veterans and Then Works to Divide Us

The United States military has consistently been among the most trusted American institutions,[150] and it is unique in size and scope among organizations that bring together Americans of diverse backgrounds. Military service facilitates strong bonds among Americans who otherwise would never have met one another, and the internet allows them to remain in contact long after they've served together. While the diversity of the American military along racial, ethnic, economic backgrounds, academic disciplines, and political affiliations is its strength,[151] it also provides fault lines to be exploited by our adversaries.

While much of the public focus regarding foreign interference with the 2016 election was centered on the divisive and overtly political messages that were published, most of the activity that these foreign entities engage in is simply audience-building. After studying the behavior of legitimate American VSOs and veteran-owned small businesses, these foreign entities have become exceptionally skilled at reproducing branding and content that earns MilVets' attention. These foreign interlopers recognize that photographs of celebrity veterans, wounded servicemembers, and flag-draped caskets often draw responses in terms of likes, shares, and follows from their audience.

The primary objective of online foreign-influence campaigns is to sow "discord in the U.S. political system,"[152] which has the effect of weakening faith in American government both domestically and abroad. In order to accomplish this objective, the hostile accounts must carefully balance relatively benign audience-building behavior with the divisive content that incites negative reactions (but also risks attracting the attention of investigators — or turning off followers). The most effective divisive content has a net effect of audience-building, as angry reactions online (comments/arguments, shares, "angry face" emoticons, etc.) are rewarded by social-media algorithms — pushing the post into the newsfeeds of Americans sympathetic to the divisive message and creating a reward-for-outrage feedback loop.

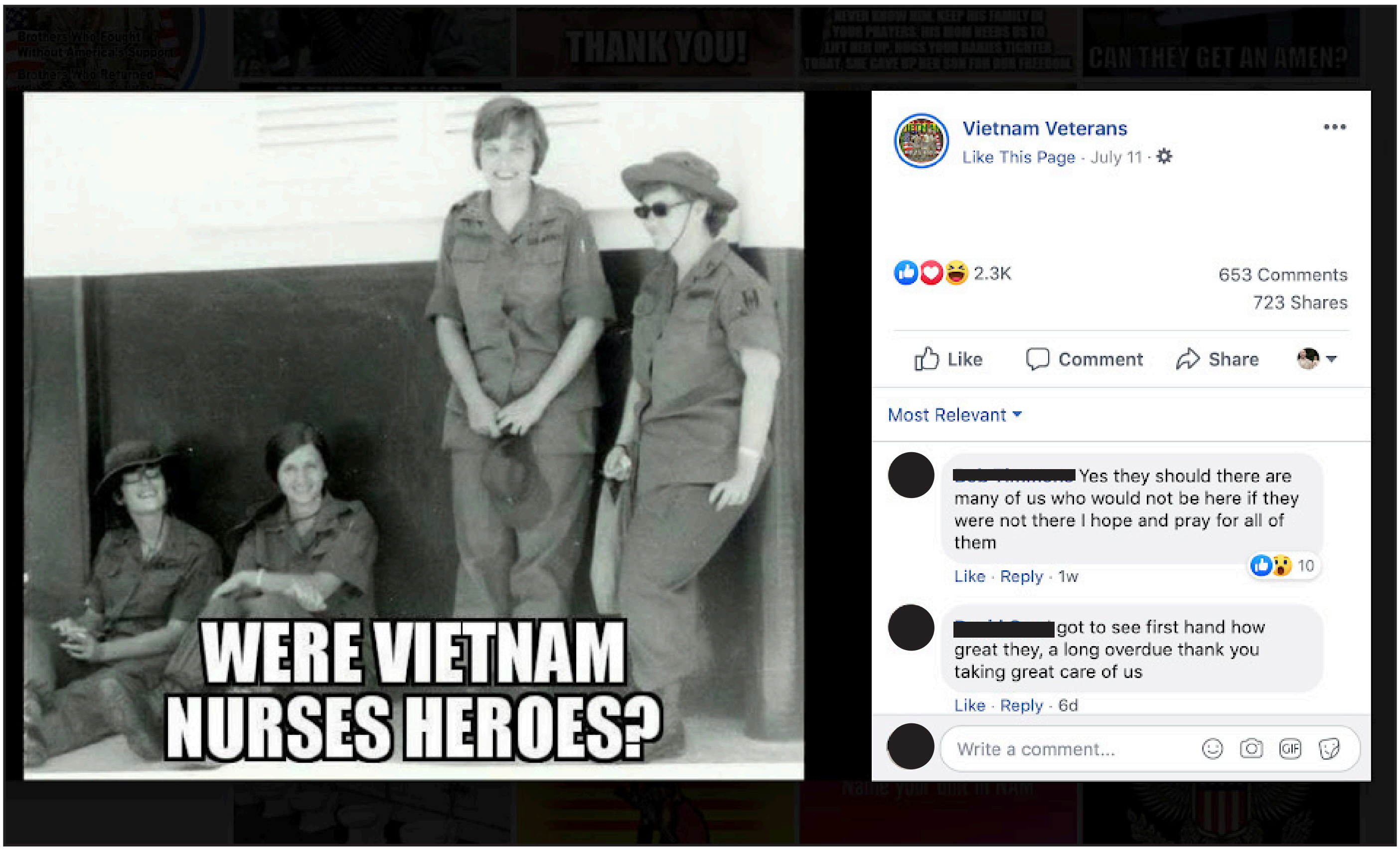
Audience-Building Content

Audience-building content takes several forms, with the goal of creating a brand that piques interest and builds rapport and loyalty. The most common form of audience-building content is the "positive meme," which is designed to evoke good feelings such as camaraderie, sympathy, and celebration. In the context of MilVets, the positive meme may incorporate generic messages with slogans like "Land of the free because of the brave, thank you veterans"[153] or engagement-bait such as "WERE VIETNAM NURSES HEROES?" or "I leave my family to protect yours CAN YOU GIVE ME AMEN AND A SHARE?" (Figures 75 and 76).[154]

More-targeted engagement-bait content leans on language and imagery that is specific to American MilVet culture. These admins often post memes displaying pictures of military equipment asking followers if they have ever used the item. This can range from the P-38 Military Can Opener[155] (Figure 77) to M18 Claymore Anti-Personnel Mines[156] (Figure 78).

The admins frequently share memes that include common phrases from MilVet culture or inside jokes like the "hooah" soldier Carl. Foreign entities also post news and information relevant to MilVets, such as changes in military benefits or "how-to" guides on using the VA. These positive memes commonly link to the sales of MilVet-themed merchandise through opaque third-party websites.

(text continued on page 77)


Brothers Who Fought Without America's Support
Brothers Who Returned
THANK YOU!
NEVER KNOW HIM, KEEP HIS FAMILY IN YOUR PRAYERS, HIS MOM NEEDS US TO LIFT HER UP, HUGS YOUR BABIES TIGHTER TODAY, SHE GAVE UP HER SON FOR OUR FREEDOM.
CAN THEY GET AN AMEN?
WERE VIETNAM NURSES HEROES?
Like
Comment
Share
Most Relevant
Write a comment...

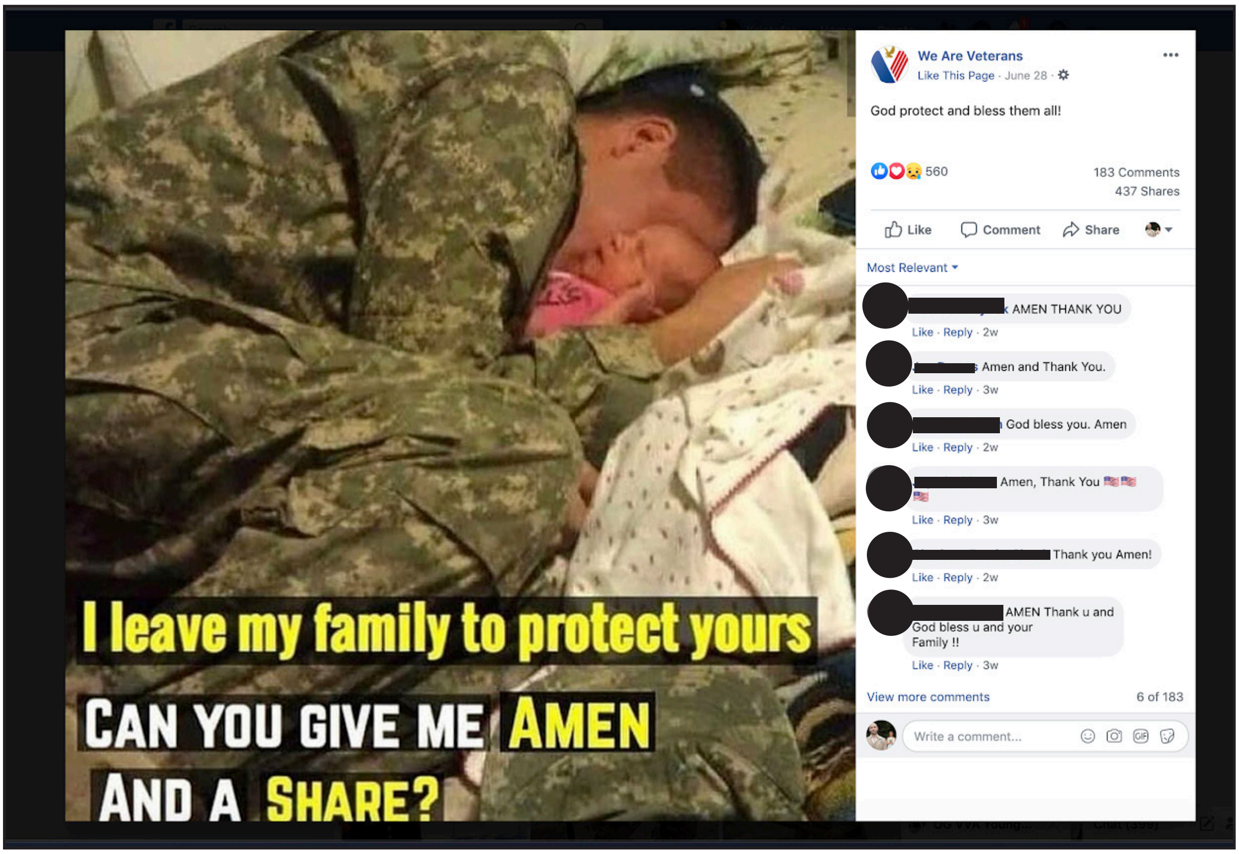
Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · July 11

2.3K
653 Comments
723 Shares

[redacted] Yes they should there are many of us who would not be here if they were not there I hope and pray for all of them
Like · Reply · 1w · 10

[redacted] got to see first hand how great they, a long overdue thank you taking great care of us
Like · Reply · 6d

Figure 75



We Are Veterans
Like This Page · June 28

God protect and bless them all!

560
183 Comments
437 Shares

[redacted] AMEN THANK YOU
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Amen and Thank You.
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted] God bless you. Amen
Like · Reply · 2w

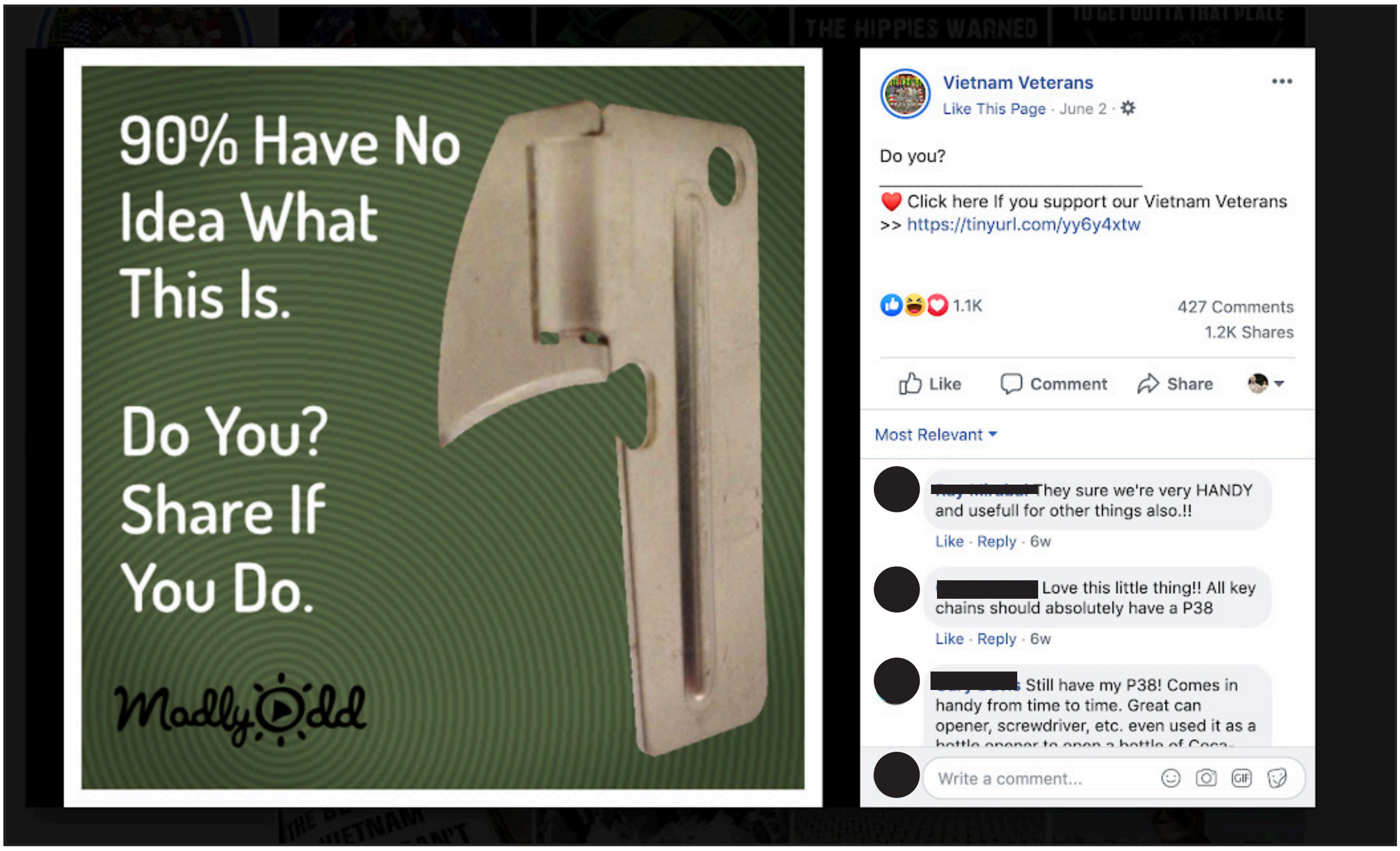
[redacted] Amen, Thank You 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted] Thank you Amen!
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] AMEN Thank u and God bless u and your Family !!
Like · Reply · 3w

View more comments 6 of 183

Figure 76



Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · June 2 ·

Do you?

❤️ Click here If you support our Vietnam Veterans >> https://tinyurl.com/yy6y4xtw

1.1K · 427 Comments · 1.2K Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

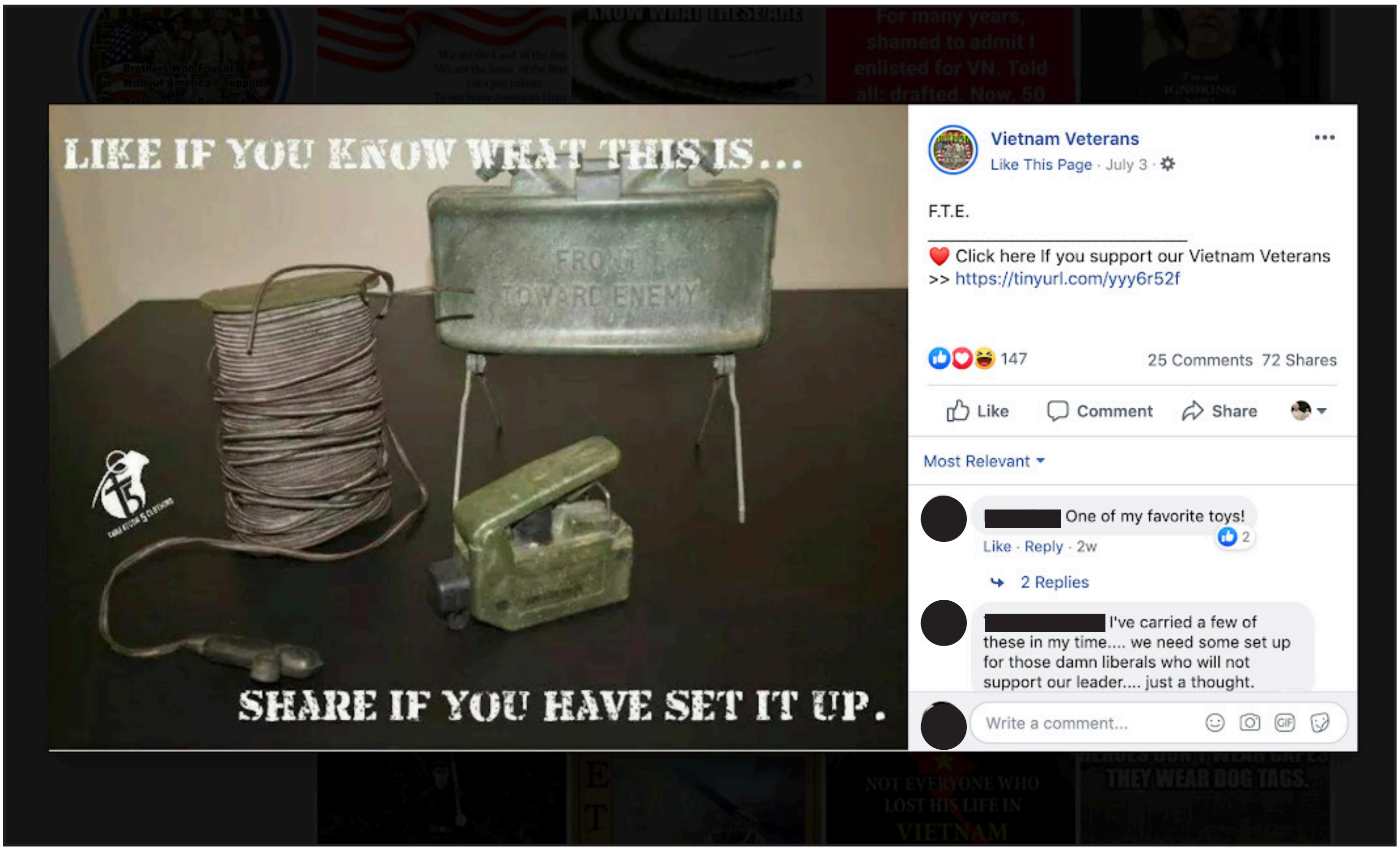
[redacted] They sure we're very HANDY and usefull for other things also.!!
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] Love this little thing!! All key chains should absolutely have a P38
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] Still have my P38! Comes in handy from time to time. Great can opener, screwdriver, etc. even used it as a bottle opener to open a bottle of Coca-

Write a comment...

Figure 77: "Vietnam Veterans" uses a link-shortener to disguise links to their store in their posts.


LIKE IF YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS...
FRONT TOWARD ENEMY
SHARE IF YOU HAVE SET IT UP.

Vietnam Veterans
Like This Page · July 3 ·

F.T.E.

❤️ Click here If you support our Vietnam Veterans >> https://tinyurl.com/yyy6r52f

147 · 25 Comments 72 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

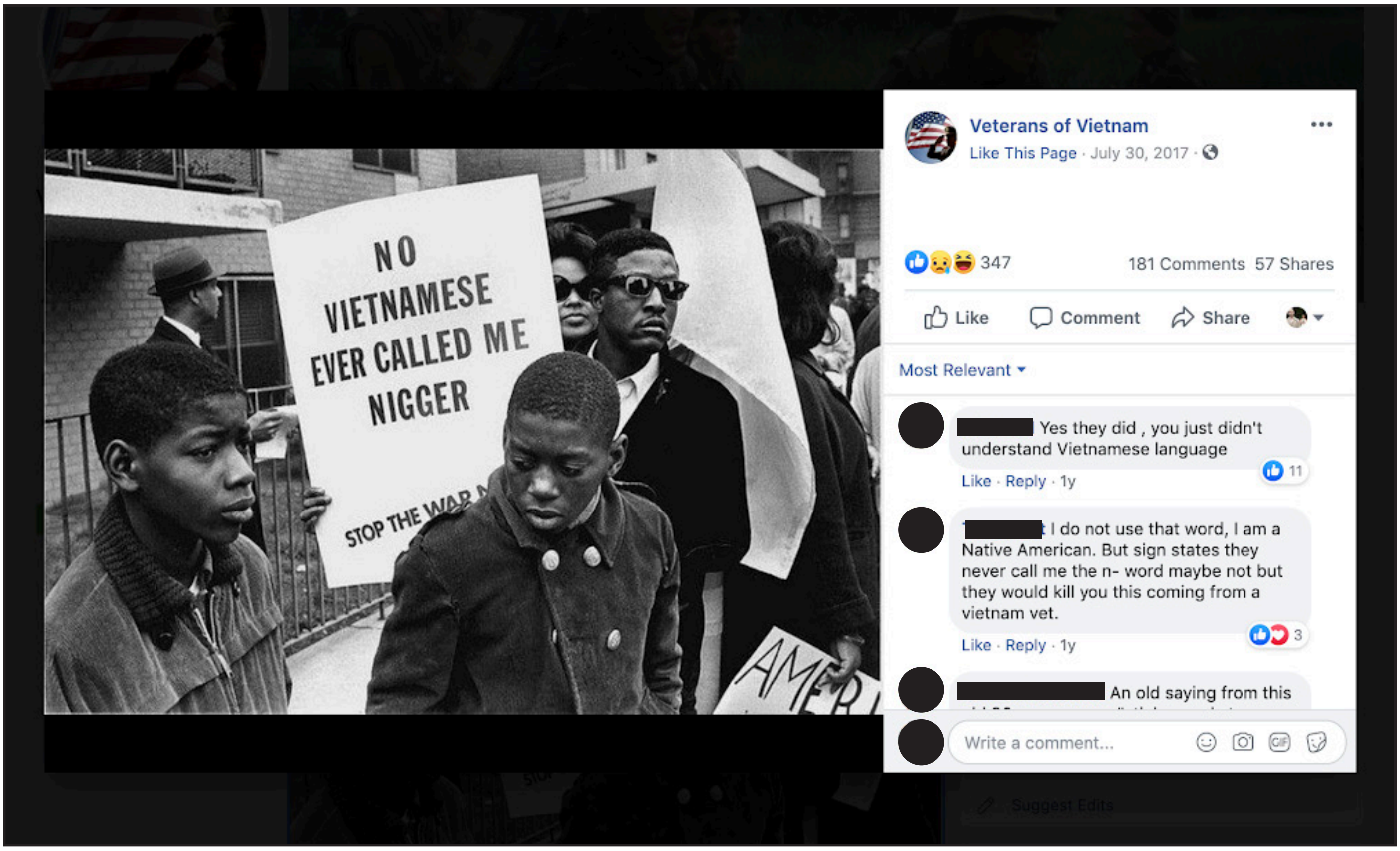
[redacted] One of my favorite toys!
Like · Reply · 2w · 2

2 Replies

[redacted] I've carried a few of these in my time.... we need some set up for those damn liberals who will not support our leader.... just a thought.

Write a comment...

Figure 78



Veterans of Vietnam
Like This Page · July 30, 2017 ·

347 181 Comments 57 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Yes they did , you just didn't understand Vietnamese language
Like · Reply · 1y 11

[redacted] I do not use that word, I am a Native American. But sign states they never call me the n- word maybe not but they would kill you this coming from a vietnam vet.
Like · Reply · 1y 3

[redacted] An old saying from this

Write a comment...

Figure 79: Divisive content can include racially inflammatory phrases.

(text continued from page 74)

Divisive Content

Divisive content is developed with two target audiences in mind: The first target audience consists of those who sympathize with the content's message and are likely to share it, spreading it across social-media platforms. The second target audience, on the other hand, consists of those who will reject the message and respond heatedly and negatively toward the first target audience. The primary purpose of these foreign accounts is to create conflict and deepen divisions among Americans (Figure 79).

Categories of MilVet Content

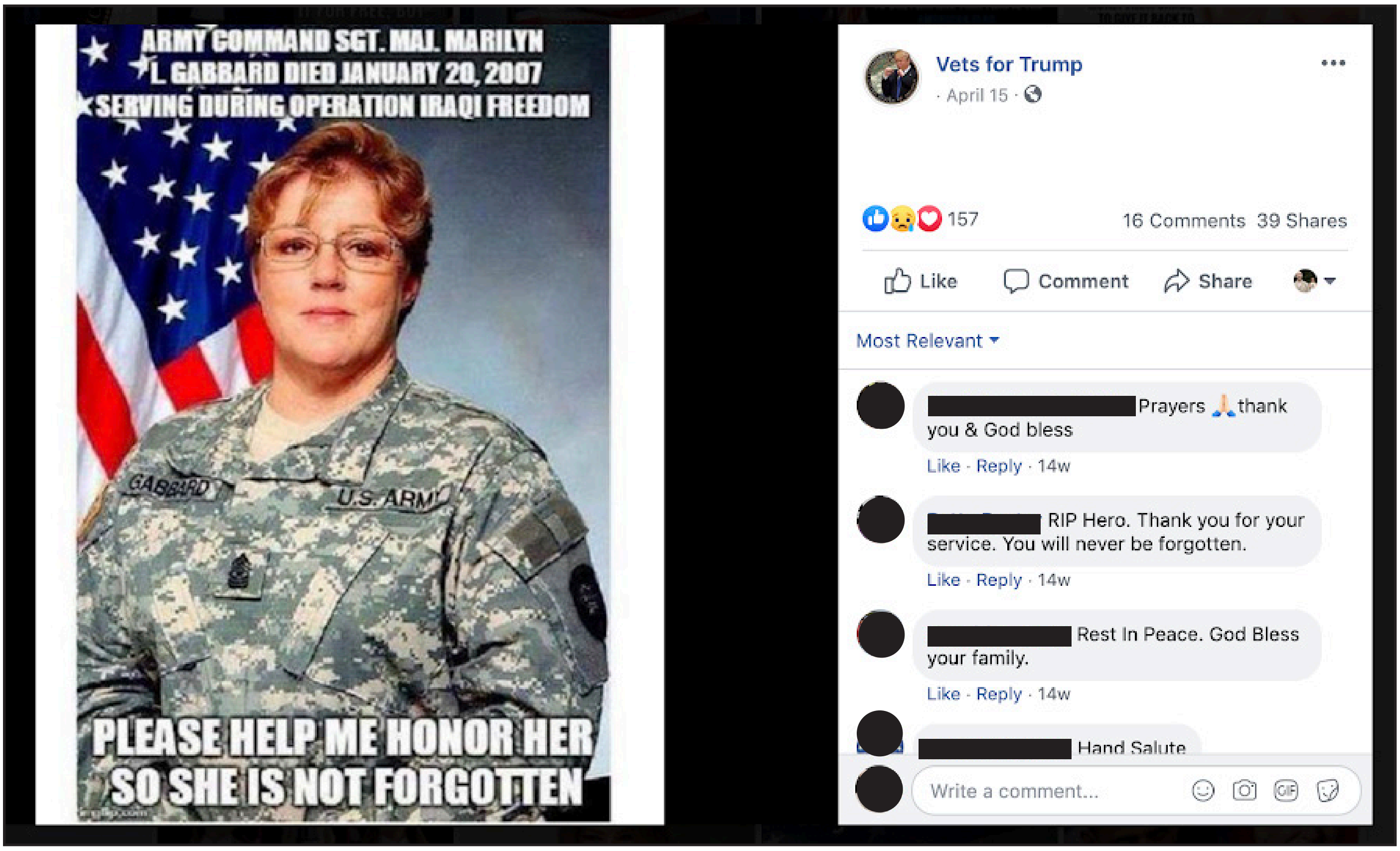
Historical photographs

Malignant entities such as "Veterans of Vietnam" frequently harvest publicly available authentic photographs from Vietnam veterans, veteran advocates, VSOs, news publications, and historians — and then post them as original content on their Facebook page. They are often posted without being made into a meme, and with a caption describing what is in the image.[157]

This type of content harvesting is made easier when these entities control private Facebook groups, such as the "Veterans of Vietnam" Facebook page's American Veterans of Vietnam Facebook group,[158] where these photos are both solicited and organically shared among a community of real Vietnam veterans.

It can sometimes be difficult, however, to tell if Facebook users that regularly post and share within these foreign-controlled groups are authentic, or if some of the individual accounts are wholly or in part under the control of foreign elements who are engaging in predatory audience-building behavior in coordination with the group's and affiliated page's admins. Suspicious behavior from individual accounts within the groups can include: apparent non-veterans constantly posting MilVet-related content; content being shared outside of daytime-hours within the US; content consistently posted quickly in batches and only around the same time each day; posts that have awkward or inconsistent use of punctuation; use of content that is identical to, or modified from, confirmed Russian disinformation sources; and content that is repetitively posted by the same accounts as if it were new.

(text continued on page 80)


ARMY COMMAND SGT. MAJ. MARILYN L GABBARD DIED JANUARY 20, 2007 SERVING DURING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM
GABBARD
U.S. ARMY
PLEASE HELP ME HONOR HER SO SHE IS NOT FORGOTTEN

Vets for Trump
· April 15 ·

157 16 Comments 39 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Prayers 🙏 thank you & God bless
Like · Reply · 14w

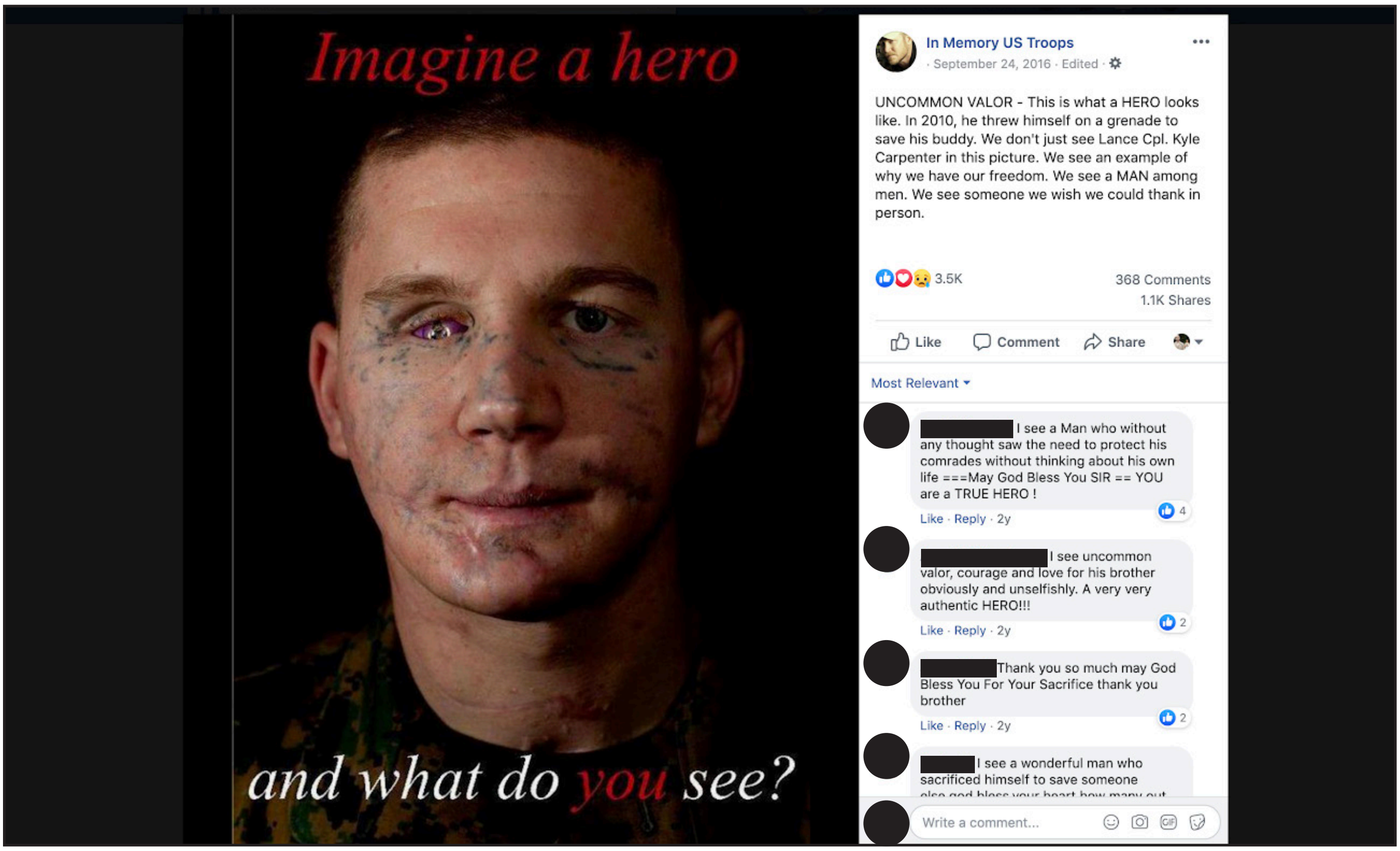
[redacted] RIP Hero. Thank you for your service. You will never be forgotten.
Like · Reply · 14w

[redacted] Rest In Peace. God Bless your family.
Like · Reply · 14w

[redacted] Hand Salute

Write a comment...

Figure 80



In Memory US Troops
· September 24, 2016 · Edited ·

UNCOMMON VALOR - This is what a HERO looks like. In 2010, he threw himself on a grenade to save his buddy. We don't just see Lance Cpl. Kyle Carpenter in this picture. We see an example of why we have our freedom. We see a MAN among men. We see someone we wish we could thank in person.

3.5K 368 Comments 1.1K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] I see a Man who without any thought saw the need to protect his comrades without thinking about his own life ===May God Bless You SIR == YOU are a TRUE HERO !
4
Like · Reply · 2y

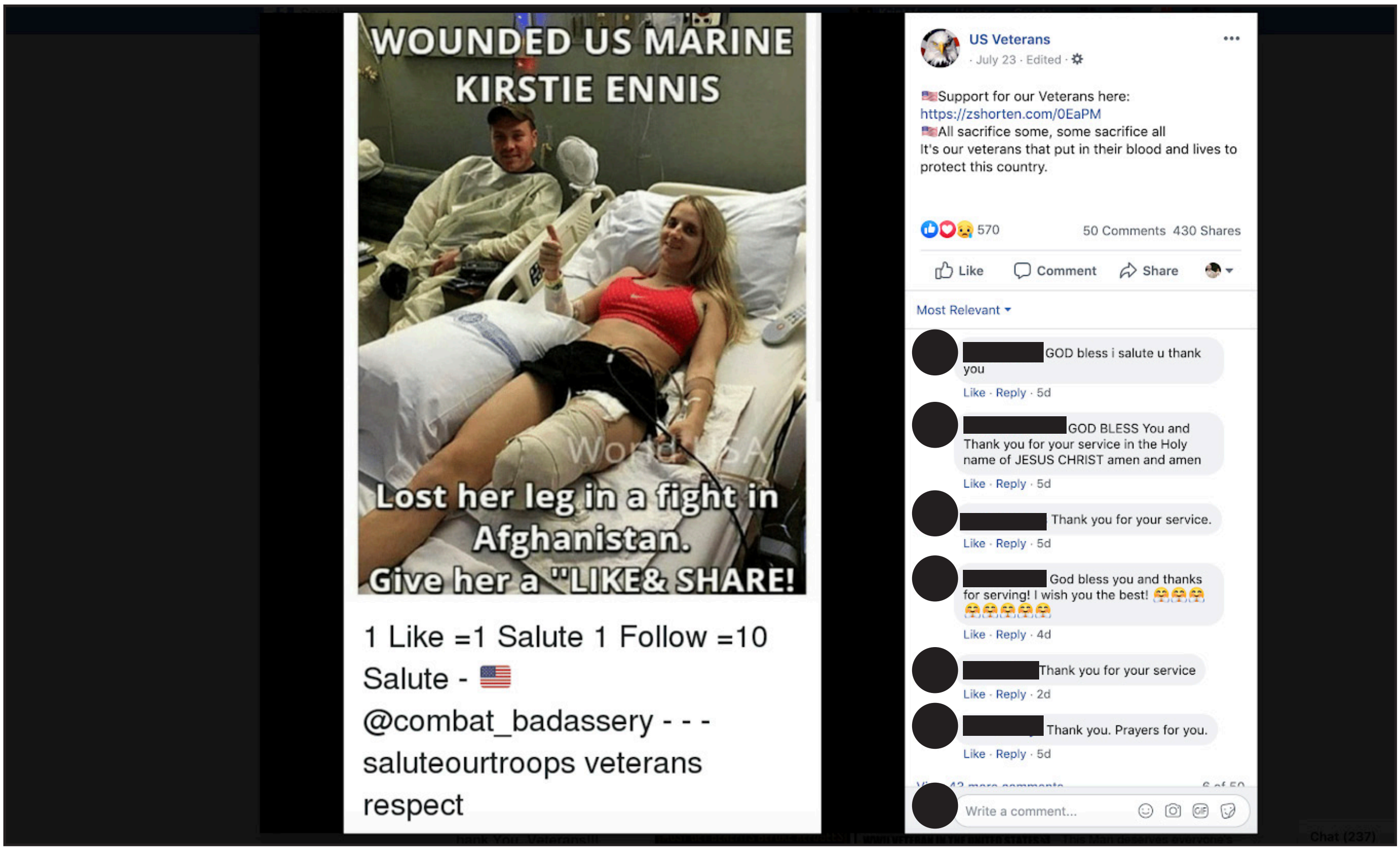
[redacted] I see uncommon valor, courage and love for his brother obviously and unselfishly. A very very authentic HERO!!!
2
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Thank you so much may God Bless You For Your Sacrifice thank you brother
2
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] I see a wonderful man who sacrificed himself to save someone else god bless your heart how many out

Write a comment...

Figure 81



1 Like =1 Salute 1 Follow =10 Salute - 🇺🇸 @combat_badassery - - - saluteourtroops veterans respect

US Veterans
· July 23 · Edited ·

🇺🇸Support for our Veterans here:
https://zshorten.com/0EaPM
🇺🇸All sacrifice some, some sacrifice all
It's our veterans that put in their blood and lives to protect this country.

570 50 Comments 430 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

[redacted] [redacted] GOD bless i salute u thank you
Like · Reply · 5d

[redacted] [redacted] GOD BLESS You and Thank you for your service in the Holy name of JESUS CHRIST amen and amen
Like · Reply · 5d

[redacted] [redacted] Thank you for your service.
Like · Reply · 5d

[redacted] [redacted] God bless you and thanks for serving! I wish you the best! 😤😤😤😤😤😤😤😤
Like · Reply · 4d

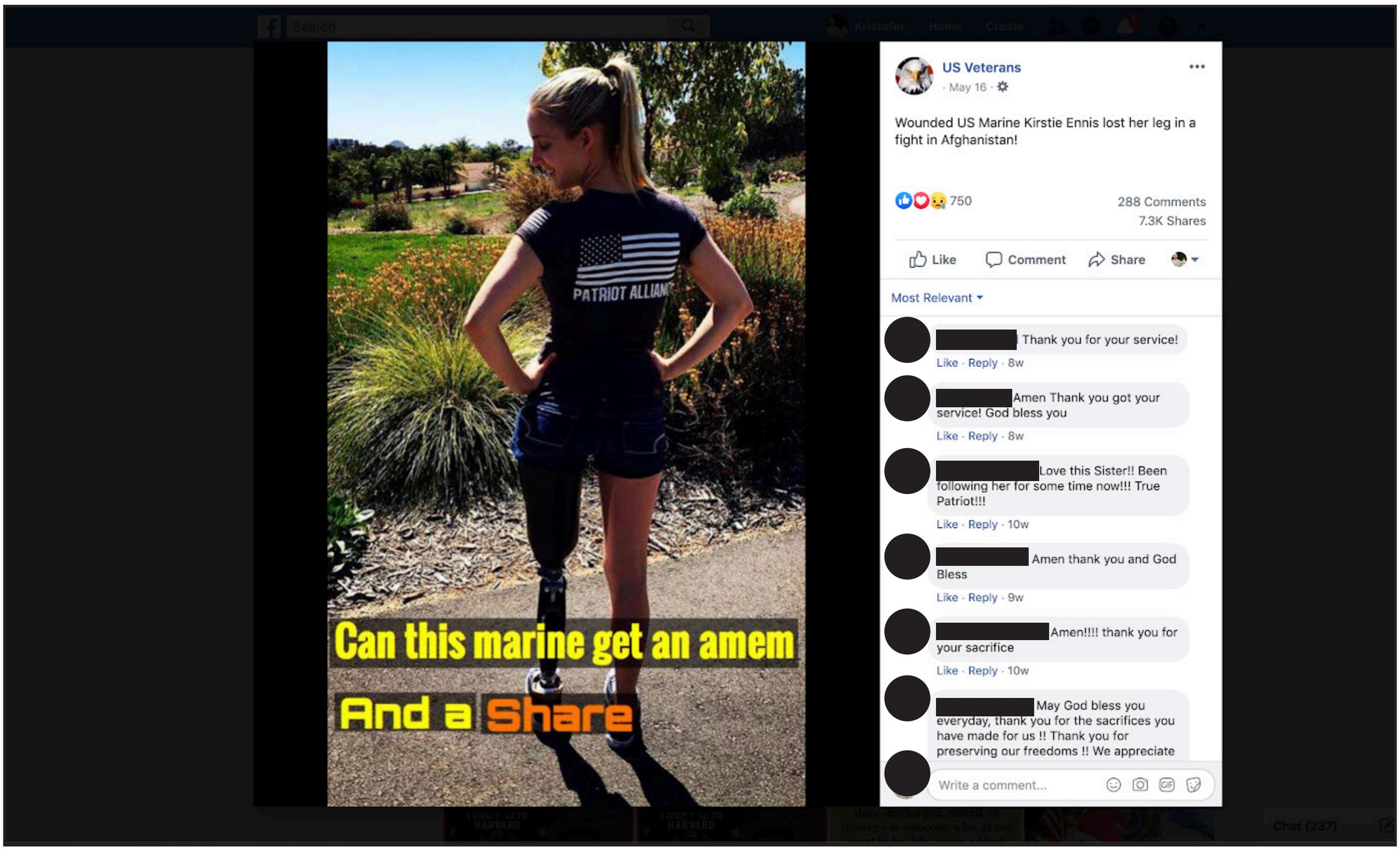
[redacted] [redacted] Thank you for your service
Like · Reply · 2d

[redacted] [redacted] Thank you. Prayers for you.
Like · Reply · 5d

Vi 42 more comments 6 of 50

[redacted] Write a comment...

Figure 82: This meme featuring Kirstie Ennis in a hospital bed is watermarked with "World USA," and includes the handle @combat_badassery. These markings allow admins to track other social-media accounts that are reposting the meme as original content.



US Veterans
· May 16 ·

Wounded US Marine Kirstie Ennis lost her leg in a fight in Afghanistan!

750 288 Comments 7.3K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

[redacted] [redacted] Thank you for your service!
Like · Reply · 8w

[redacted] [redacted] Amen Thank you got your service! God bless you
Like · Reply · 8w

[redacted] [redacted] Love this Sister!! Been following her for some time now!!! True Patriot!!!
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] [redacted] Amen thank you and God Bless
Like · Reply · 9w

[redacted] [redacted] Amen!!!! thank you for your sacrifice
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] [redacted] May God bless you everyday, thank you for the sacrifices you have made for us !! Thank you for preserving our freedoms !! We appreciate

[redacted] Write a comment...

Figure 83: There are hundreds of MilVet and law-enforcement memes that feature distinctive yellow and orange text like this one, which suggests a common original source or repository of this content. Memes with this style of text frequently include spelling and grammatical errors indicative of a non-native English speaker.

(text continued from page 77)

To be clear, these are not definitive signs of inauthentic accounts — but activity that raises suspicions for investigators.

Use of Prominent Servicemembers

Army Sergeant Major Marilyn Gabbard (Figure 80), who was killed in Iraq in 2007, is a favorite of these foreign admins. Marine Corporal Aaron Mankin (Figure 71), Marine Lance Corporal Kyle Carpenter (Figure 81), and Marine Sergeant Kirstie Ennis (Figures 82 and 83), all severely wounded in post-9/11 wars, have become some of the most frequent subjects of memes created and used by foreign admins to build an audience for their fraudulent social-media pages and accounts.

Marilyn Gabbard

Ms. Gabbard was the first woman promoted to the rank of command sergeant major in the Iowa National Guard and was a trailblazer for young enlisted women in the military.[159] She was an active member of the community of military and veterans service organizations, having served as the national secretary for the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, as well as president of the Enlisted Association of the Iowa National Guard, and as president of the Iowa Sergeants Major Association.[160] She was killed in Iraq in 2007 when her helicopter crashed.

Aaron Mankin

Marine Corporal Aaron Mankin (Figure 71), Marine Lance Corporal Kyle Carpenter (Figure 81), and Marine Sergeant Kirstie Ennis (Figures 82 and 83), all severely wounded in post-9/11 wars, have become some of the most frequent subjects of memes created and used by foreign admins to build an audience for their fraudulent social-media pages and accounts. Mr. Mankin was serving as a combat correspondent in Iraq in 2005 when his vehicle was hit by an IED, killing six men.[161] The resulting burns scarred most of his body, but after being medically retired, he has become a tireless advocate for post-9/11 veterans and was recognized in 2010 among *People* magazine's "Heroes of the Year."[162]

Kyle Carpenter

In 2010, as his unit was being ambushed by the Taliban, a grenade was thrown into a sandbagged defensive position that Mr. Carpenter and a fellow Marine were occupying. Mr. Carpenter threw his body onto the grenade just before it exploded, absorbing most of the shock and shrapnel — saving the lives of his colleagues in a selfless act of bravery. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.[163]

Kirstie Ennis

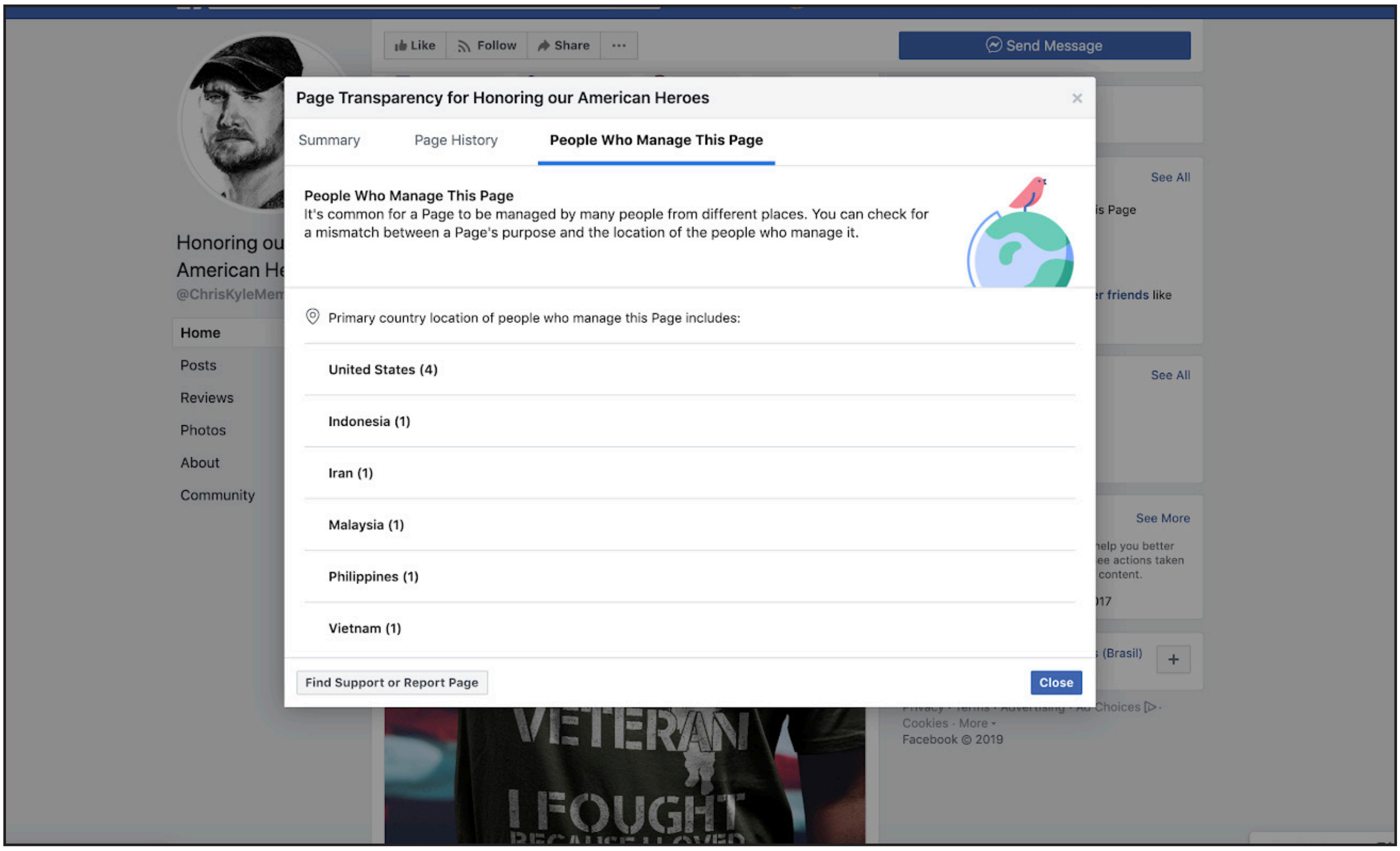
Ms. Ennis was serving as a Marine in Afghanistan in 2012 when she was injured in a helicopter crash that left her with a traumatic brain injury, spinal trauma, and an amputation of the leg above the knee, among other injuries.[164] Ms. Ennis's road to recovery has been thoroughly documented in both social media and the press, and she has inspired countless people as she climbed Mount Everest and continues to engage in demanding physical activities without limitation. She was the first-ever war veteran to be featured in *Sports Illustrated's* "Body Issue."[165]

Each of these stories of bravery, sacrifice, and recovery has been callously co-opted by foreign admins to take advantage of the sympathies of Americans and deceive them for nefarious online purposes.

Chris Kyle

Chris Kyle is a particularly outrageous case of co-opting prominent veterans to delude Americans because memorial pages based on him were specifically targeted by Russian ads, and there are a variety of pages dedicated to him with foreign admins — including admins located in Iran and Pakistan (Figures 84-89).

(text continued on page 87)



Page Transparency for Honoring our American Heroes

Summary | Page History | People Who Manage This Page

People Who Manage This Page

It's common for a Page to be managed by many people from different places. You can check for a mismatch between a Page's purpose and the location of the people who manage it.

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

United States (4)

Indonesia (1)

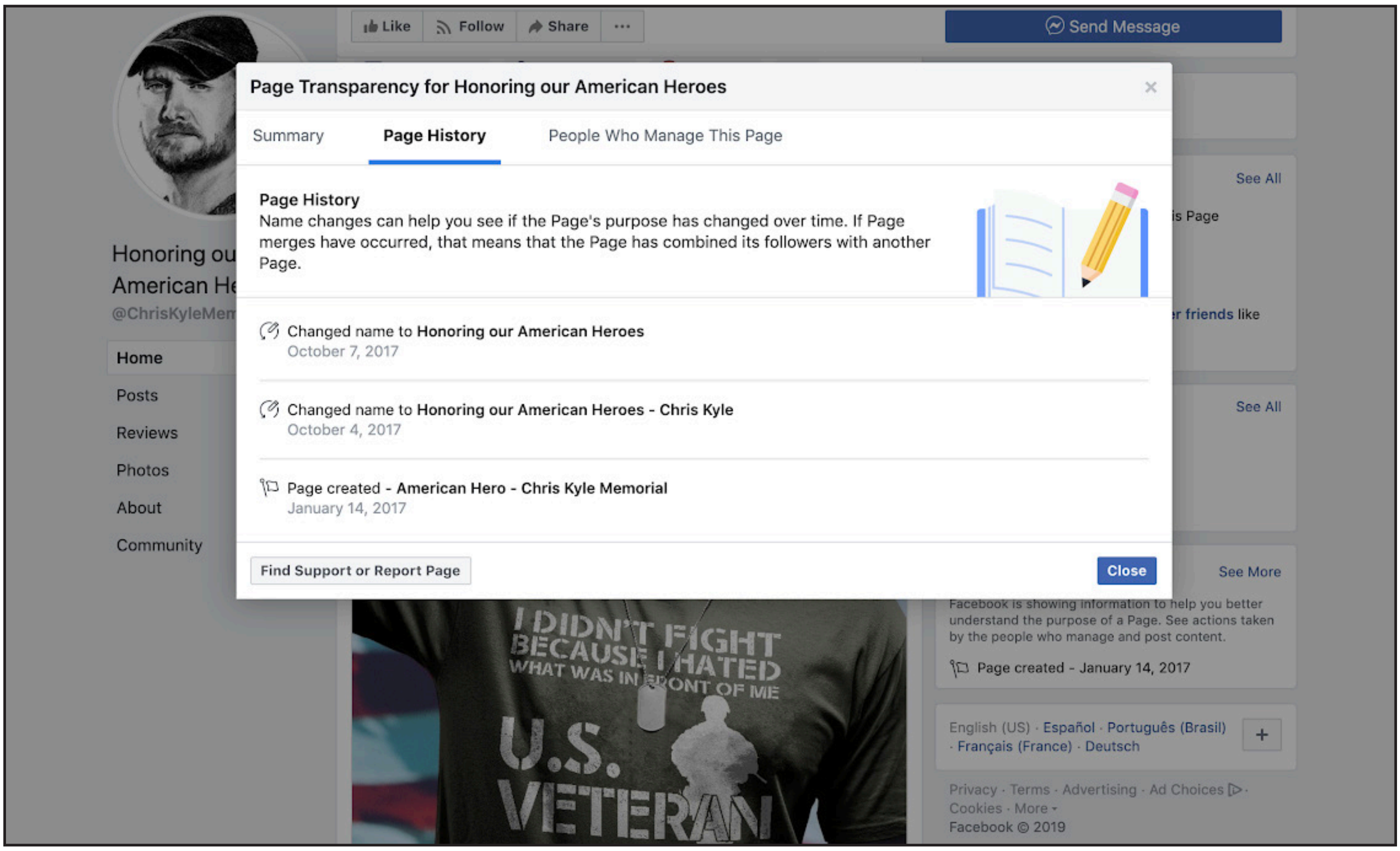
Iran (1)

Malaysia (1)

Philippines (1)

Vietnam (1)

Figure 84: The Facebook page "Honoring our American Heroes" has four admins in the US and five others in different countries.


Like
Follow
Share
Send Message
Honoring ou
American He
@ChrisKyleMem
Home
Posts
Reviews
Photos
About
Community
See All
See All
See More
Find Support or Report Page
Close
English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch
Privacy · Terms · Advertising · Ad Choices · Cookies · More ·
Facebook © 2019

Page Transparency for Honoring our American Heroes

Summary | Page History | People Who Manage This Page

Page History

Name changes can help you see if the Page's purpose has changed over time. If Page merges have occurred, that means that the Page has combined its followers with another Page.

Changed name to **Honoring our American Heroes**
October 7, 2017

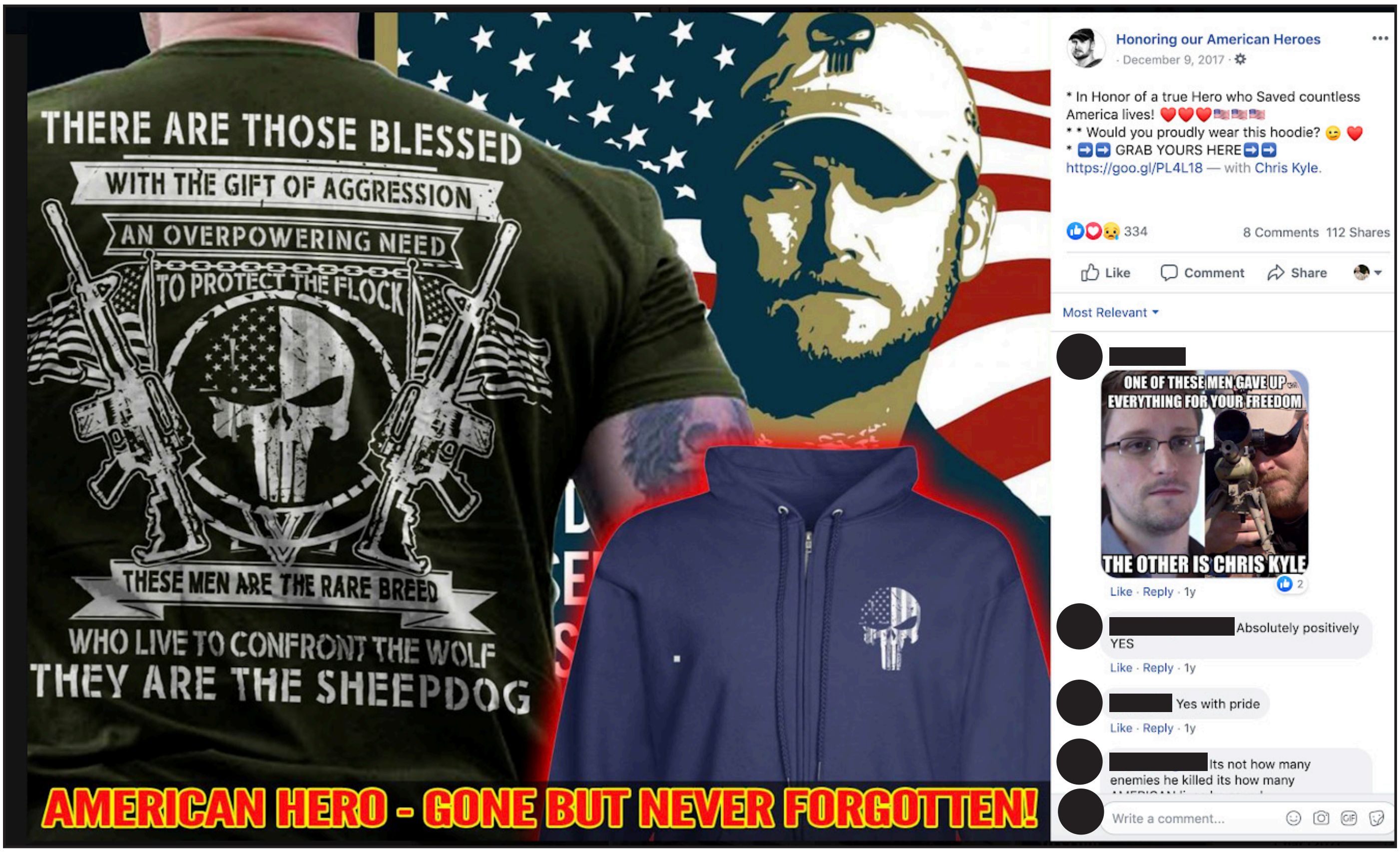
Changed name to **Honoring our American Heroes - Chris Kyle**
October 4, 2017

Page created - **American Hero - Chris Kyle Memorial**
January 14, 2017

Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content.

Page created - January 14, 2017

Figure 85: This page has changed names twice, though its primary focus remains on Chris Kyle.


THERE ARE THOSE BLESSED
WITH THE GIFT OF AGGRESSION
AN OVERPOWERING NEED
TO PROTECT THE FLOCK
THESE MEN ARE THE RARE BREED
WHO LIVE TO CONFRONT THE WOLF
THEY ARE THE SHEEPDOG
AMERICAN HERO - GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN!
ONE OF THESE MEN GAVE UP EVERYTHING FOR YOUR FREEDOM
THE OTHER IS CHRIS KYLE

Honoring our American Heroes
· December 9, 2017 ·

* In Honor of a true Hero who Saved countless America lives! ❤️❤️❤️🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸
* * Would you proudly wear this hoodie? 😉 ❤️
* ➡️➡️ GRAB YOURS HERE➡️➡️
https://goo.gl/PL4L18 — with Chris Kyle.

334 · 8 Comments · 112 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted]
Like · Reply · 1y · 2

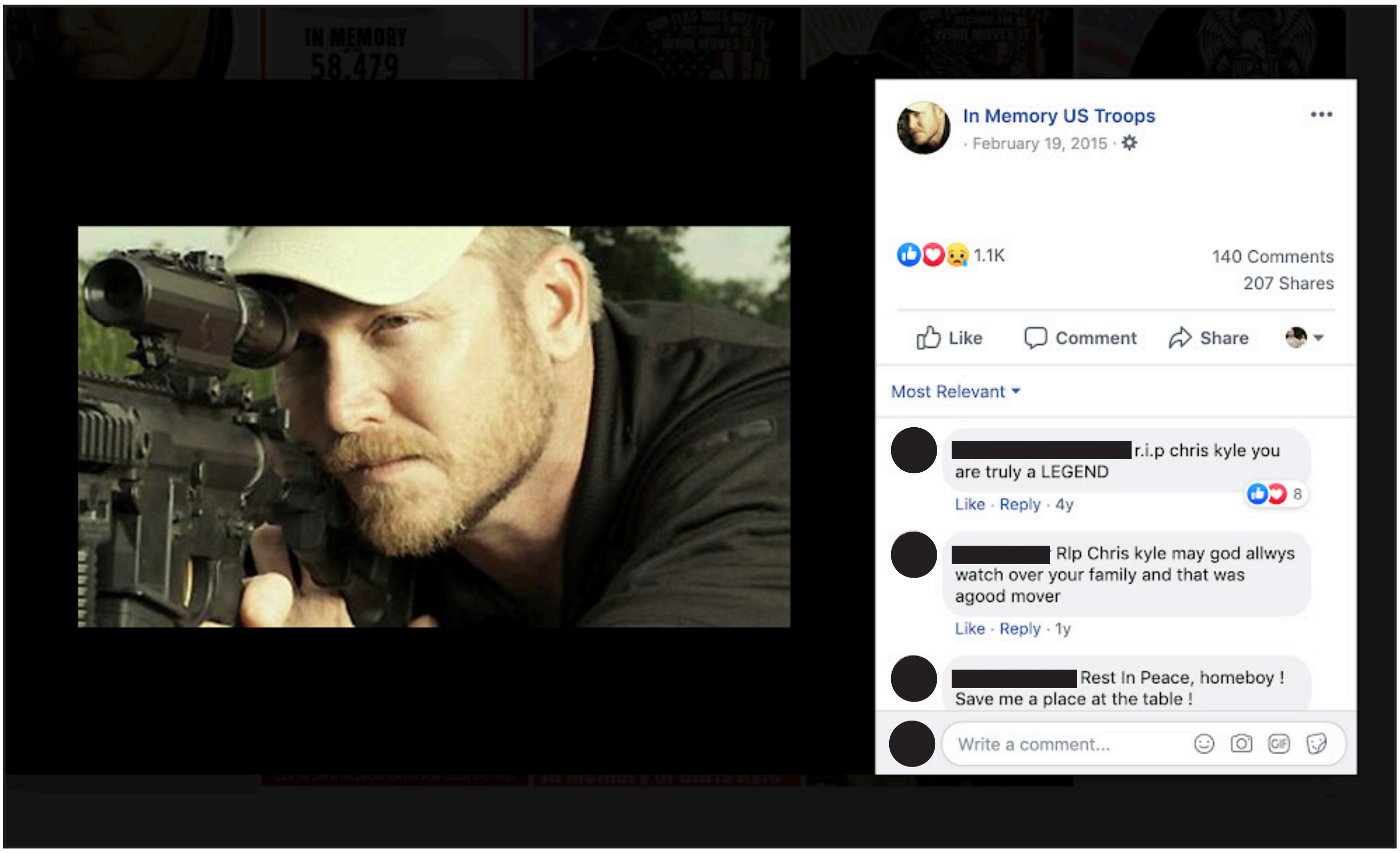
[redacted] Absolutely positively YES
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Yes with pride
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Its not how many enemies he killed its how many

Write a comment...

Figure 86: Chris Kyle is often exploited by pages with foreign admins to sell merchandise.



In Memory US Troops
· February 19, 2015 ·

1.1K · 140 Comments · 207 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

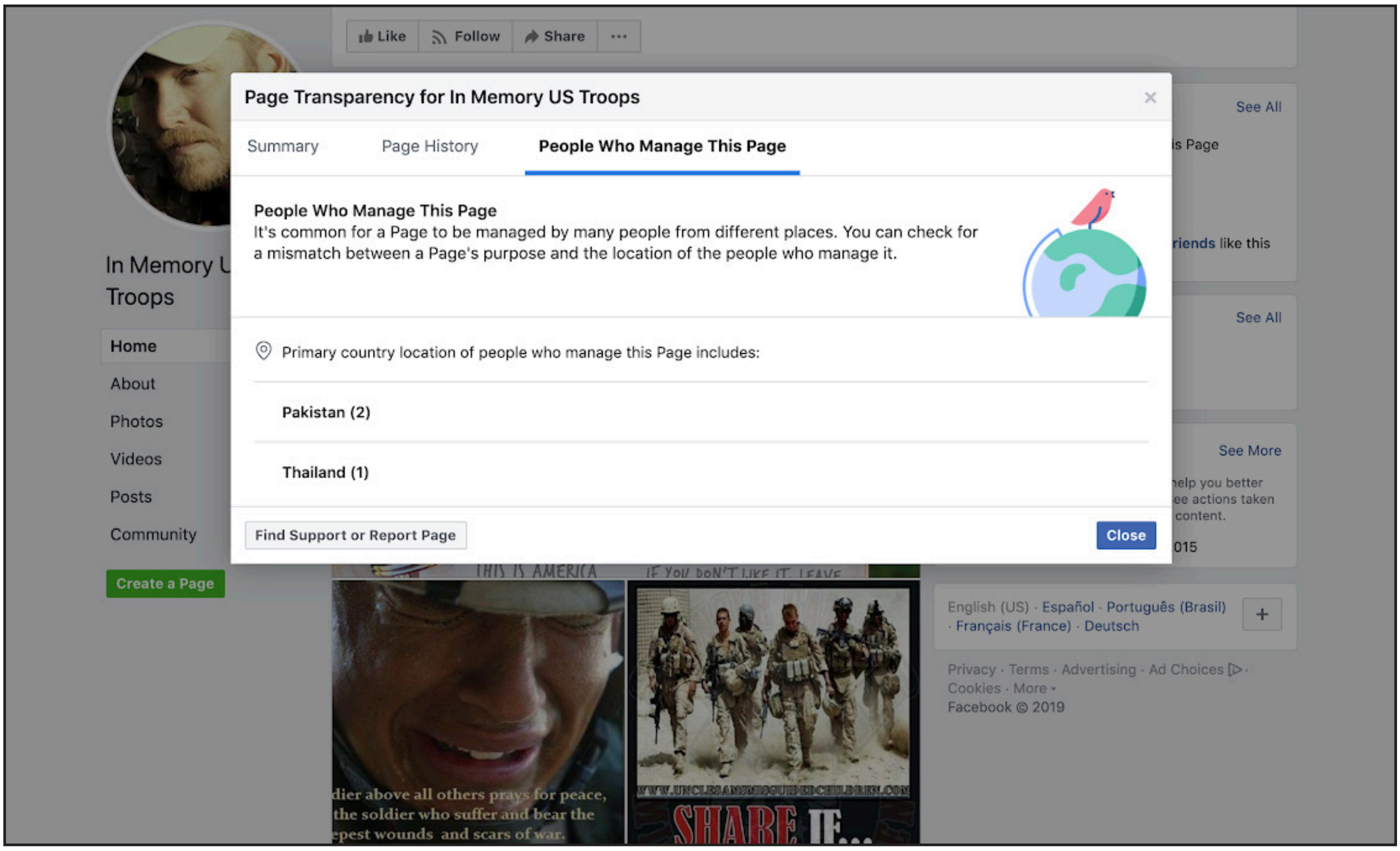
[redacted] r.i.p chris kyle you are truly a LEGEND
Like · Reply · 4y · 8

[redacted] Rlp Chris kyle may god allwys watch over your family and that was agood mover
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Rest In Peace, homeboy ! Save me a place at the table !

Write a comment...

Figure 87: Chris Kyle's name and photos are used frequently by several pages with foreign admins. While the "Honoring our American Heroes" page (above) has admins in the US, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam — the admins of this page, "In Memory US Troops," are based in Pakistan and Thailand.



Page Transparency for In Memory US Troops

Summary | Page History | **People Who Manage This Page**

People Who Manage This Page
It's common for a Page to be managed by many people from different places. You can check for a mismatch between a Page's purpose and the location of the people who manage it.

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

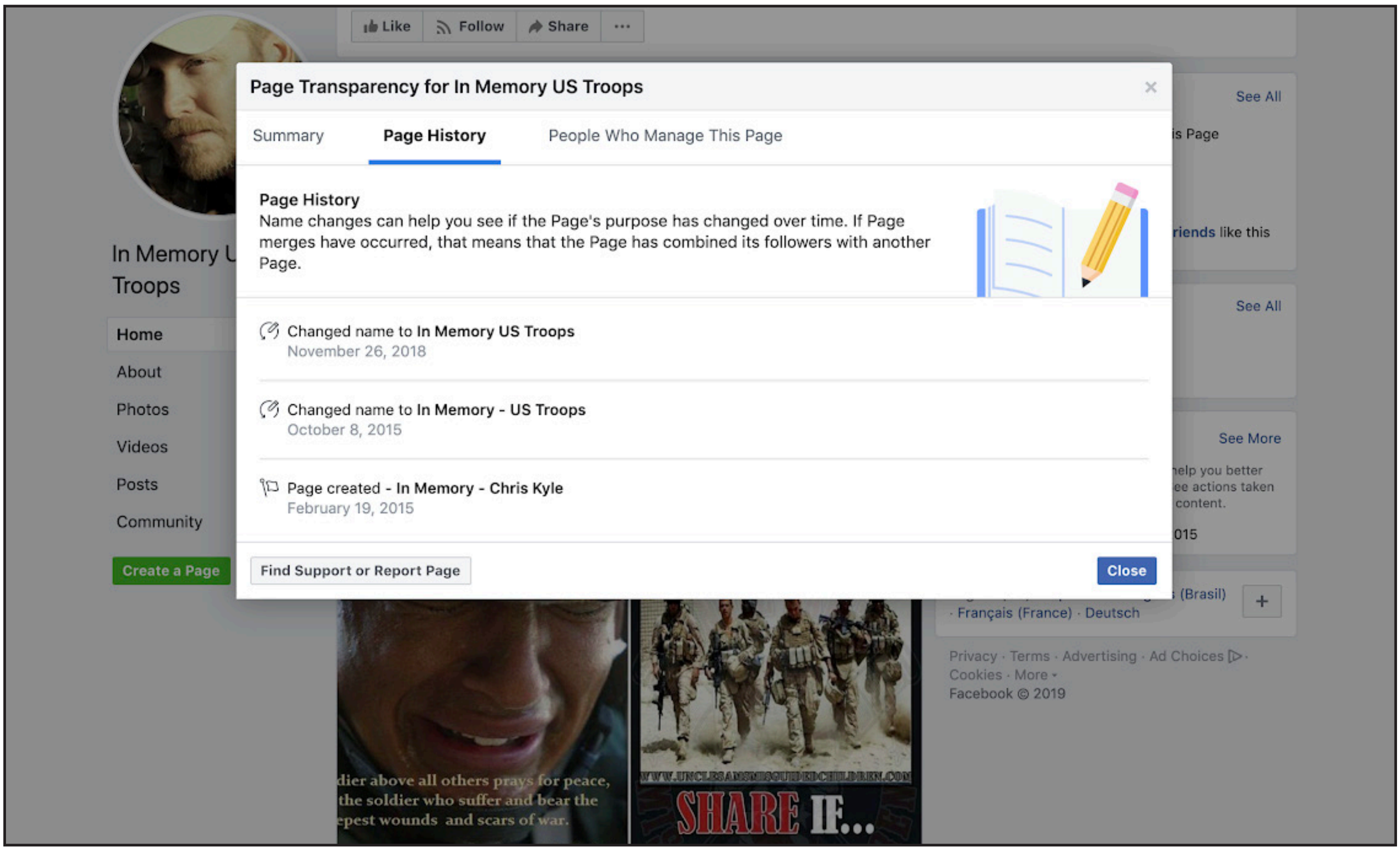
Pakistan (2)

Thailand (1)

Find Support or Report Page | Close

Like
Follow
Share
In Memory US Troops
Home
About
Photos
Videos
Posts
Community
Create a Page
See All
See More
English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch
Privacy · Terms · Advertising · Ad Choices · Cookies · More
Facebook © 2019
SHARE IF...

Figure 88



Page Transparency for In Memory US Troops

Summary | **Page History** | People Who Manage This Page

Page History
Name changes can help you see if the Page's purpose has changed over time. If Page merges have occurred, that means that the Page has combined its followers with another Page.

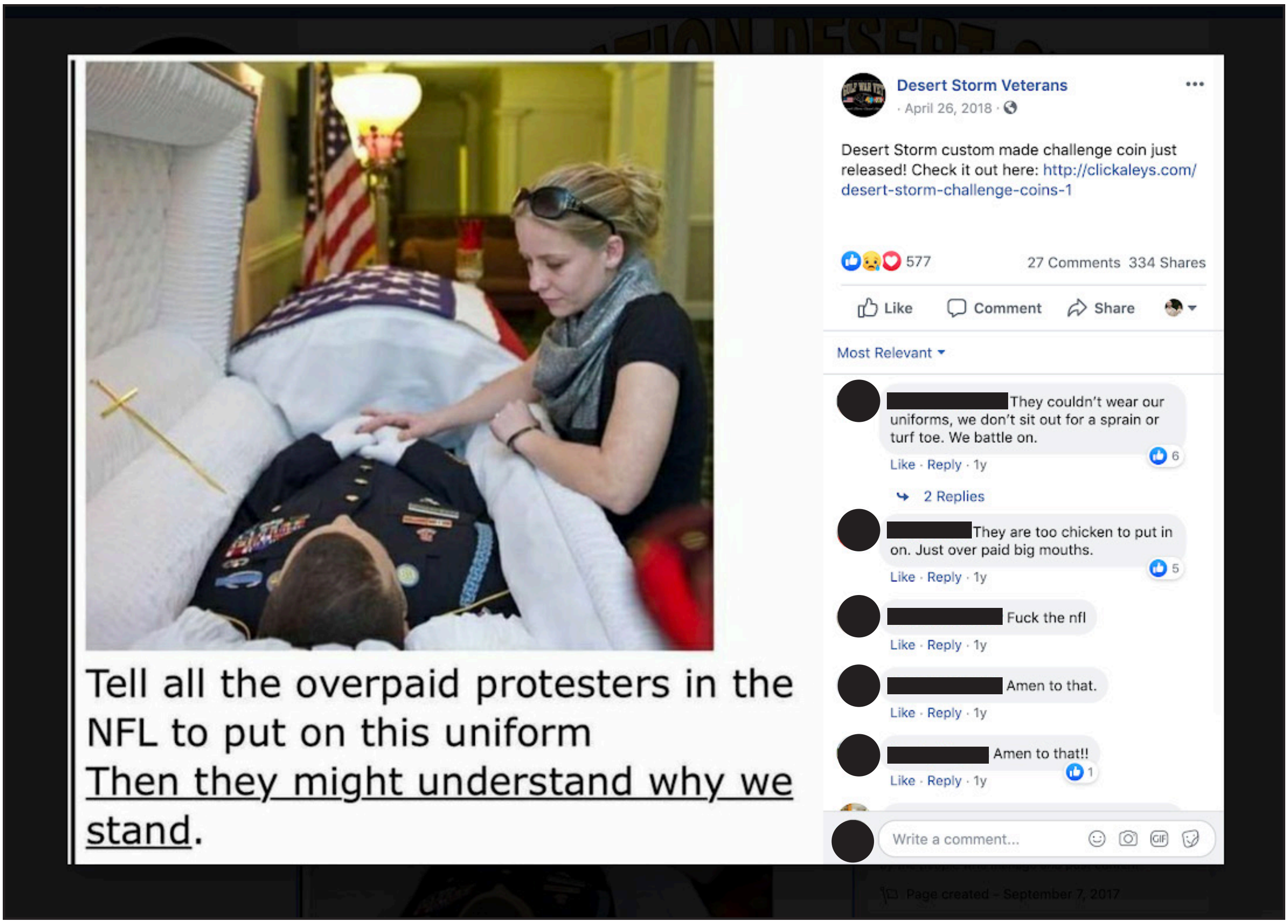
Changed name to **In Memory US Troops**
November 26, 2018

Changed name to **In Memory - US Troops**
October 8, 2015

Page created - **In Memory - Chris Kyle**
February 19, 2015

Find Support or Report Page | Close

Figure 89


Tell all the overpaid protesters in the NFL to put on this uniform
Then they might understand why we stand.

Desert Storm Veterans
· April 26, 2018 ·

Desert Storm custom made challenge coin just released! Check it out here: http://clickaleys.com/desert-storm-challenge-coins-1

577 27 Comments 334 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] They couldn't wear our uniforms, we don't sit out for a sprain or turf toe. We battle on. 6
Like · Reply · 1y
2 Replies

[redacted] They are too chicken to put in on. Just over paid big mouths. 5
Like · Reply · 1y

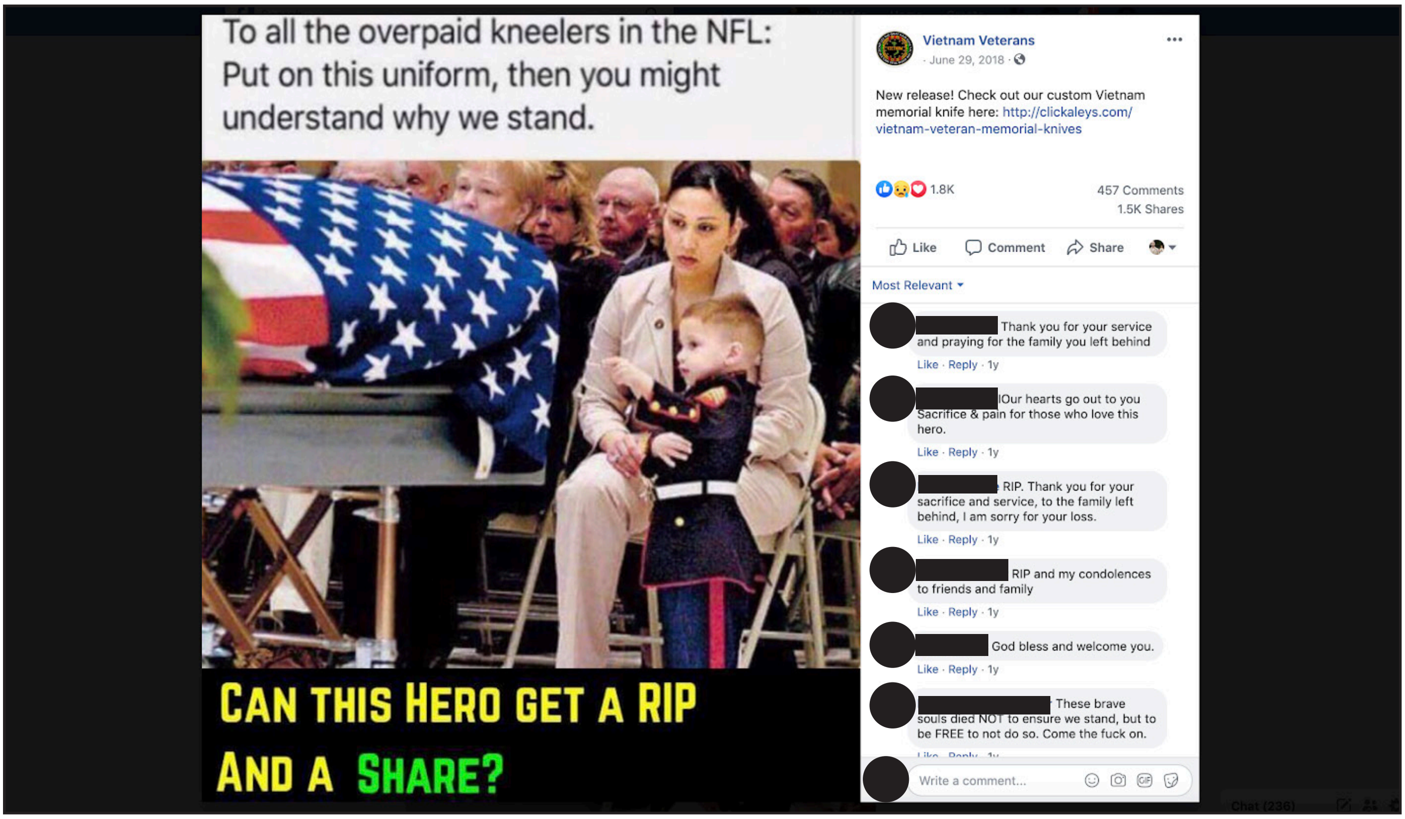
[redacted] Fuck the nfl
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen to that.
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen to that!! 1
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 90: The Gold Star wife featured in this screenshot has appealed to the public to stop using this photo as a political meme. Unfortunately, this request has no impact on the dozens of foreign admins who have posted this meme on their fraudulent pages or the thousands who have shared it.


To all the overpaid kneelers in the NFL: Put on this uniform, then you might understand why we stand.
CAN THIS HERO GET A RIP AND A SHARE?

Vietnam Veterans
· June 29, 2018 ·

New release! Check out our custom Vietnam memorial knife here: http://clickaleys.com/vietnam-veteran-memorial-knives

1.8K 457 Comments 1.5K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Thank you for your service and praying for the family you left behind
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Our hearts go out to you Sacrifice & pain for those who love this hero.
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] RIP. Thank you for your sacrifice and service, to the family left behind, I am sorry for your loss.
Like · Reply · 1y

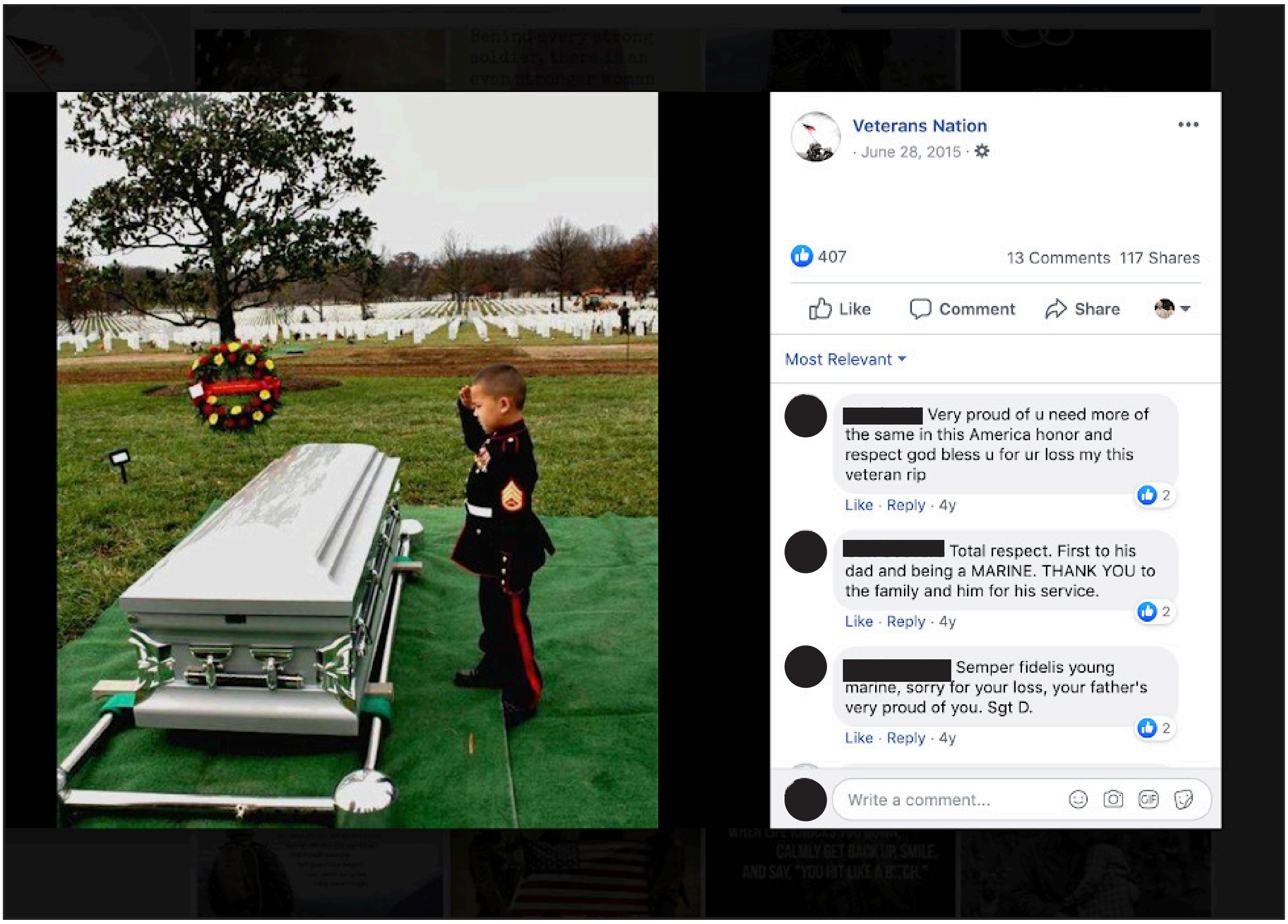
[redacted] RIP and my condolences to friends and family
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] God bless and welcome you.
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] These brave souls died NOT to ensure we stand, but to be FREE to not do so. Come the fuck on.
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 91: This Gold Star wife and son are being exploited by the Facebook page "Vietnam Veterans" to sell knives.



Veterans Nation
· June 28, 2015 ·

407 13 Comments 117 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

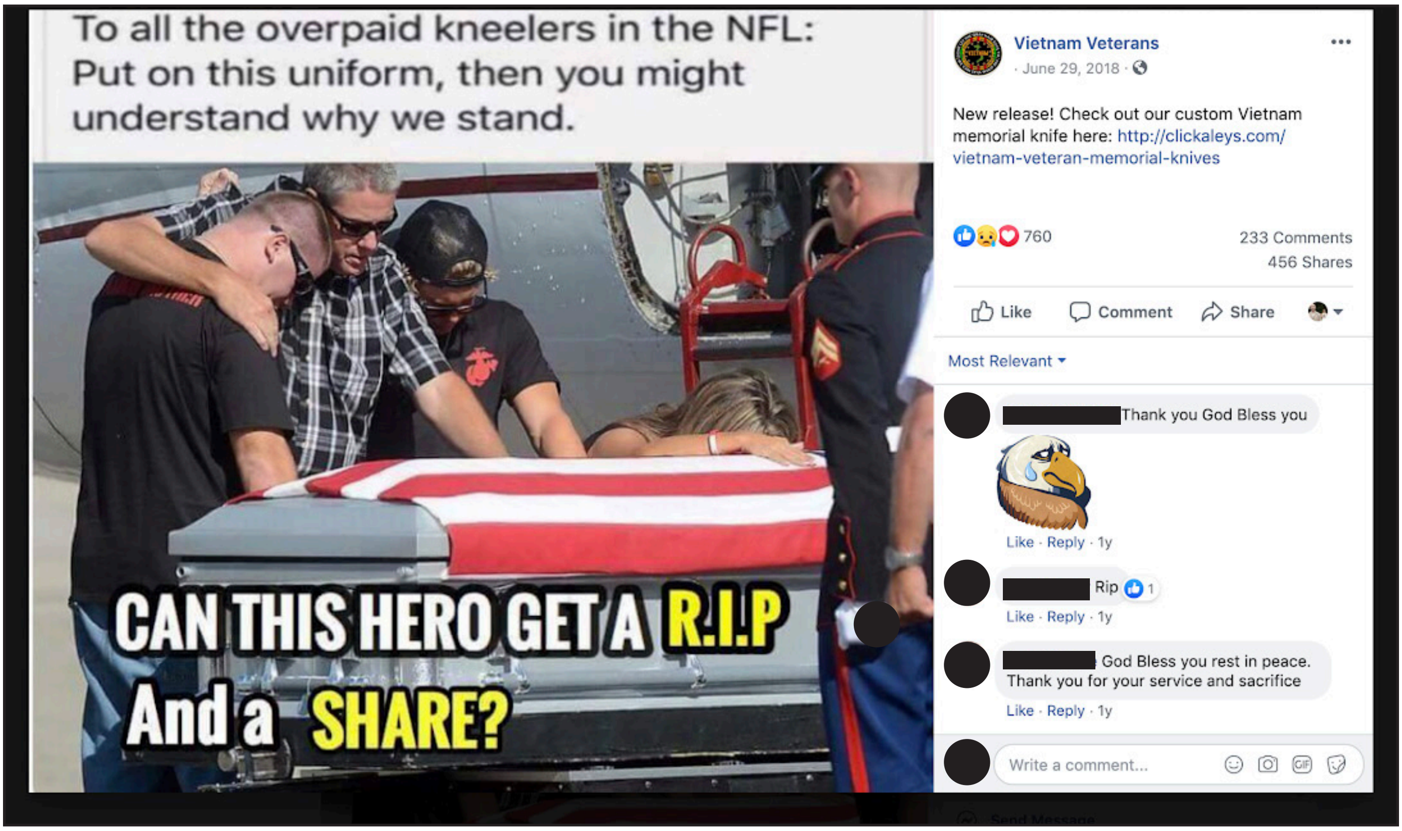
[redacted] Very proud of u need more of the same in this America honor and respect god bless u for ur loss my this veteran rip
Like · Reply · 4y 2

[redacted] Total respect. First to his dad and being a MARINE. THANK YOU to the family and him for his service.
Like · Reply · 4y 2

[redacted] Semper fidelis young marine, sorry for your loss, your father's very proud of you. Sgt D.
Like · Reply · 4y 2

Write a comment...

Figure 92



To all the overpaid kneelers in the NFL: Put on this uniform, then you might understand why we stand.
CAN THIS HERO GET A R.I.P And a SHARE?

Vietnam Veterans
· June 29, 2018 ·

New release! Check out our custom Vietnam memorial knife here: http://clickaleys.com/vietnam-veteran-memorial-knives

760 233 Comments 456 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

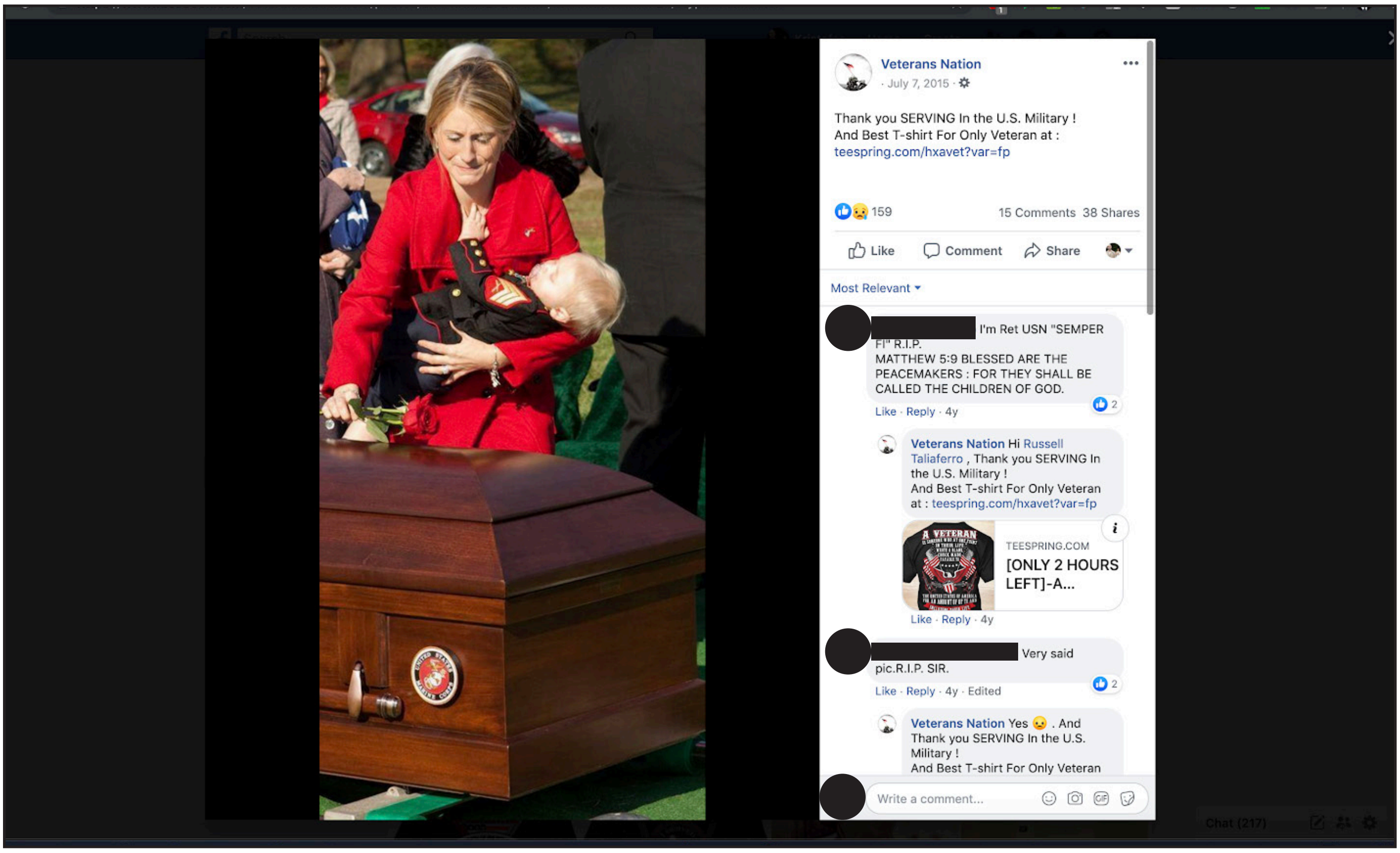
[redacted] Thank you God Bless you
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Rip 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] God Bless you rest in peace. Thank you for your service and sacrifice
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 93



Veterans Nation
· July 7, 2015 ·

Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military !
And Best T-shirt For Only Veteran at :
teespring.com/hxavet?var=fp

159 · 15 Comments 38 Shares

[redacted] I'm Ret USN "SEMPER FI" R.I.P.
MATTHEW 5:9 BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS : FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.
Like · Reply · 4y · 2

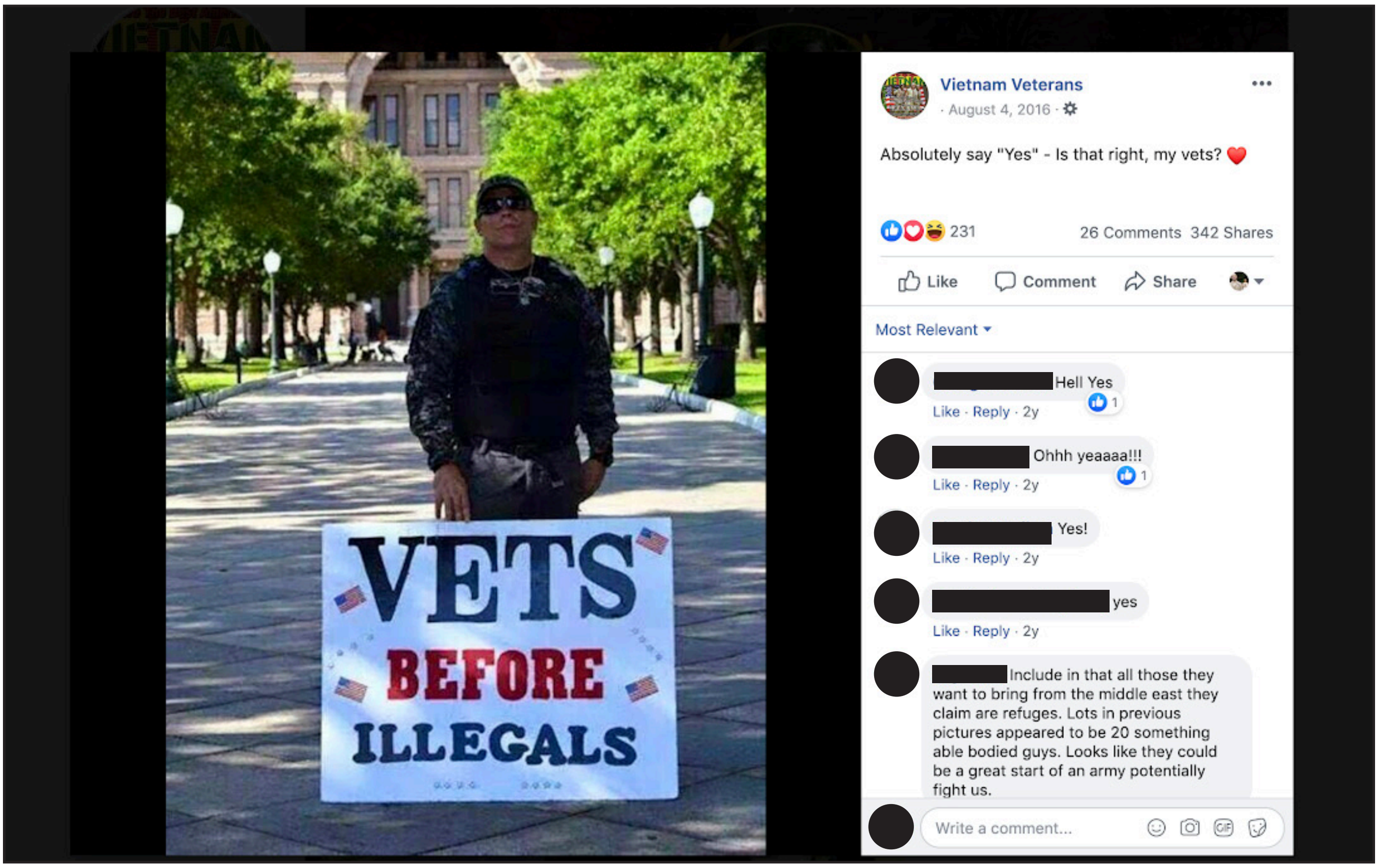
Veterans Nation Hi Russell Taliaferro , Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military !
And Best T-shirt For Only Veteran at : teespring.com/hxavet?var=fp

TEESPRING.COM
[ONLY 2 HOURS LEFT]-A...
Like · Reply · 4y

[redacted] Very said pic.R.I.P. SIR.
Like · Reply · 4y · Edited · 2

Veterans Nation Yes 😞 . And Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military !
And Best T-shirt For Only Veteran

Figure 94



Vietnam Veterans
· August 4, 2016 ·

Absolutely say "Yes" - Is that right, my vets? ❤️

231 · 26 Comments 342 Shares

[redacted] Hell Yes
Like · Reply · 2y · 1

[redacted] Ohhh yeaaaa!!!
Like · Reply · 2y · 1

[redacted] Yes!
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] yes
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Include in that all those they want to bring from the middle east they claim are refuges. Lots in previous pictures appeared to be 20 something able bodied guys. Looks like they could be a great start of an army potentially fight us.

Figure 95

(text continued from page 80)

Casket Photos

Gold Star families have frequently been exploited by foreign admins who politicize photos of the families mourning over the casket of their fallen servicemember (Figures 90-94). This entire investigation, in fact, was partly motivated by VVA's attempt to help one widow who put out a public call to tell people on the internet to stop making her and her deceased husband into a political meme.[166] As we attempted to discover the origin of the page of this offensive meme and report it to Facebook, we came to realize that it wasn't just posted once — but multiple times on several different social-media pages and that many other Gold Star families were also being exploited in the same way.

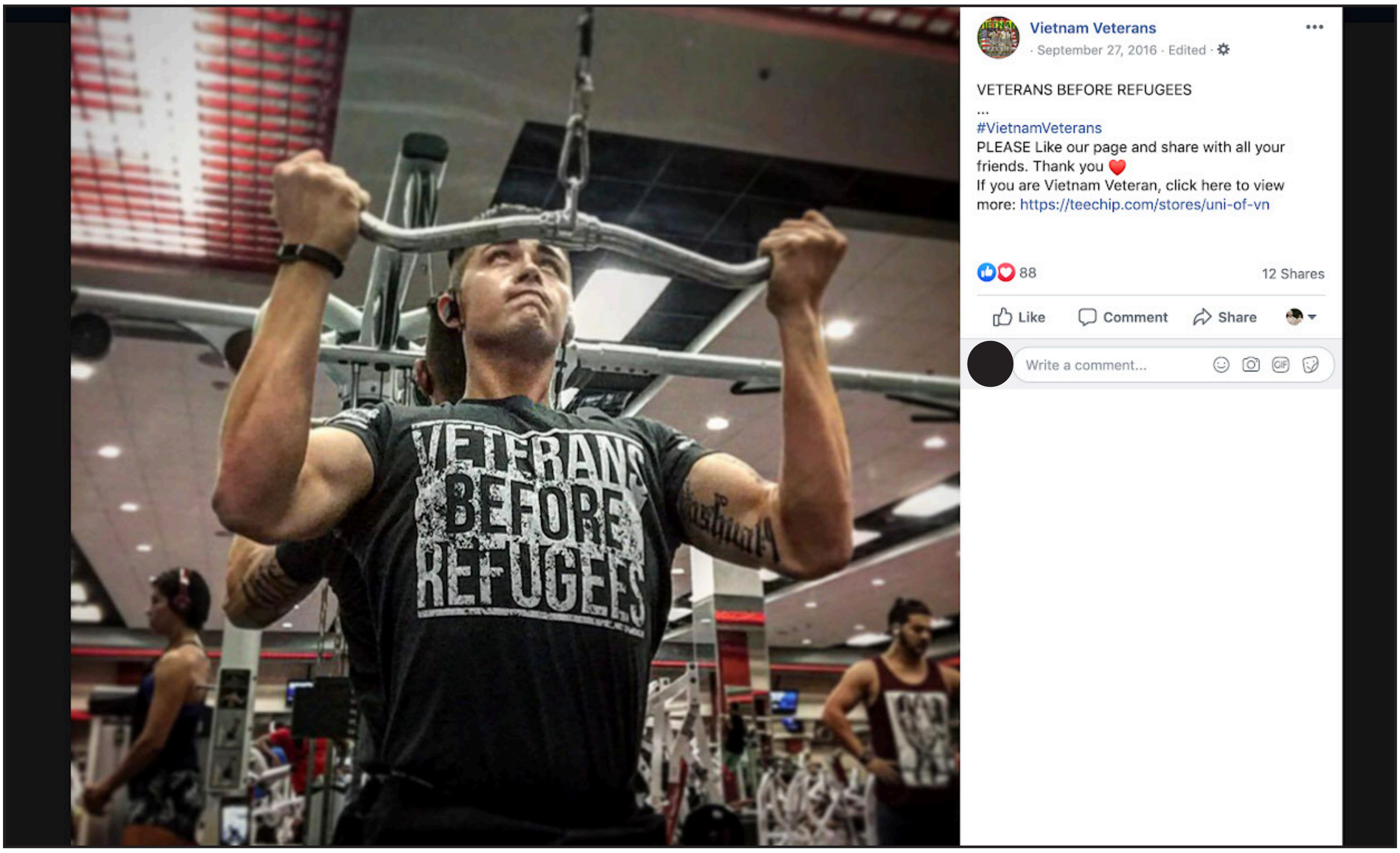
In numerous cases, these intimate photographs weren't being used just to build an audience or spread divisive political messages but also being used by foreign admins to sell merchandise.

BuzzFeed News' tech reporter Jane Lytvynenko reached out to Facebook about one of the pages that had been using these military-casket photos, and Facebook let her know that they immediately shut down the page — as well as eight other connected pages originating from Eastern Asia — for "inauthentic activity."[167]

Racist and Xenophobic Propaganda

While there may be individual American veterans who subscribe to racist and xenophobic beliefs and are attracted to messages like "Veterans Before Illegals" or "Veterans Before Refugees" — there is not one single legitimate veterans organization that in any way endorses or promotes these messages. We, in fact, categorically reject them and seek to underscore that this false dichotomy is both harmful to veterans and our democracy as a whole. Yet, foreign admins have been promoting these hateful messages alongside posts that sell merchandise with our names and logos — misleading the general public about the positions maintained by our organizations (Figures 95-97).

(text continued on page 94)

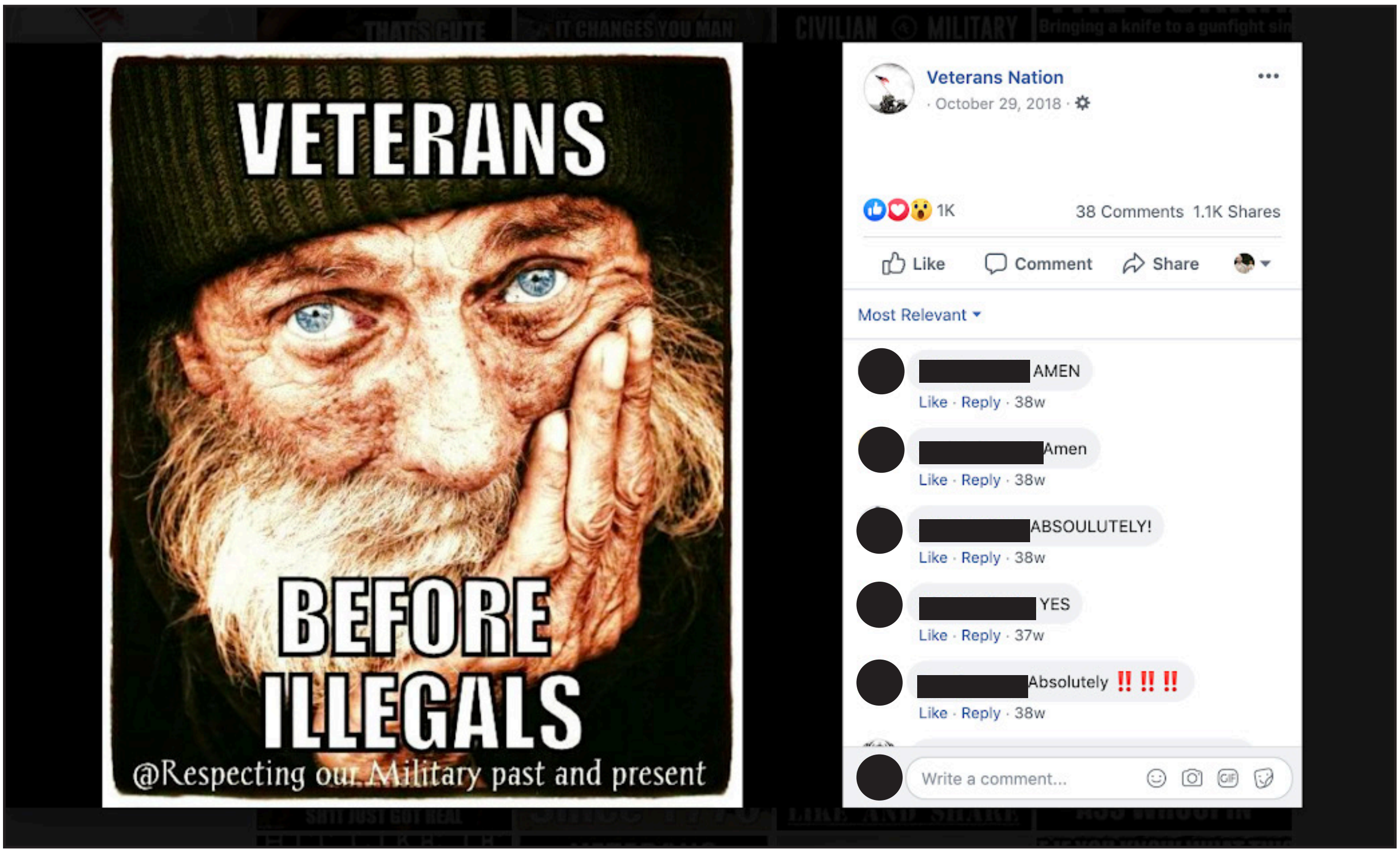


Vietnam Veterans
· September 27, 2016 · Edited ·

VETERANS BEFORE REFUGEES
...
#VietnamVeterans
PLEASE Like our page and share with all your friends. Thank you ❤
If you are Vietnam Veteran, click here to view more: https://teechip.com/stores/uni-of-vn

88 12 Shares

Figure 96


VETERANS
BEFORE
ILLEGALS
@Respecting our Military past and present
THAT'S CUTE
IT CHANGES YOU MAN
CIVILIAN MILITARY
Bringing a knife to a gunfight sin

Veterans Nation
· October 29, 2018 ·

1K 38 Comments 1.1K Shares

[redacted] AMEN
Like · Reply · 38w

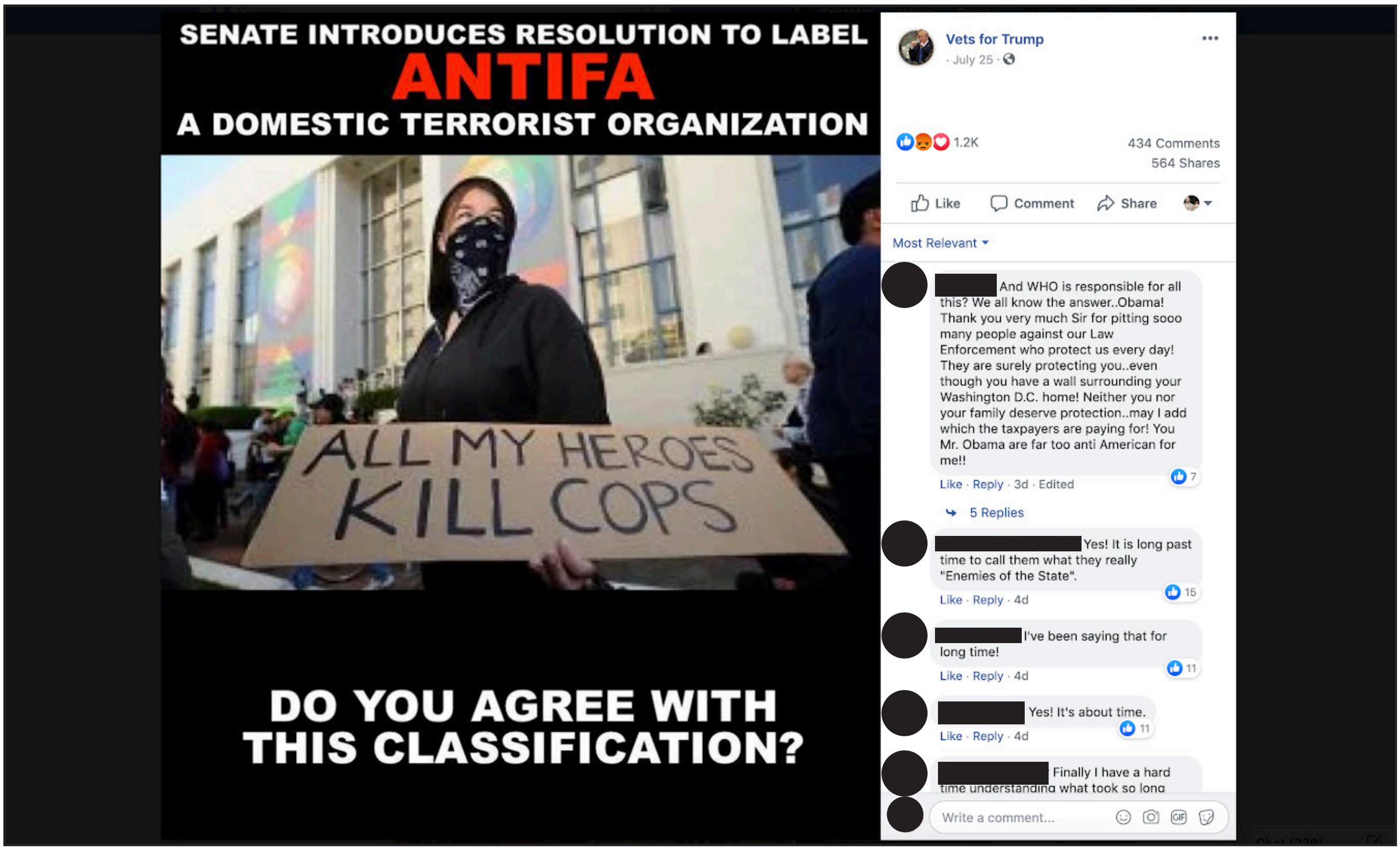
[redacted] Amen
Like · Reply · 38w

[redacted] ABSOULUTELY!
Like · Reply · 38w

[redacted] YES
Like · Reply · 37w

[redacted] Absolutely ‼ ‼ ‼
Like · Reply · 38w

Figure 97



SENATE INTRODUCES RESOLUTION TO LABEL
ANTIFA
A DOMESTIC TERRORIST ORGANIZATION
ALL MY HEROES KILL COPS
DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS CLASSIFICATION?

Vets for Trump
· July 25 ·

1.2K 434 Comments 564 Shares

Like Comment Share
Most Relevant

[redacted] And WHO is responsible for all this? We all know the answer..Obama! Thank you very much Sir for pitting sooo many people against our Law Enforcement who protect us every day! They are surely protecting you..even though you have a wall surrounding your Washington D.C. home! Neither you nor your family deserve protection..may I add which the taxpayers are paying for! You Mr. Obama are far too anti American for me!!

Like · Reply · 3d · Edited 7

5 Replies

[redacted] Yes! It is long past time to call them what they really "Enemies of the State".

Like · Reply · 4d 15

[redacted] I've been saying that for long time!

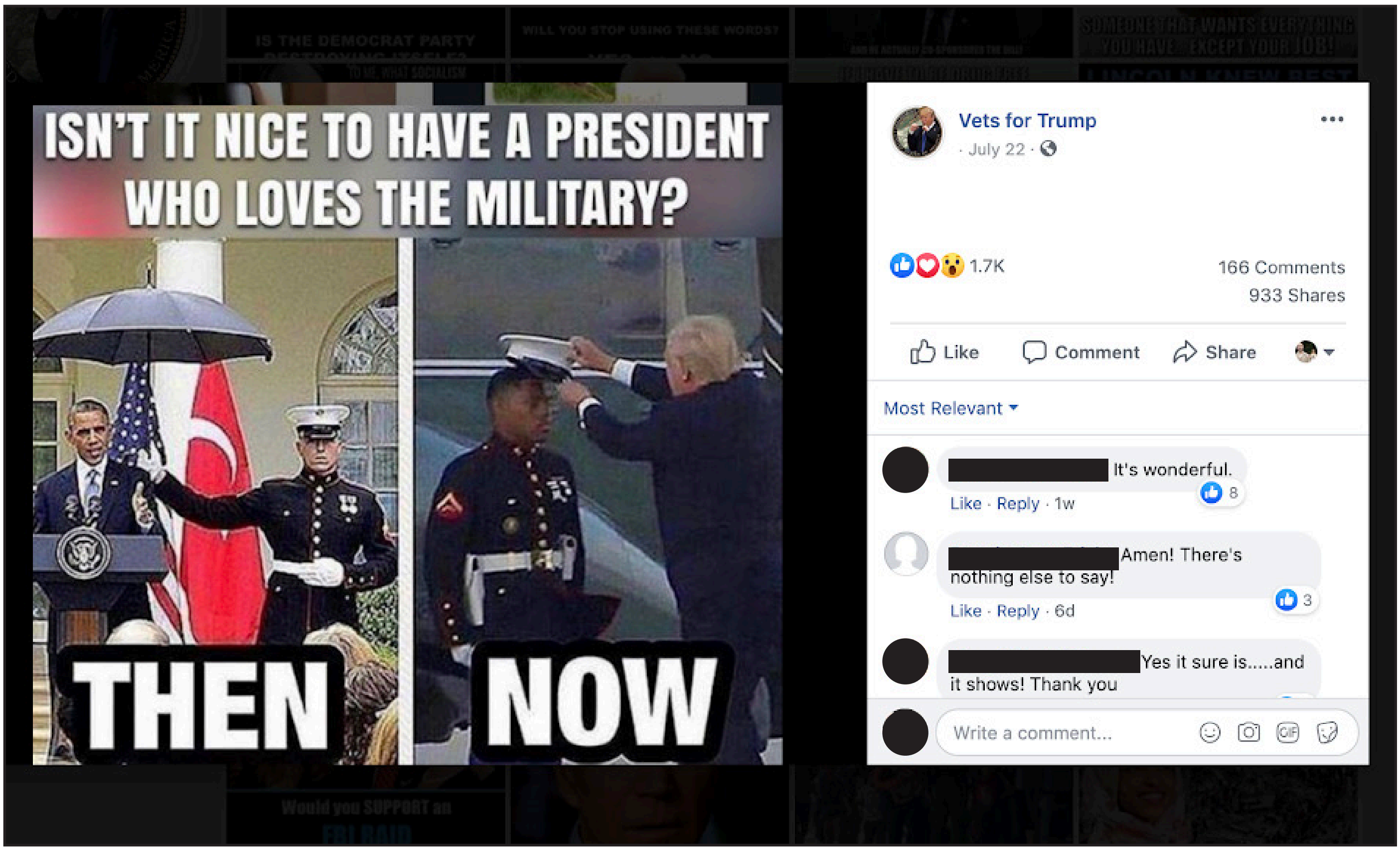
Like · Reply · 4d 11

[redacted] Yes! It's about time.

Like · Reply · 4d 11

[redacted] Finally I have a hard time understanding what took so long

Figure 98



IS THE DEMOCRAT PARTY DESTROYING ITSELF?
WILL YOU STOP USING THESE WORDS?
SOMEONE THAT WANTS EVERYTHING YOU HAVE...EXCEPT YOUR JOB!
LINCOLN KNEW BEST
ISN'T IT NICE TO HAVE A PRESIDENT WHO LOVES THE MILITARY?
THEN
NOW
Would you SUPPORT an FBI RAID

Vets for Trump
· July 22 ·

1.7K 166 Comments 933 Shares

Like Comment Share
Most Relevant

[redacted] It's wonderful.

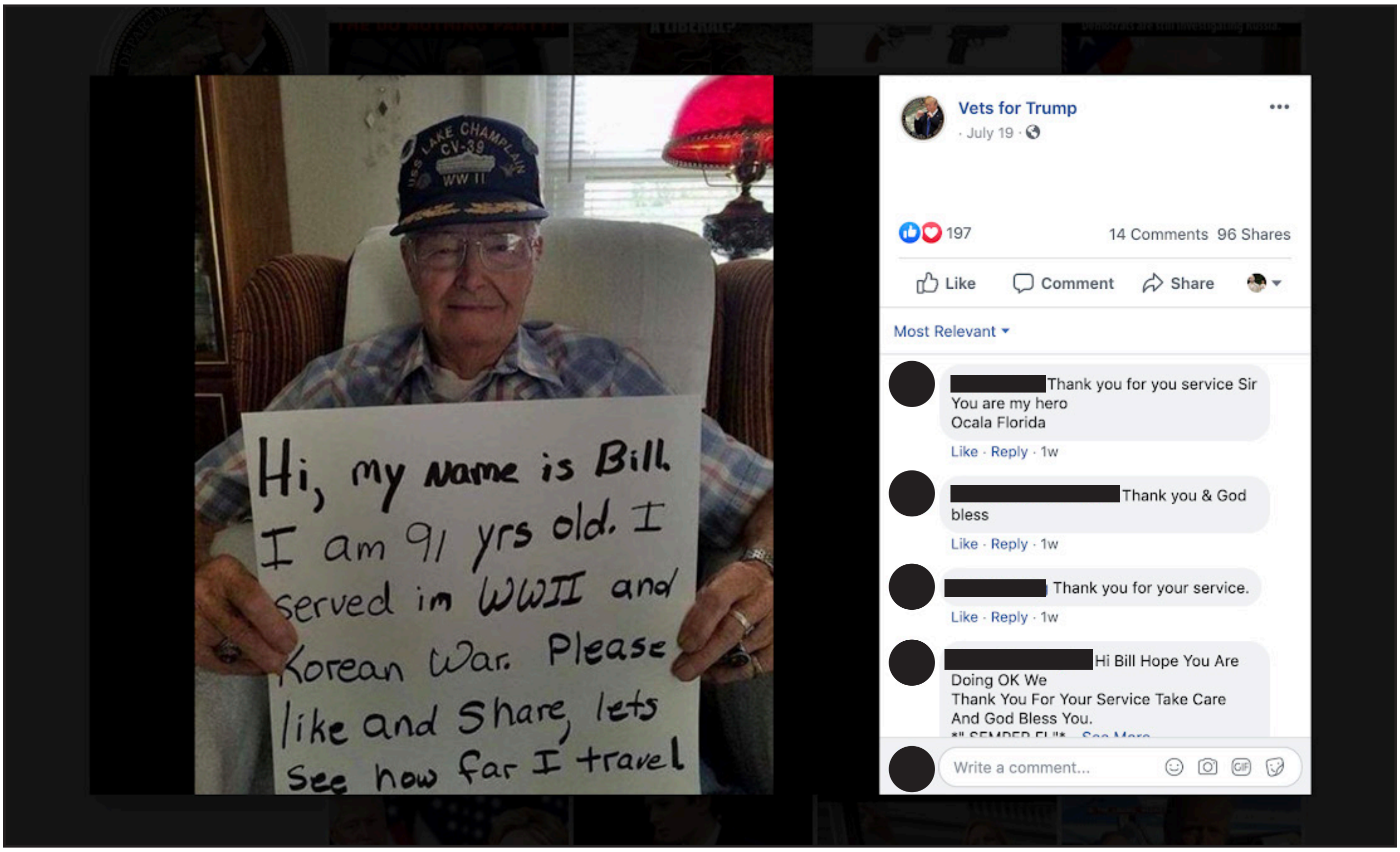
Like · Reply · 1w 8

[redacted] Amen! There's nothing else to say!

Like · Reply · 6d 3

[redacted] Yes it sure is.....and it shows! Thank you

Figure 99



Vets for Trump
· July 19 ·

197 14 Comments 96 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Thank you for you service Sir You are my hero Ocala Florida
Like · Reply · 1w

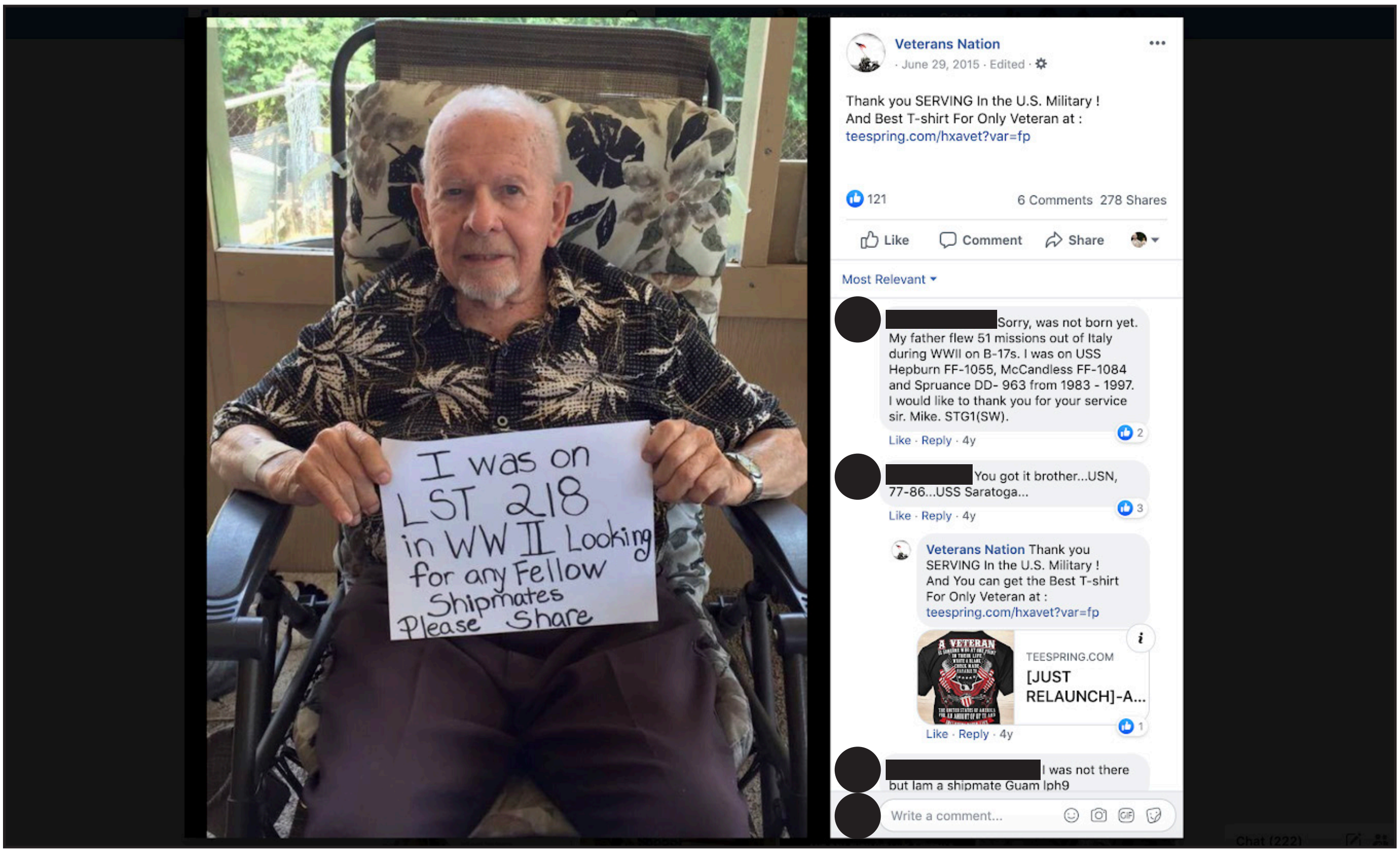
[redacted] Thank you & God bless
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Thank you for your service.
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Hi Bill Hope You Are Doing OK We Thank You For Your Service Take Care And God Bless You.
" SEMPER FI " ... See More

Write a comment...

Figure 100



Veterans Nation
· June 29, 2015 · Edited ·

Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military !
And Best T-shirt For Only Veteran at :
teespring.com/hxavet?var=fp

121 6 Comments 278 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Sorry, was not born yet. My father flew 51 missions out of Italy during WWII on B-17s. I was on USS Hepburn FF-1055, McCandless FF-1084 and Spruance DD- 963 from 1983 - 1997. I would like to thank you for your service sir. Mike. STG1(SW).
2
Like · Reply · 4y

[redacted] You got it brother...USN, 77-86...USS Saratoga...
3
Like · Reply · 4y

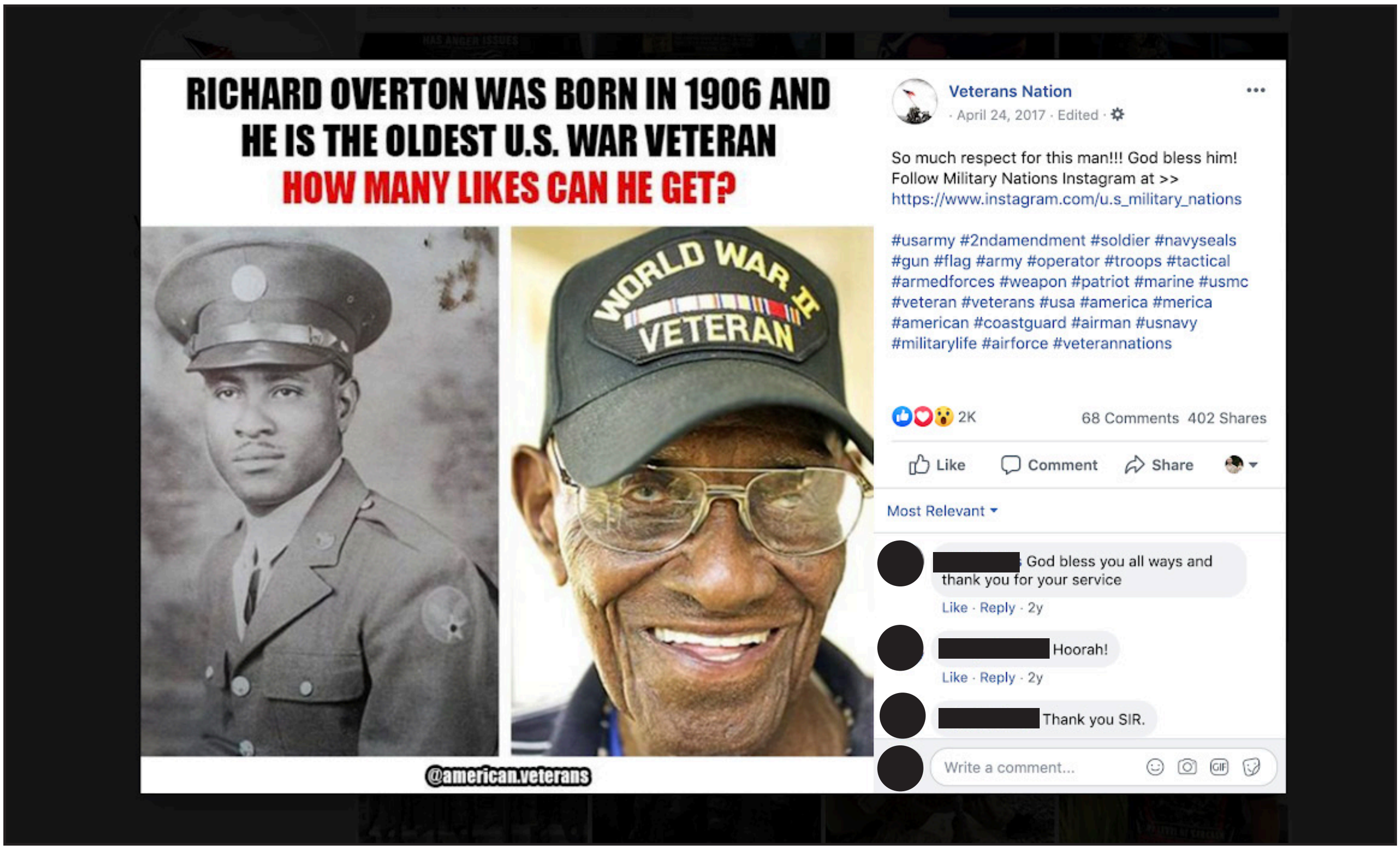
Veterans Nation Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military ! And You can get the Best T-shirt For Only Veteran at : teespring.com/hxavet?var=fp

TEESPRING.COM
[JUST RELAUNCH]-A...
1
Like · Reply · 4y

[redacted] I was not there but Iam a shipmate Guam lph9

Write a comment...

Figure 101: Elderly veterans often have young friends and family who take photos like this one to help the vet reconnect with their long-lost battle buddies. Unfortunately, once these photos are co-opted by foreign admins, the hundreds of people who share the photo in good faith are only serving to spread the influence of the foreign trolls who are exploiting American veterans.


RICHARD OVERTON WAS BORN IN 1906 AND HE IS THE OLDEST U.S. WAR VETERAN
HOW MANY LIKES CAN HE GET?
WORLD WAR II VETERAN
@american.veterans
Like
Comment
Share

Veterans Nation
· April 24, 2017 · Edited ·

So much respect for this man!!! God bless him!
Follow Military Nations Instagram at >>
https://www.instagram.com/u.s_military_nations

#usarmy #2ndamendment #soldier #navyseals #gun #flag #army #operator #troops #tactical #armedforces #weapon #patriot #marine #usmc #veteran #veterans #usa #america #merica #american #coastguard #airman #usnavy #militarylife #airforce #veterannations

2K 68 Comments 402 Shares

Most Relevant

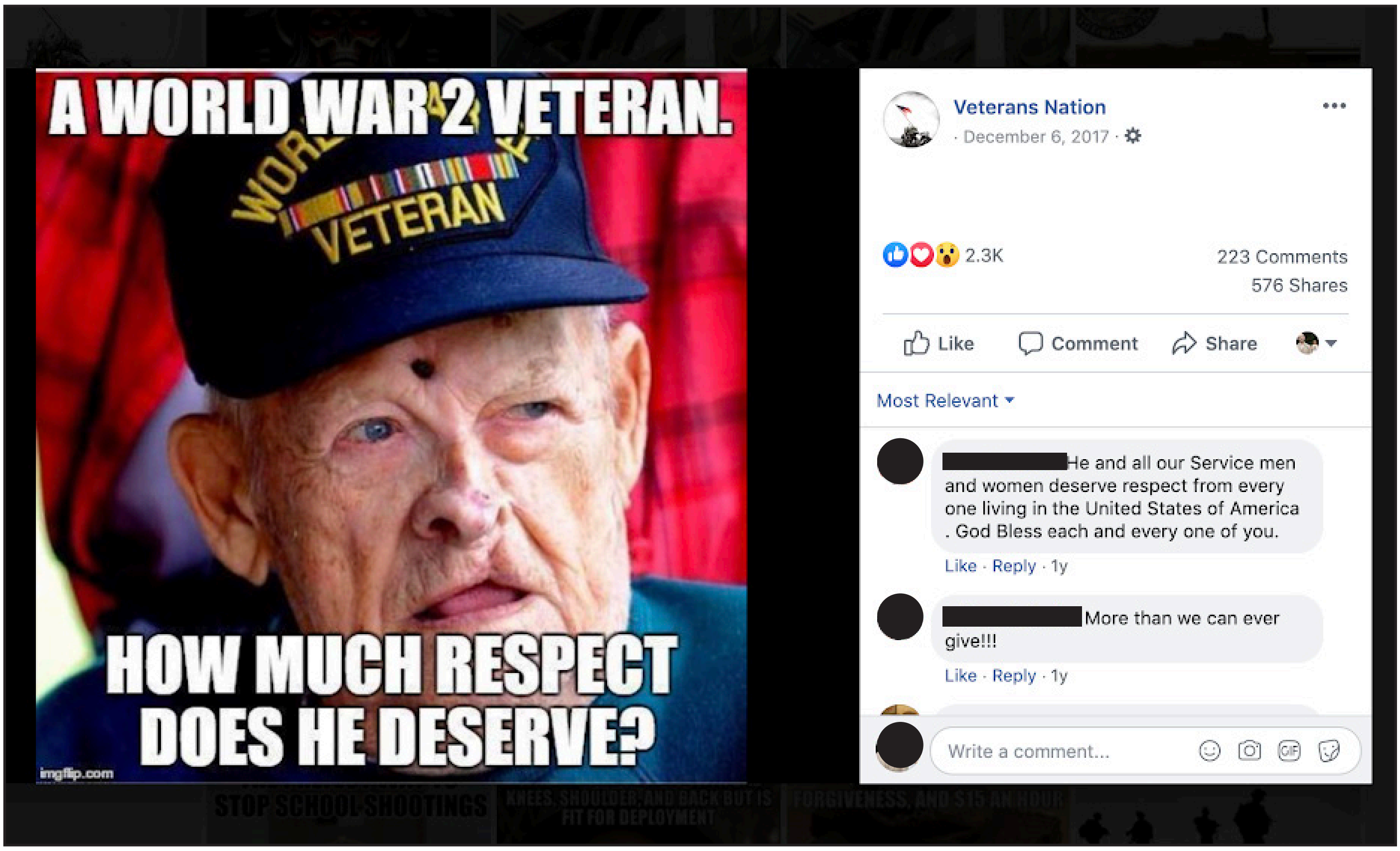
[redacted] God bless you all ways and thank you for your service
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Hoorah!
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Thank you SIR.

Write a comment...

Figure 102


A WORLD WAR 2 VETERAN.
WORLD WAR II VETERAN
HOW MUCH RESPECT DOES HE DESERVE?
imgflip.com
STOP SCHOOL SHOOTINGS
KNEES, SHOULDER, AND BACK BUT IS FIT FOR DEPLOYMENT
FORGIVENESS, AND $15 AN HOUR
Like
Comment
Share

Veterans Nation
· December 6, 2017 ·

2.3K 223 Comments 576 Shares

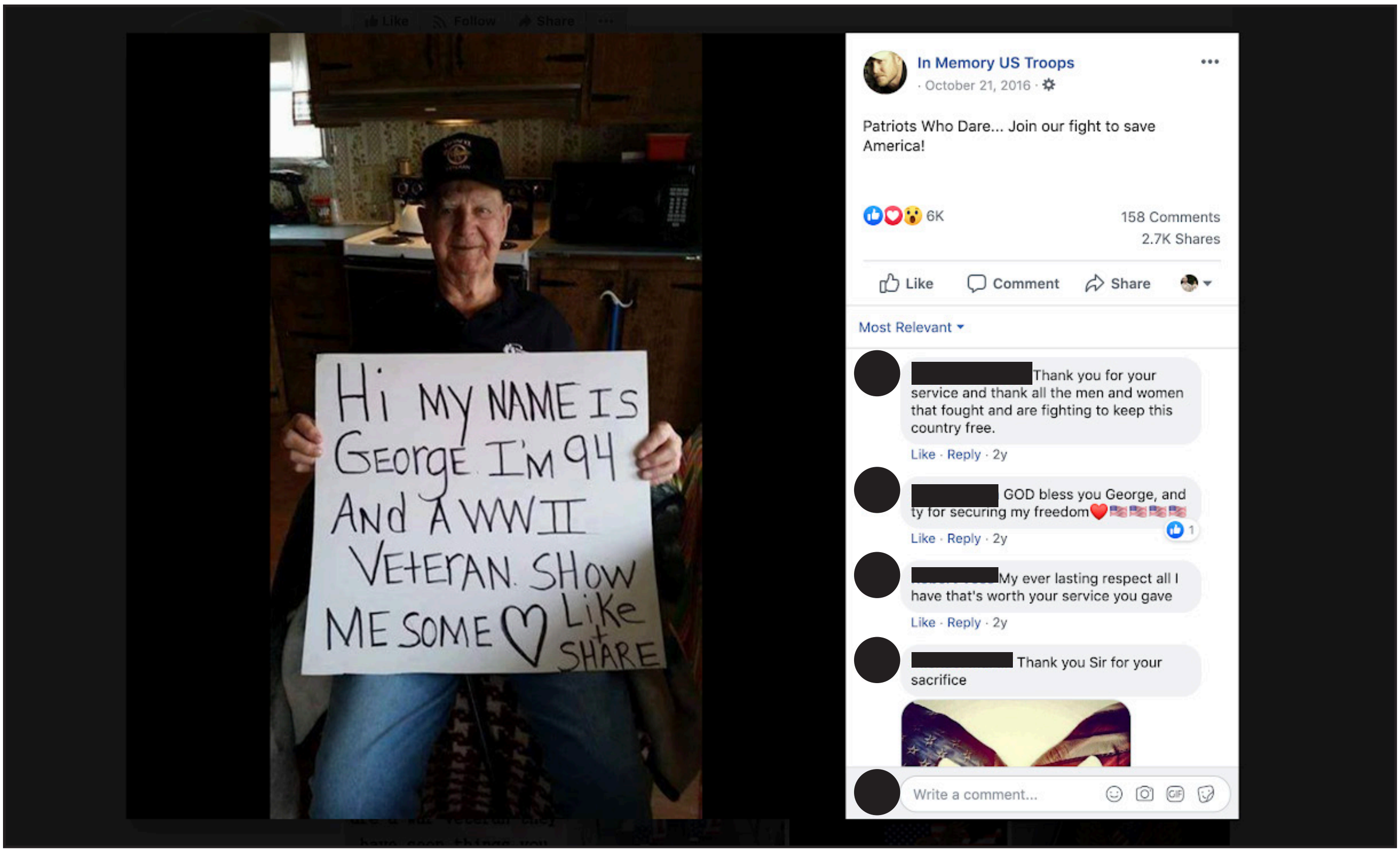
Most Relevant

[redacted] He and all our Service men and women deserve respect from every one living in the United States of America . God Bless each and every one of you.
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] More than we can ever give!!!
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 103


Hi MY NAME IS George I'M 94 And A WWII VEtERAN. SHOW ME SOME ♡ LIKE SHARE

In Memory US Troops
· October 21, 2016 ·

Patriots Who Dare... Join our fight to save America!

6K
158 Comments
2.7K Shares

Like
Comment
Share
Most Relevant ▾

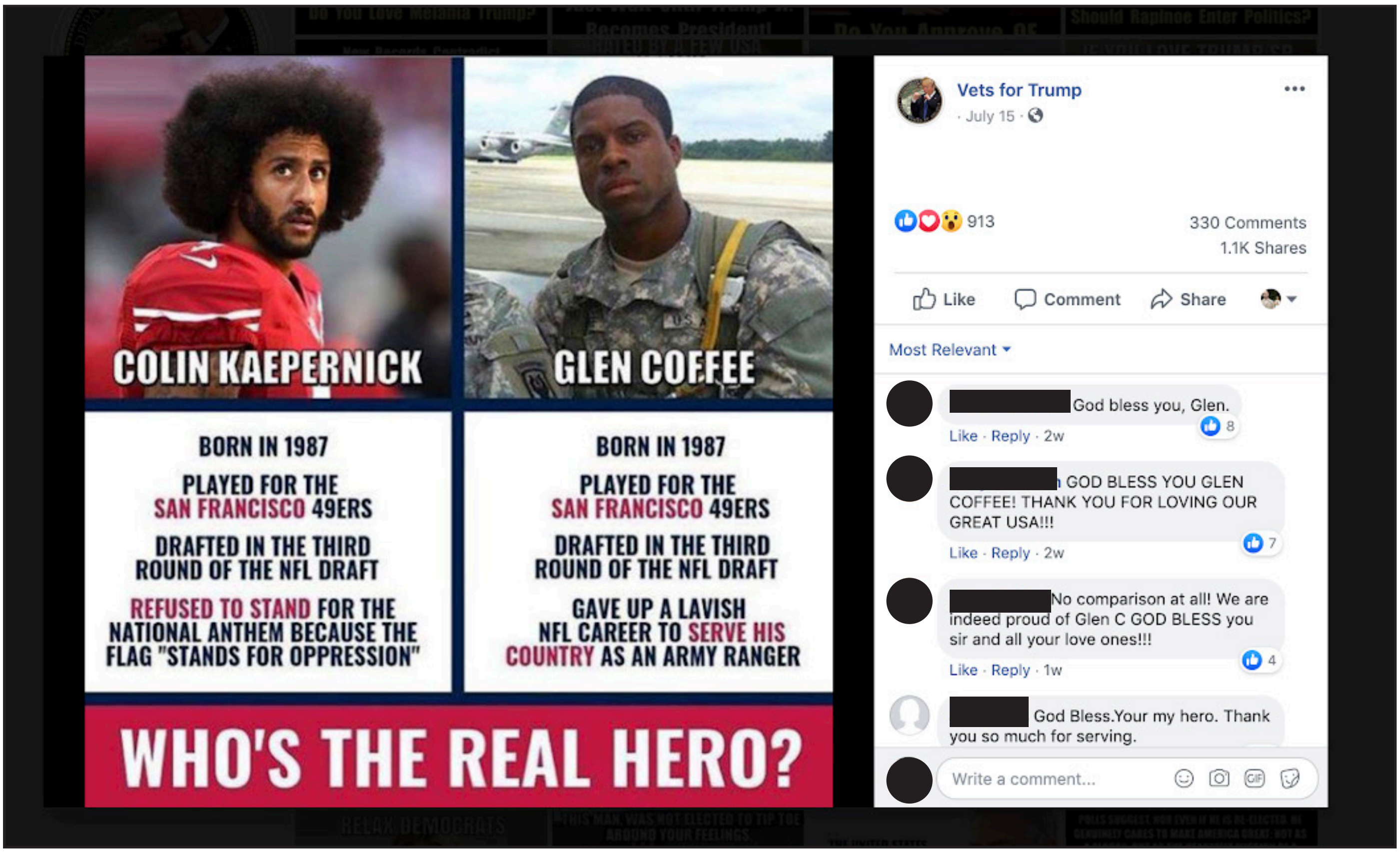
[redacted] Thank you for your service and thank all the men and women that fought and are fighting to keep this country free.
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] GOD bless you George, and ty for securing my freedom❤️🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸 1
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] My ever lasting respect all I have that's worth your service you gave
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Thank you Sir for your sacrifice

Figure 104


COLIN KAEPERNICK
GLEN COFFEE
BORN IN 1987
PLAYED FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
DRAFTED IN THE THIRD ROUND OF THE NFL DRAFT
REFUSED TO STAND FOR THE NATIONAL ANTHEM BECAUSE THE FLAG "STANDS FOR OPPRESSION"
BORN IN 1987
PLAYED FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
DRAFTED IN THE THIRD ROUND OF THE NFL DRAFT
GAVE UP A LAVISH NFL CAREER TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY AS AN ARMY RANGER
WHO'S THE REAL HERO?

Vets for Trump
· July 15 ·

913
330 Comments
1.1K Shares

Like
Comment
Share
Most Relevant ▾

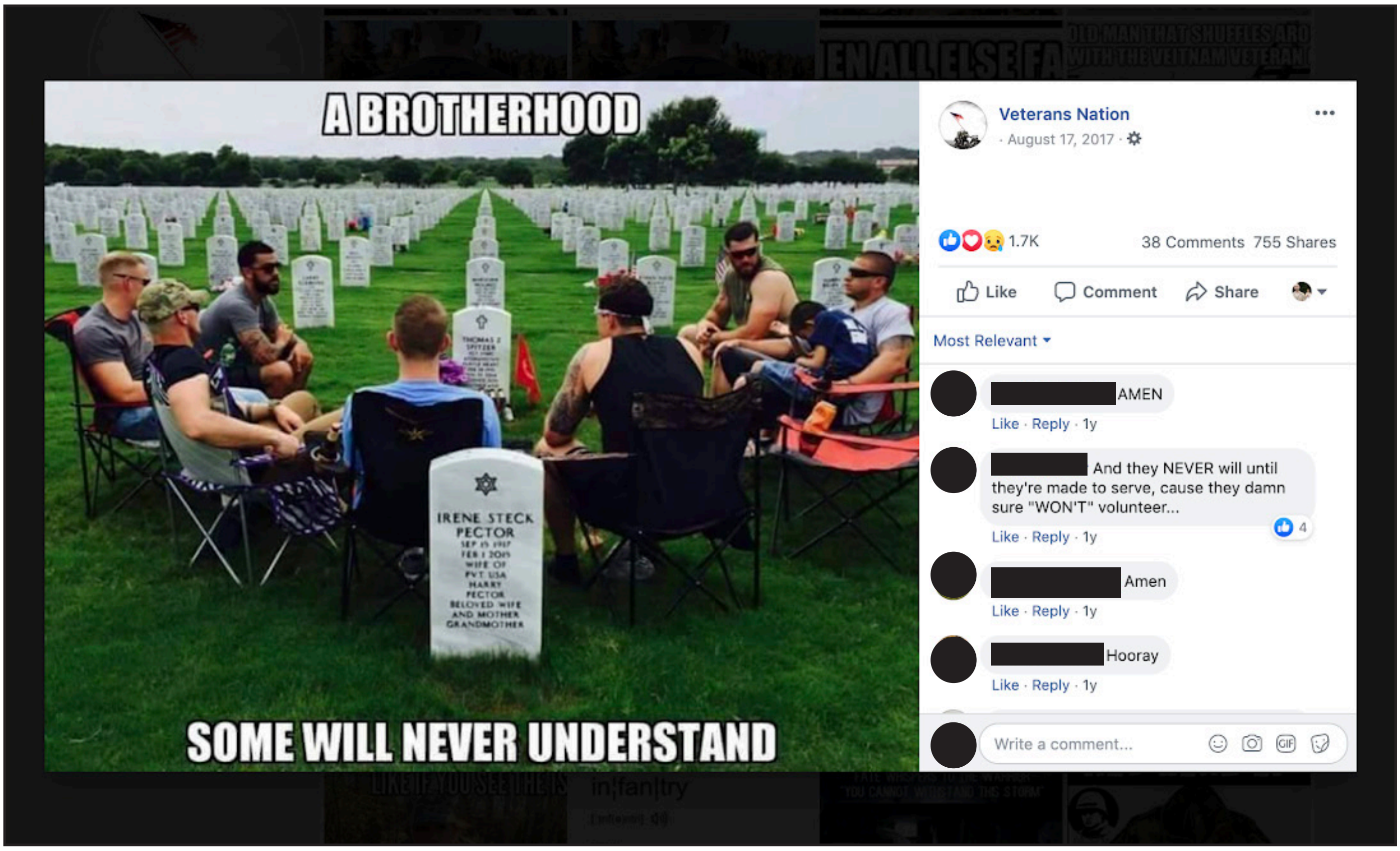
[redacted] God bless you, Glen. 8
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] GOD BLESS YOU GLEN COFFEE! THANK YOU FOR LOVING OUR GREAT USA!!! 7
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] No comparison at all! We are indeed proud of Glen C GOD BLESS you sir and all your love ones!!! 4
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] God Bless.Your my hero. Thank you so much for serving.

Figure 105



Veterans Nation
· August 17, 2017 · ⚙

1.7K 38 Comments 755 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

[redacted] AMEN
Like · Reply · 1y

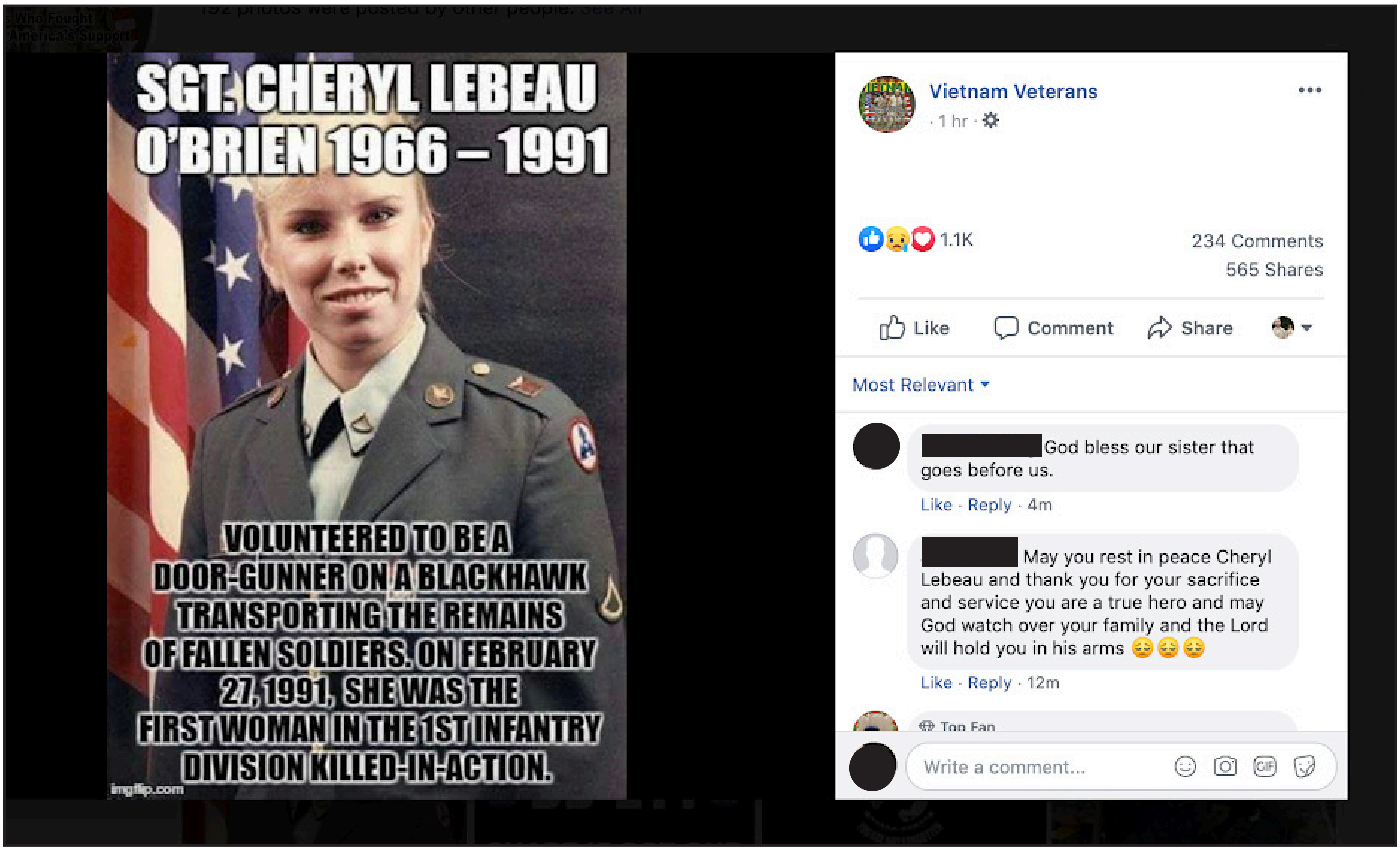
[redacted] And they NEVER will until they're made to serve, cause they damn sure "WON'T" volunteer...
4
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Hooray
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 106


SGT. CHERYL LEBEAU O'BRIEN 1966 – 1991
VOLUNTEERED TO BE A DOOR-GUNNER ON A BLACKHAWK TRANSPORTING THE REMAINS OF FALLEN SOLDIERS. ON FEBRUARY 27, 1991, SHE WAS THE FIRST WOMAN IN THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION KILLED-IN-ACTION.
imgflip.com

Vietnam Veterans
· 1 hr · ⚙

1.1K 234 Comments 565 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

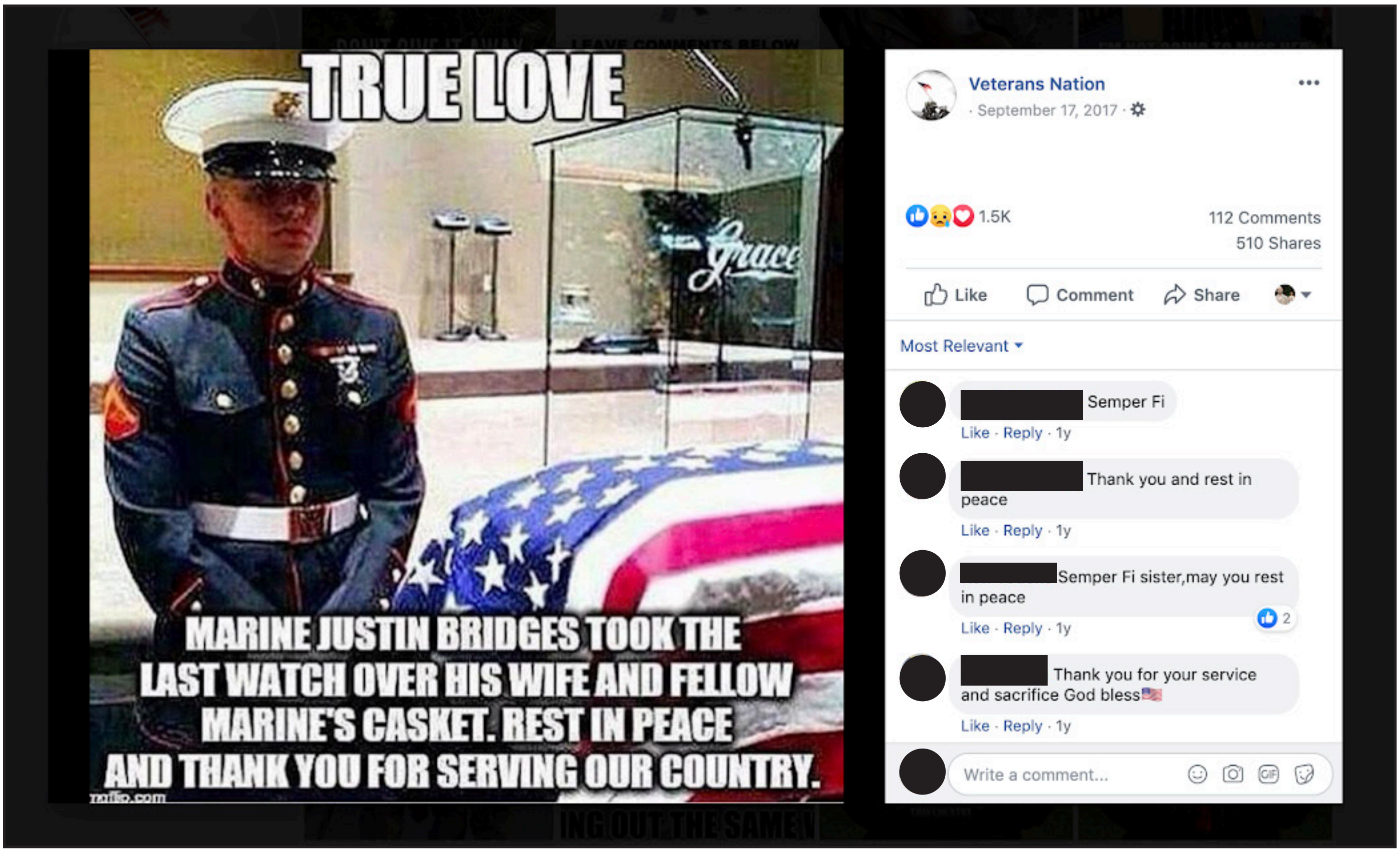
[redacted] God bless our sister that goes before us.
Like · Reply · 4m

[redacted] May you rest in peace Cheryl Lebeau and thank you for your sacrifice and service you are a true hero and may God watch over your family and the Lord will hold you in his arms 😔😔😔
Like · Reply · 12m

Top Fan

Write a comment...

Figure 107


TRUE LOVE
Grace
MARINE JUSTIN BRIDGES TOOK THE LAST WATCH OVER HIS WIFE AND FELLOW MARINE'S CASKET. REST IN PEACE AND THANK YOU FOR SERVING OUR COUNTRY.
imgflip.com
Like
Comment
Share

Veterans Nation
· September 17, 2017 ·

1.5K

112 Comments
510 Shares

Most Relevant

[redacted] Semper Fi
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Thank you and rest in peace
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Semper Fi sister,may you rest in peace
Like · Reply · 1y 2

[redacted] Thank you for your service and sacrifice God bless🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 108

(text continued from page 87)

Antifa

Memes featuring Antifa emphasize the most radical and threatening elements of the otherwise small and disorganized group of protestors (Figure 98).

Obama vs. Trump in Respect for the Troops

Several memes contain depictions of President Obama in situations that can be interpreted as disrespectful to MilVets, with photos that depict President Trump in the opposite way (Figure 99).

Elderly Veterans Asking for Likes, Shares, and Respect

A very common and effective type of meme used by foreign admins features elderly veterans, usually holding handwritten signs (which are sometimes photoshopped after-the-fact) asking for respect or likes, or to help the subject reconnect with those with whom they served. These photos are never shared in a way that links to the subject of the photo — therefore separating them from any possible benefit of the well-meaning likes, comments, and shares garnered by the content (Figures 100-104).

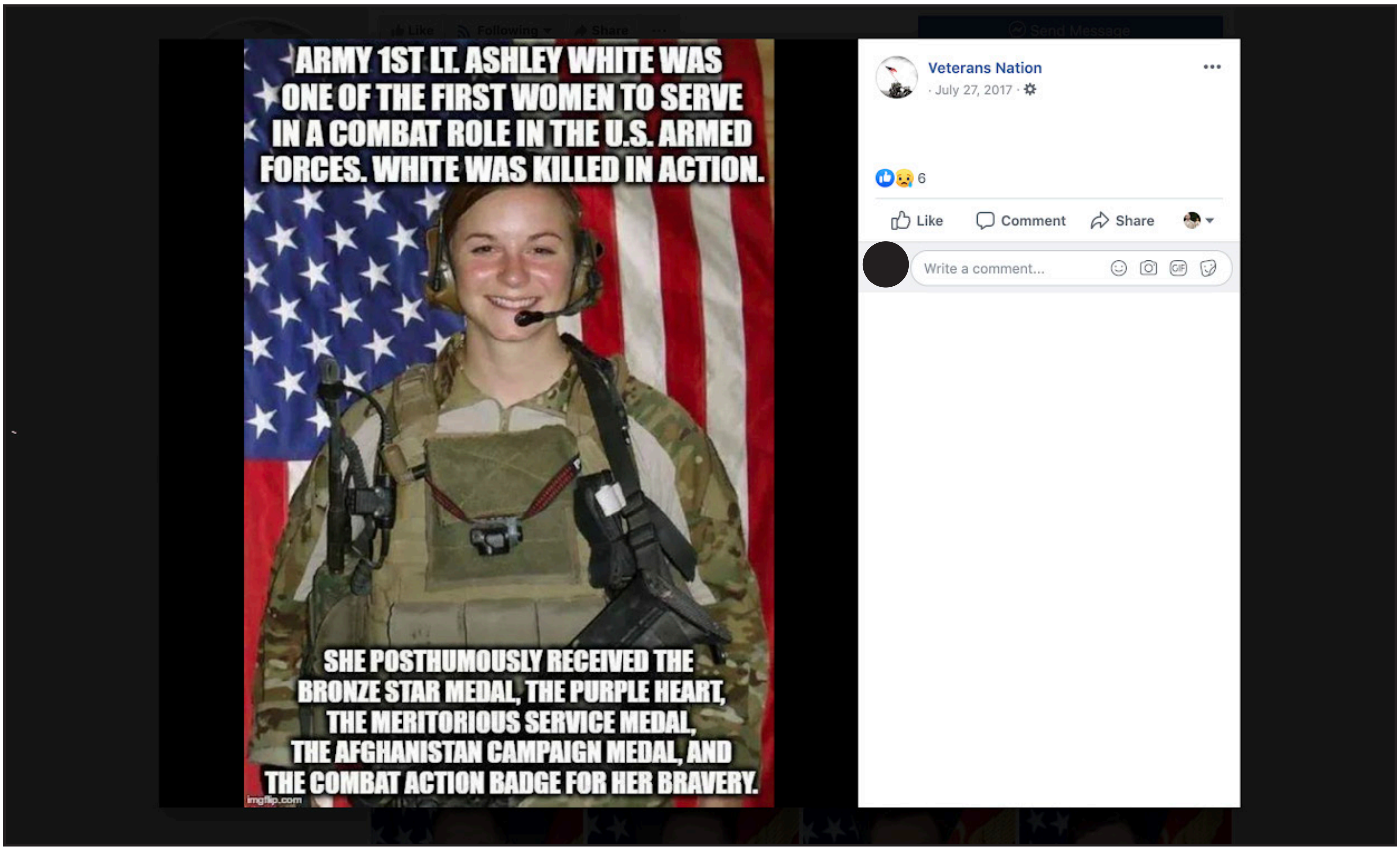
Kaepernick and the NFL vs. Troops

Colin Kaepernick, the former National Football League quarterback who is credited with having started the kneeling-for-the-anthem campaign to raise awareness for police brutality and racism against African Americans in the US, is a favorite target of foreign admins who wish to exploit and amplify conflicts between Americans of different backgrounds and political persuasions (Figure 105).

Exploiting KIAs, WIAs, and Mourning Servicemembers

A particularly heinous exploitation of MilVets by foreign admins occurs when they share their mourning for those who have been killed or wounded in combat, or those who have died by suicide, while purporting to be among the Americans mourning. These foreign admins turn touching photos of heartbroken MilVets into clickbait that is meant to sell counterfeit merchandise and build audiences that they'll inundate with divisive political propaganda (Figures 106-116).

(text continued on page 100)

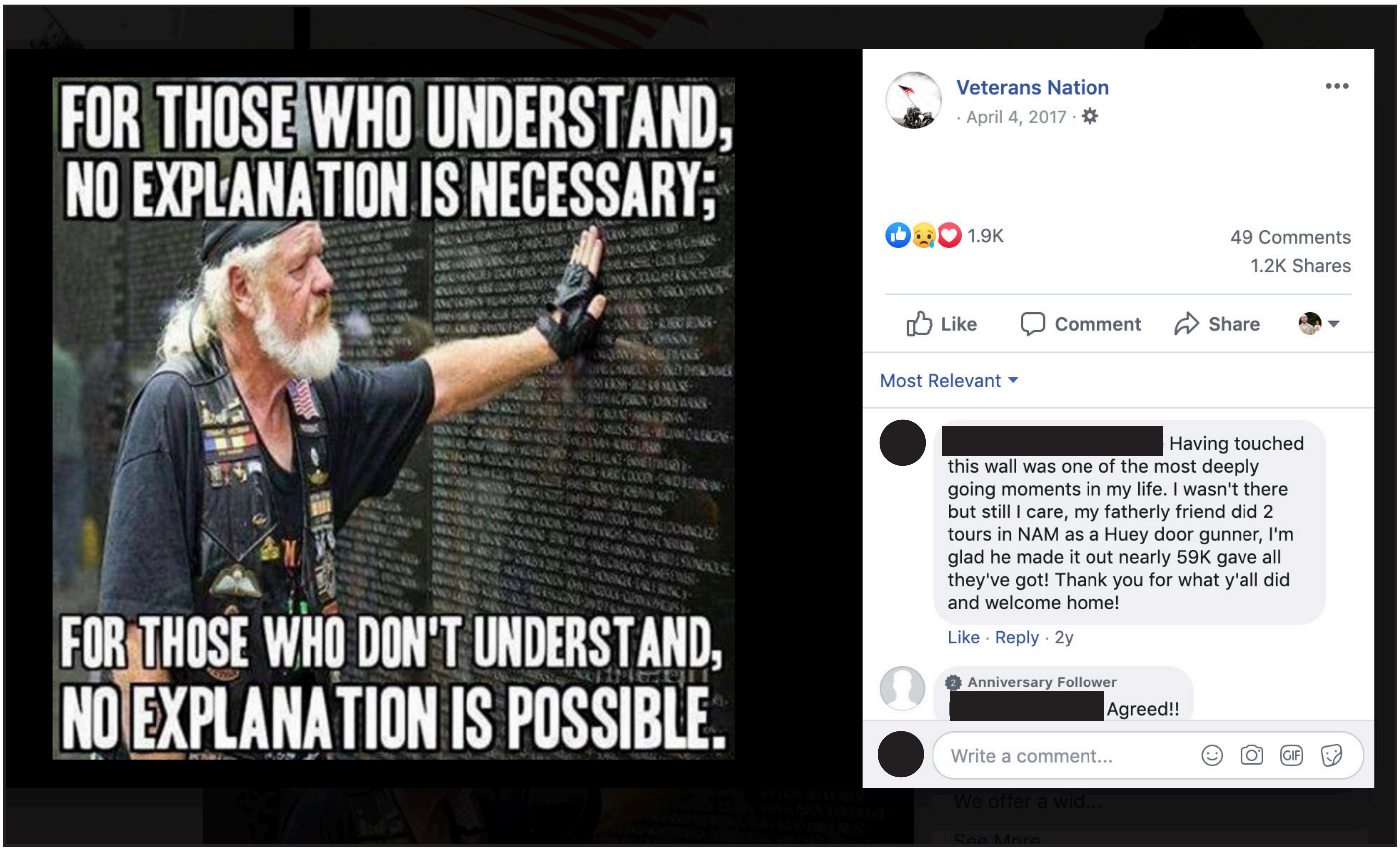


ARMY 1ST LT. ASHLEY WHITE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST WOMEN TO SERVE IN A COMBAT ROLE IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES. WHITE WAS KILLED IN ACTION.

SHE POSTHUMOUSLY RECEIVED THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL, THE PURPLE HEART, THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL, THE AFGHANISTAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL, AND THE COMBAT ACTION BADGE FOR HER BRAVERY.

Veterans Nation
· July 27, 2017 ·

Figure 109



FOR THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND, NO EXPLANATION IS NECESSARY;

FOR THOSE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND, NO EXPLANATION IS POSSIBLE.

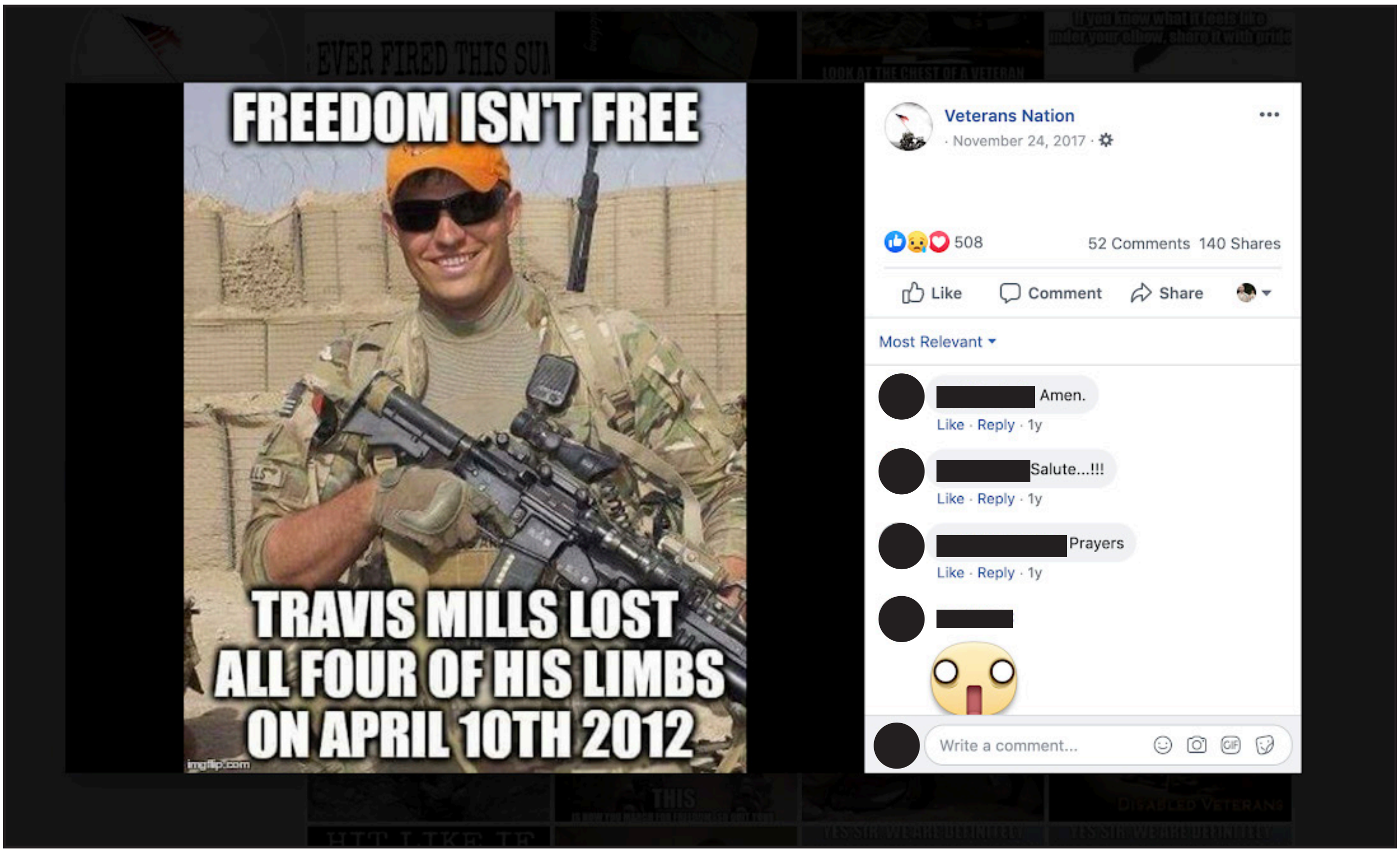
Veterans Nation
· April 4, 2017 ·

[redacted] Having touched this wall was one of the most deeply going moments in my life. I wasn't there but still I care, my fatherly friend did 2 tours in NAM as a Huey door gunner, I'm glad he made it out nearly 59K gave all they've got! Thank you for what y'all did and welcome home!

Like · Reply · 2y

Anniversary Follower
[redacted] Agreed!!

Figure 110



Veterans Nation
· November 24, 2017 ·

52 Comments 140 Shares

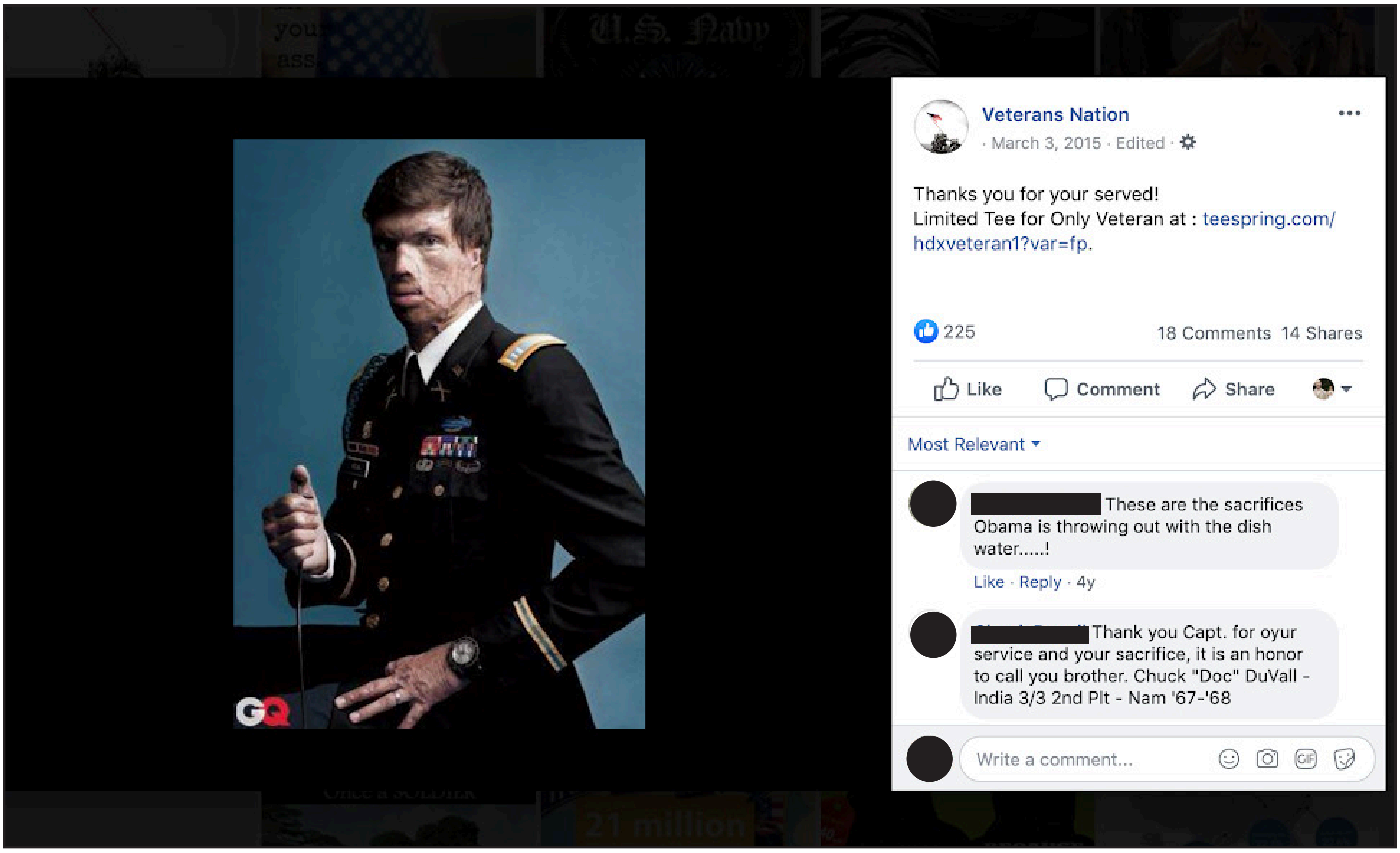
[redacted] Amen.

[redacted] Salute...!!!

[redacted] Prayers

[redacted]

Figure 111



Veterans Nation
· March 3, 2015 · Edited ·

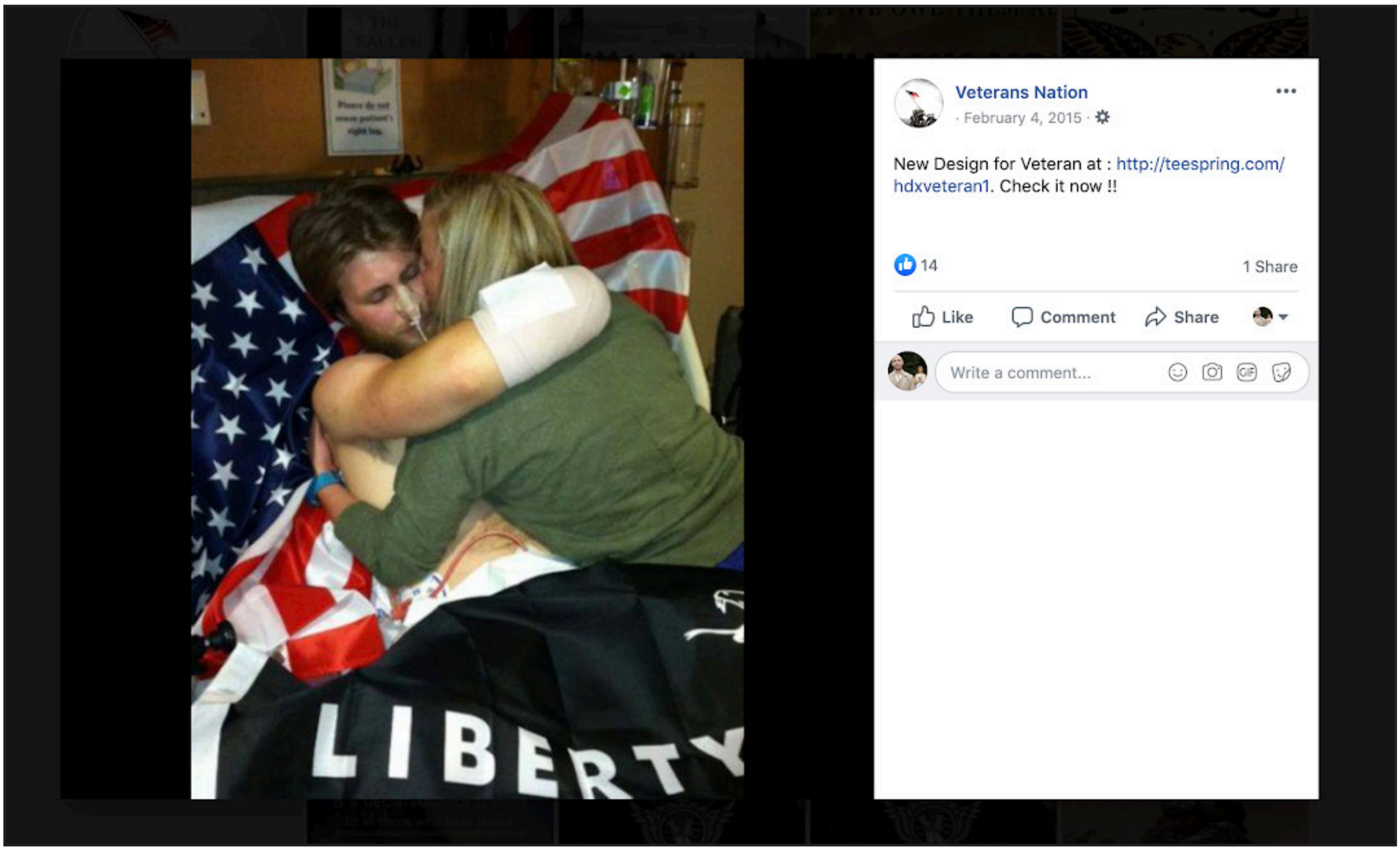
Thanks you for your served!
Limited Tee for Only Veteran at : teespring.com/hdxveteran1?var=fp.

18 Comments 14 Shares

[redacted] These are the sacrifices Obama is throwing out with the dish water.....!

[redacted] Thank you Capt. for oyur service and your sacrifice, it is an honor to call you brother. Chuck "Doc" DuVall - India 3/3 2nd Plt - Nam '67-'68

Figure 112

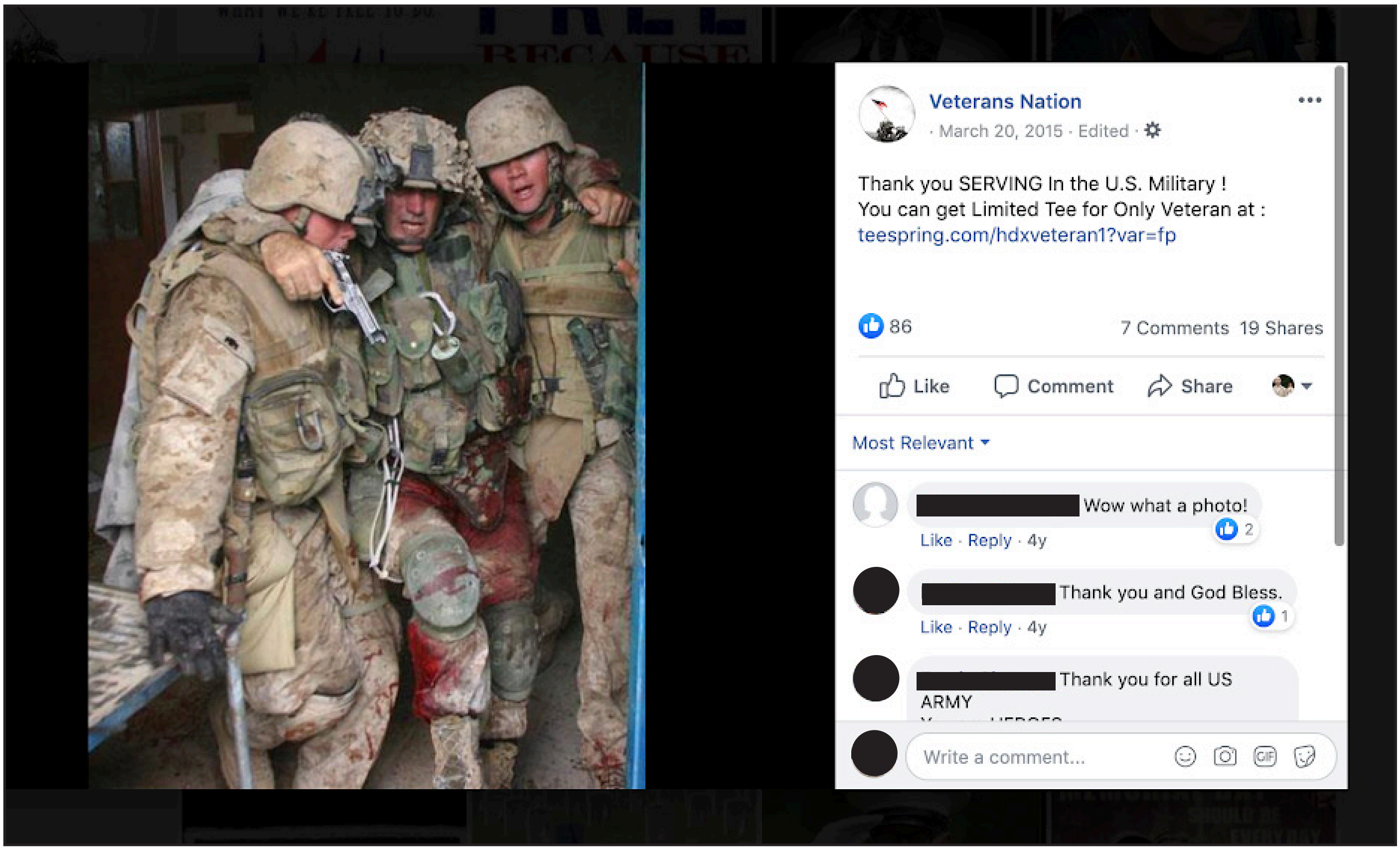


Veterans Nation
· February 4, 2015 ·

New Design for Veteran at : http://teespring.com/hdxveteran1. Check it now !!

14 1 Share

Figure 113



Veterans Nation
· March 20, 2015 · Edited ·

Thank you SERVING In the U.S. Military !
You can get Limited Tee for Only Veteran at :
teespring.com/hdxveteran1?var=fp

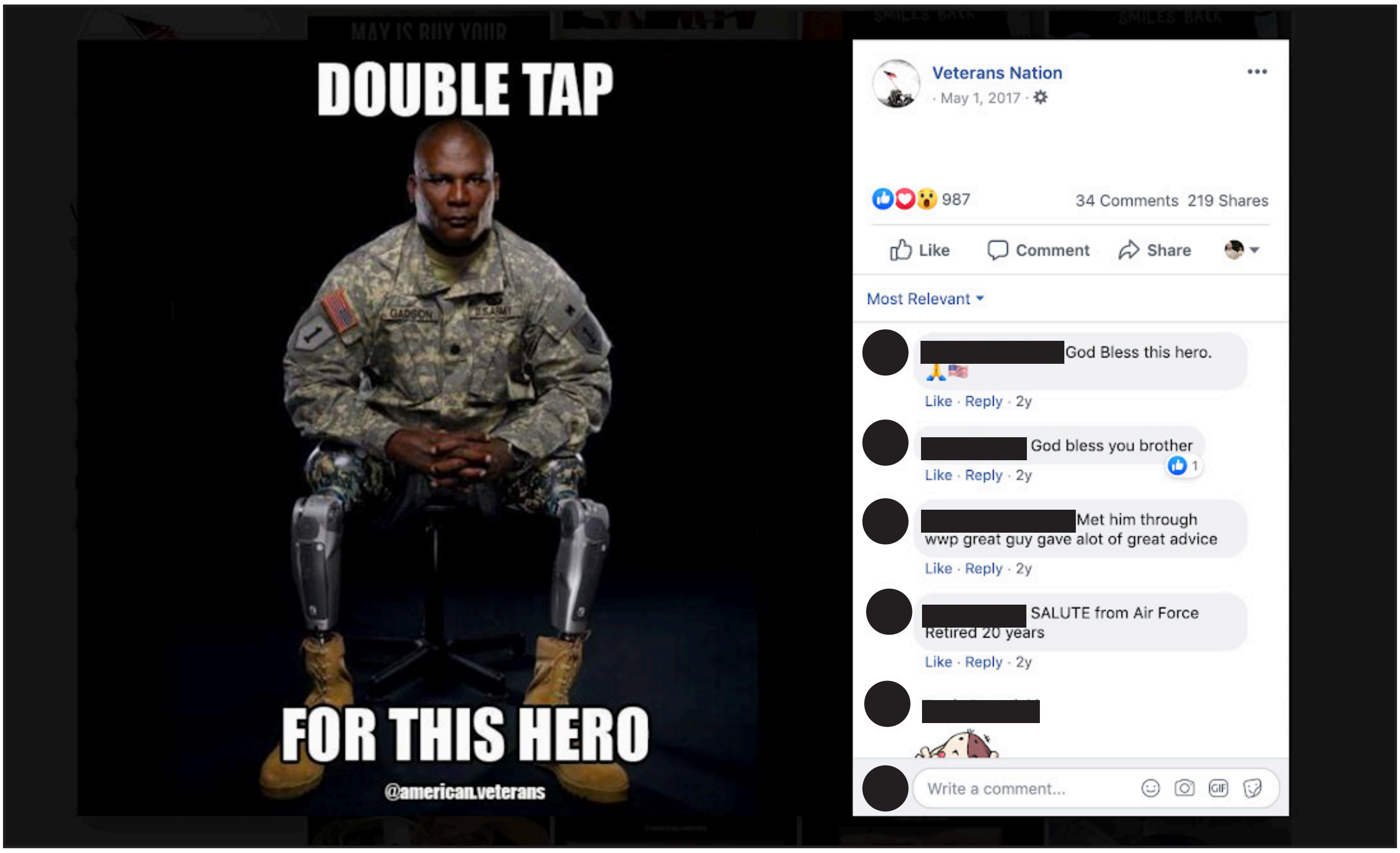
86 7 Comments 19 Shares

[redacted] Wow what a photo!
Like · Reply · 4y 2

[redacted] Thank you and God Bless.
Like · Reply · 4y 1

[redacted] Thank you for all US ARMY

Figure 114



Veterans Nation
· May 1, 2017 · ⚙

987 34 Comments 219 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

[redacted] God Bless this hero. 🙏🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] God bless you brother 1
Like · Reply · 2y

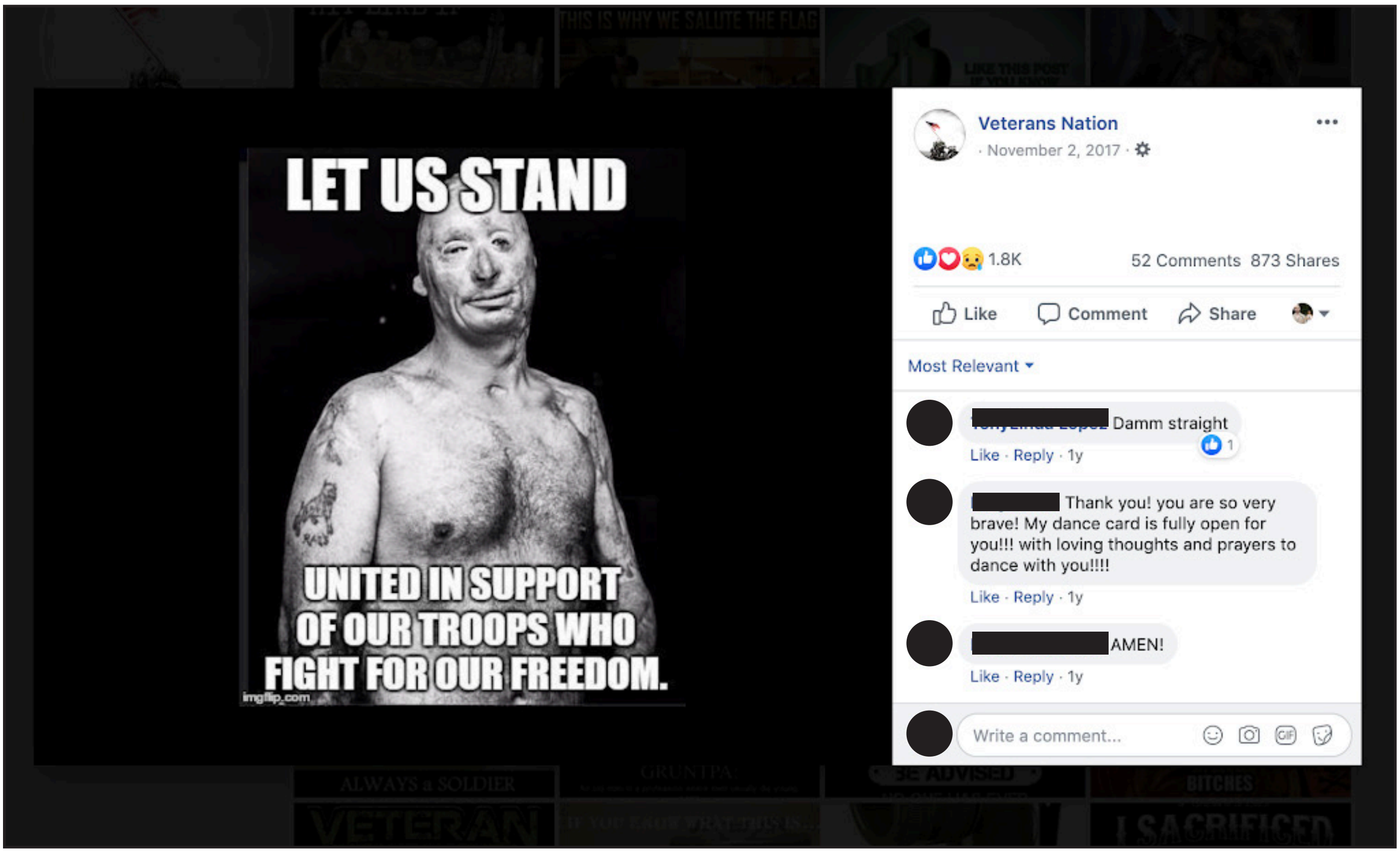
[redacted] Met him through wwp great guy gave alot of great advice
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] SALUTE from Air Force Retired 20 years
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted]

Write a comment...

Figure 115



Veterans Nation
· November 2, 2017 · ⚙

1.8K 52 Comments 873 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

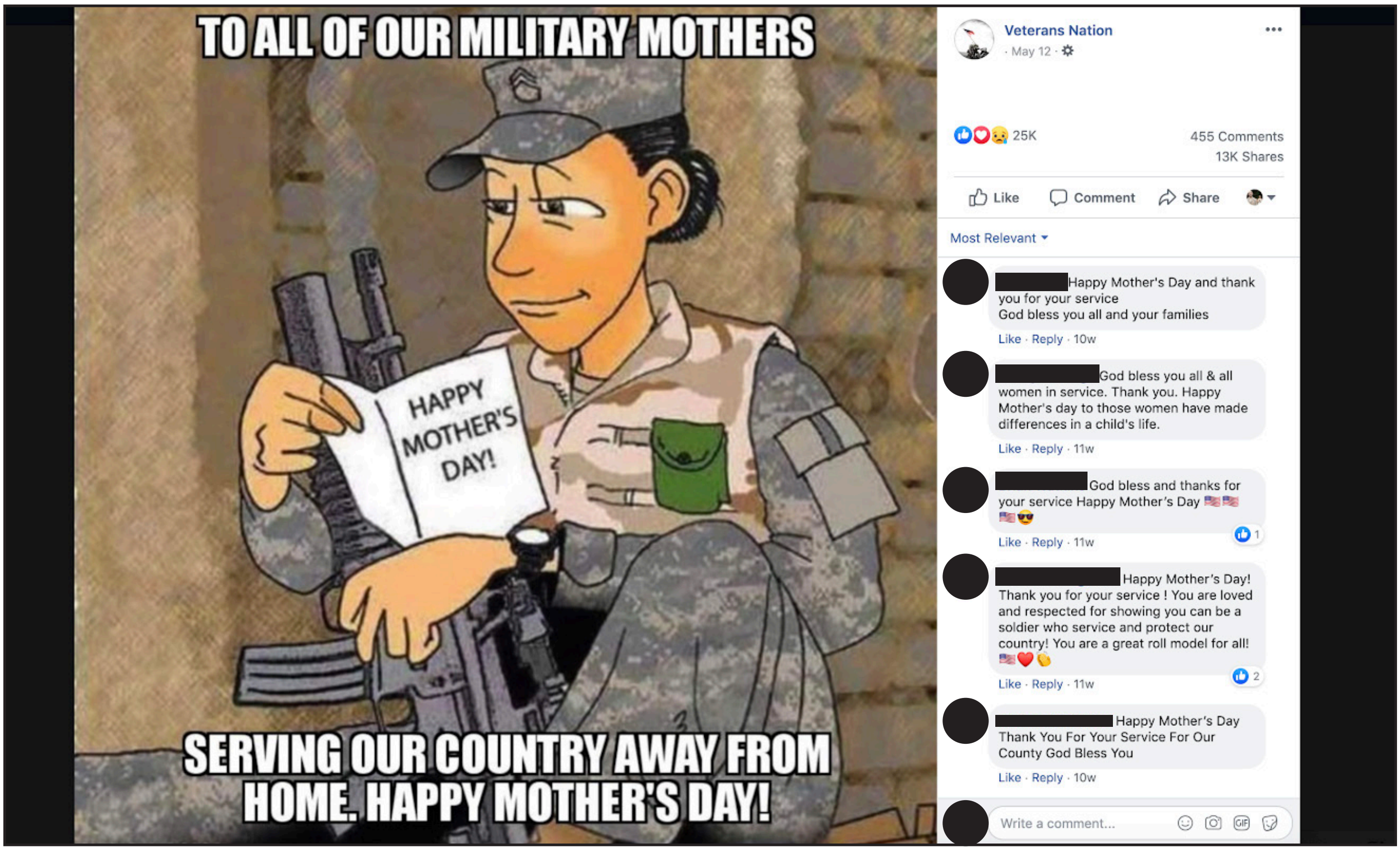
[redacted] Damm straight 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Thank you! you are so very brave! My dance card is fully open for you!!! with loving thoughts and prayers to dance with you!!!!
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] AMEN!
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 116


TO ALL OF OUR MILITARY MOTHERS
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!
SERVING OUR COUNTRY AWAY FROM HOME. HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Veterans Nation
· May 12 ·

25K
455 Comments
13K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Happy Mother's Day and thank you for your service
God bless you all and your families
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] God bless you all & all women in service. Thank you. Happy Mother's day to those women have made differences in a child's life.
Like · Reply · 11w

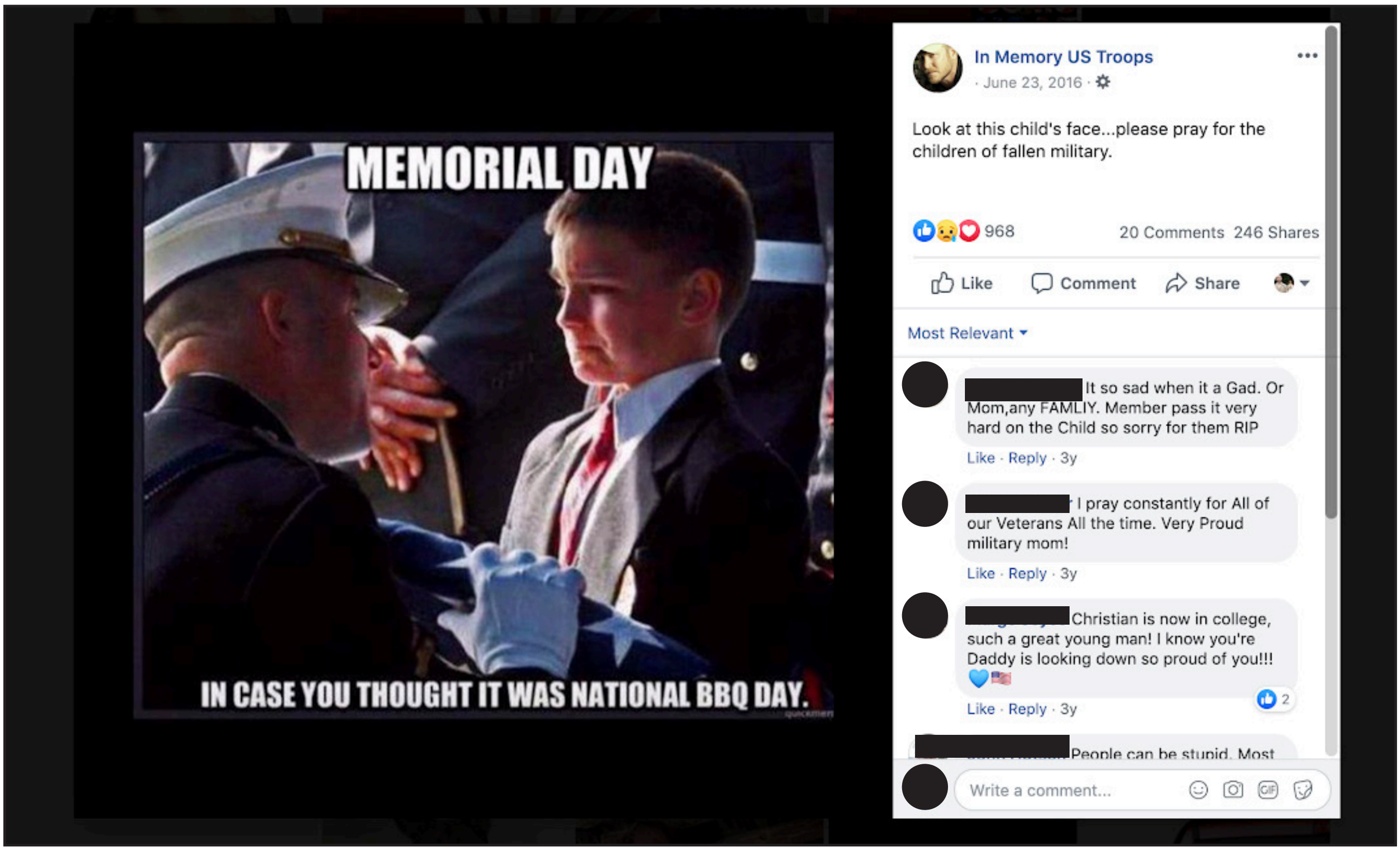
[redacted] God bless and thanks for your service Happy Mother's Day 🇺🇸🇺🇸 🇺🇸😎
Like · Reply · 11w 1

[redacted] Happy Mother's Day!
Thank you for your service ! You are loved and respected for showing you can be a soldier who service and protect our country! You are a great roll model for all! 🇺🇸❤️👏
Like · Reply · 11w 2

[redacted] Happy Mother's Day
Thank You For Your Service For Our County God Bless You
Like · Reply · 10w

Write a comment...

Figure 117: Mother's Day



In Memory US Troops
· June 23, 2016 ·

Look at this child's face...please pray for the children of fallen military.

968
20 Comments 246 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] It so sad when it a Gad. Or Mom,any FAMLIY. Member pass it very hard on the Child so sorry for them RIP
Like · Reply · 3y

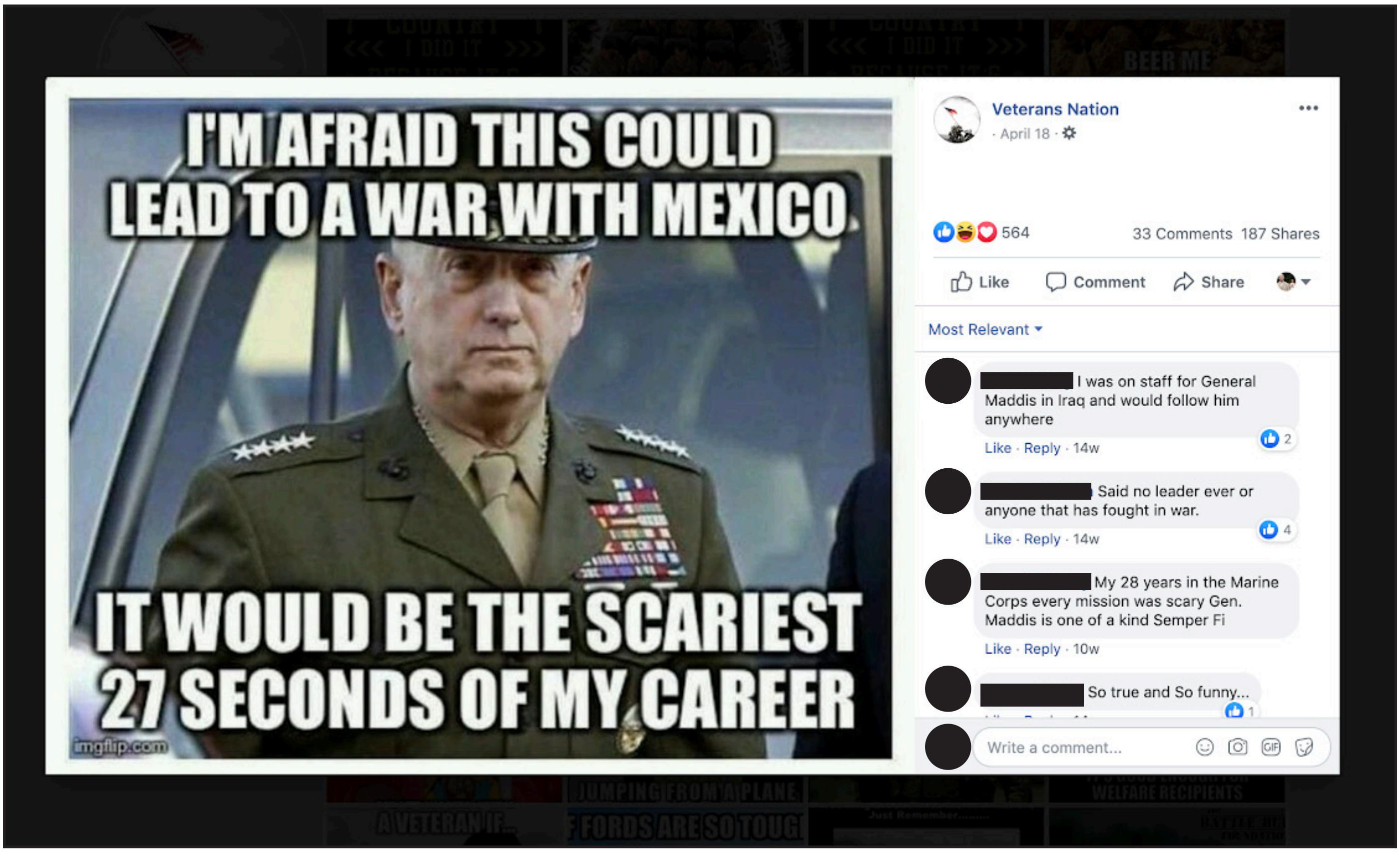
[redacted] I pray constantly for All of our Veterans All the time. Very Proud military mom!
Like · Reply · 3y

[redacted] Christian is now in college, such a great young man! I know you're Daddy is looking down so proud of you!!! 💙🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 3y 2

[redacted] People can be stupid. Most

Write a comment...

Figure 118: Memorial Day


I'M AFRAID THIS COULD LEAD TO A WAR WITH MEXICO
IT WOULD BE THE SCARIEST 27 SECONDS OF MY CAREER
imgflip.com

Veterans Nation
· April 18 ·

564 33 Comments 187 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] I was on staff for General Maddis in Iraq and would follow him anywhere
Like · Reply · 14w 2

[redacted] Said no leader ever or anyone that has fought in war.
Like · Reply · 14w 4

[redacted] My 28 years in the Marine Corps every mission was scary Gen. Maddis is one of a kind Semper Fi
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] So true and So funny...
1

Write a comment...

Figure 119

(text continued from page 94)

Holidays

Religious, federal, and cultural holidays are frequently exploited by foreign admins for clickbait memes involving MilVets. For pages that have not had their admin locations revealed because they have not yet purchased political ads or achieved a very large following, the holiday memes that are shared outside the appropriate seasons can tip off investigators to those controlled by foreign admins (Figures 117 and 118).

Secretary Mattis Memes

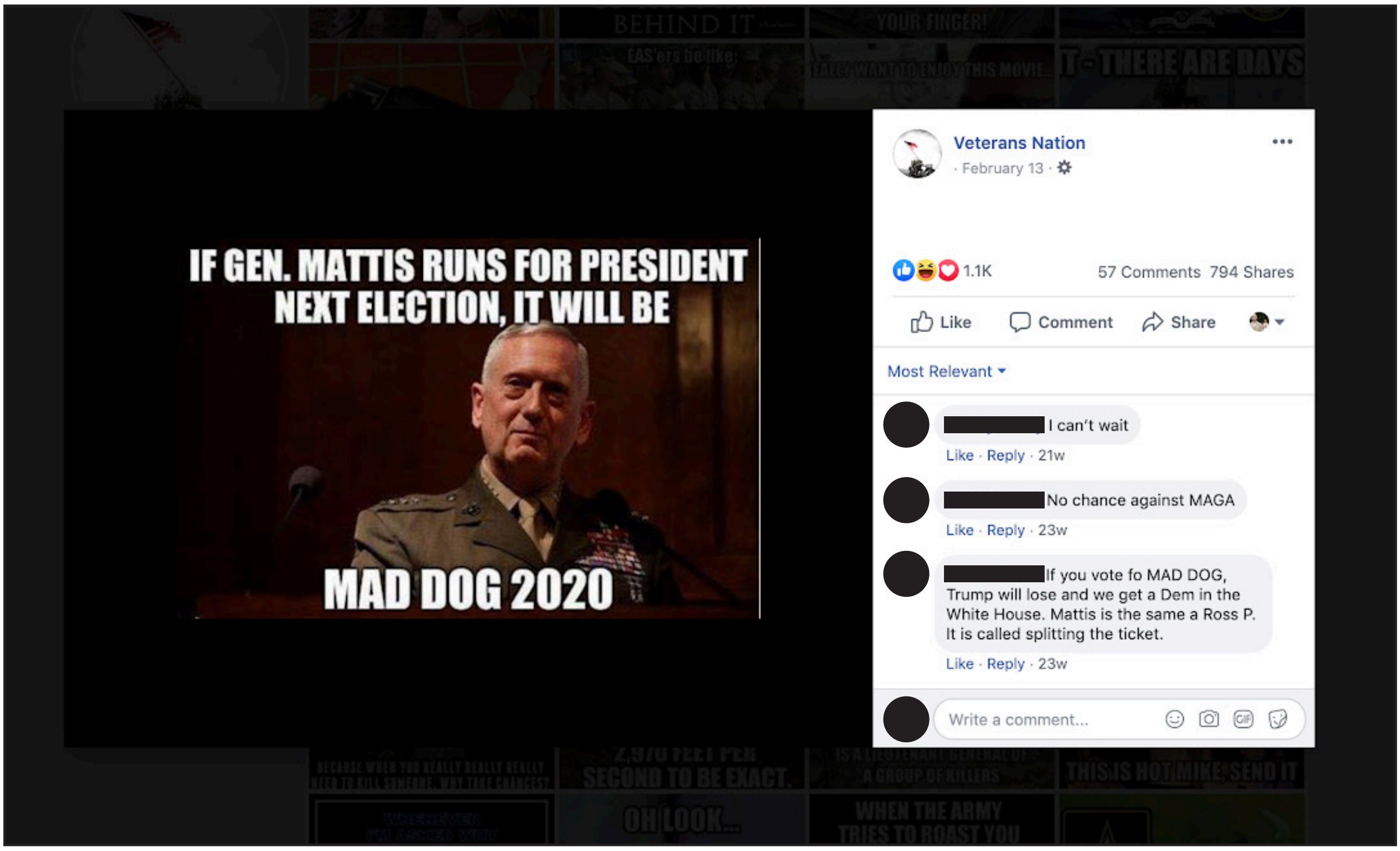
As a Marine Corps General, Secretary Mattis achieved a level of fame and appreciation among MilVets beyond that of any other high-ranking officer of the modern US military. Referred to lovingly by MilVets as the Warrior Monk for his reputation for being well read, as Chaos for his radio call sign, and Mad Dog by the press as a result of his brutal quotes, Mattis has become the inspiration for countless internet memes. As a result, he has served as one of the most popular sources of engagement bait for foreign admins to build an audience of MilVets on social-media (Figures 119-122).

Exploiting Military Women

This category includes women serving primarily in the American and Israeli militaries, though it is not uncommon to see women in uniforms representing many other countries — both allied and adversary. Content featuring women in uniform almost always highlights their gender, though it may be to exploit them in a sexual manner, to doubt their femininity or capabilities as servicemembers, or to celebrate their achievements as leaders. Regardless of the spin that foreign admins put on the content that features military women, memes of this category are often the most effective engagement-bait (Figures 123-130).

Exploiting Homeless Veterans

Homelessness among veterans is a problem that is frequently pit against other problems that our society faces — creating a false dichotomy that if an individual supports any number of divisive issues, they therefore cannot at the same time support ending veteran homelessness (Figures 131 and 132).



Veterans Nation
· February 13 · ⚙

1.1K
57 Comments 794 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

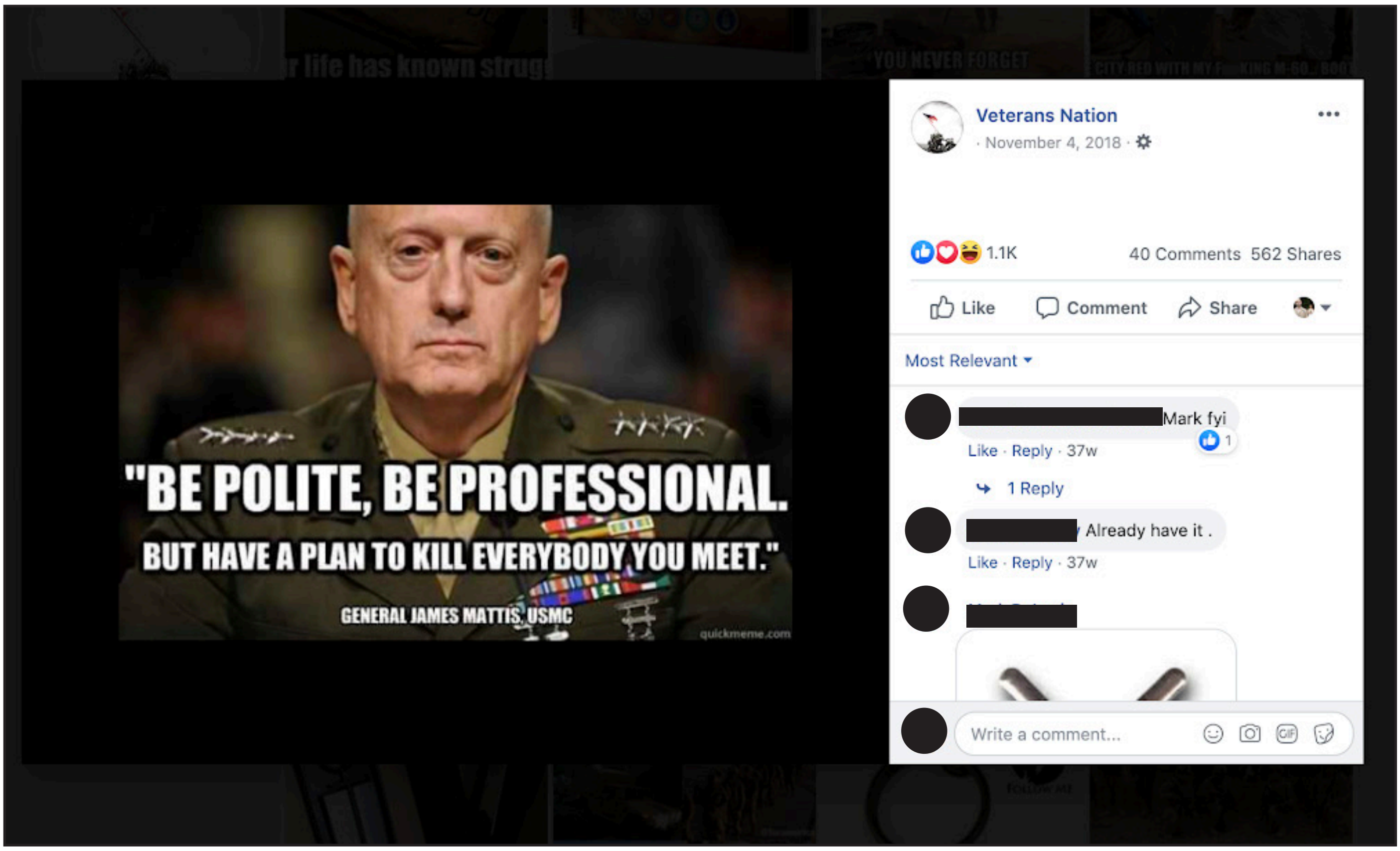
[redacted] I can't wait
Like · Reply · 21w

[redacted] No chance against MAGA
Like · Reply · 23w

[redacted] If you vote fo MAD DOG, Trump will lose and we get a Dem in the White House. Mattis is the same a Ross P. It is called splitting the ticket.
Like · Reply · 23w

Write a comment...

Figure 120



"BE POLITE, BE PROFESSIONAL.
BUT HAVE A PLAN TO KILL EVERYBODY YOU MEET."
GENERAL JAMES MATTIS, USMC
quickmeme.com

Veterans Nation
· November 4, 2018 · ⚙

1.1K
40 Comments 562 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant ▾

[redacted] Mark fyi
1
Like · Reply · 37w

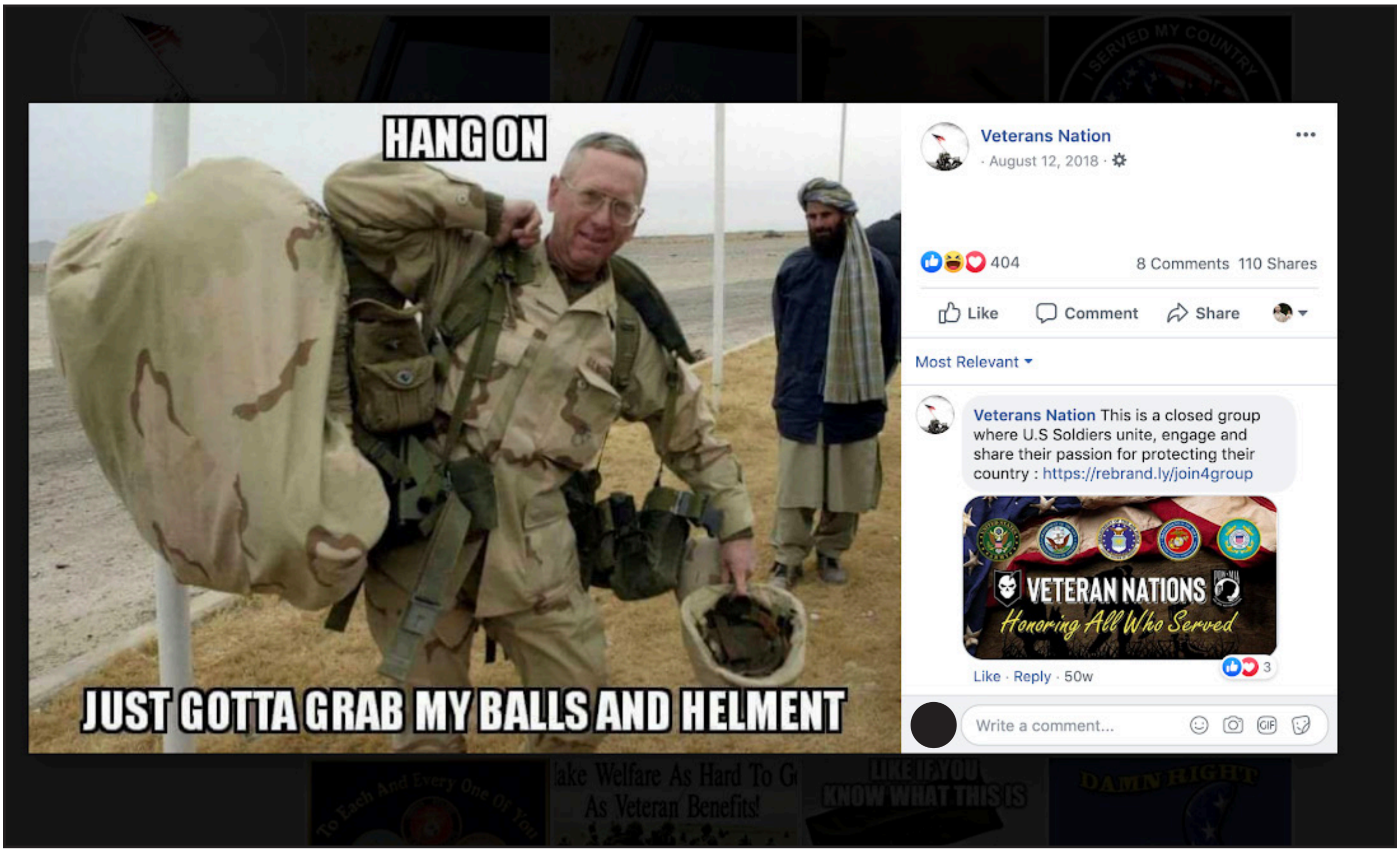
↳ 1 Reply

[redacted] Already have it .
Like · Reply · 37w

[redacted]

Write a comment...

Figure 121


HANG ON
JUST GOTTA GRAB MY BALLS AND HELMENT
VETERAN NATIONS
Honoring All Who Served
LIKE IF YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS
Take Welfare As Hard To G
As Veteran Benefits!
To Each And Every One Of You
DAMN RIGHT
I SERVED MY COUNTRY

Veterans Nation
· August 12, 2018 ·

404 8 Comments 110 Shares

Like Comment Share

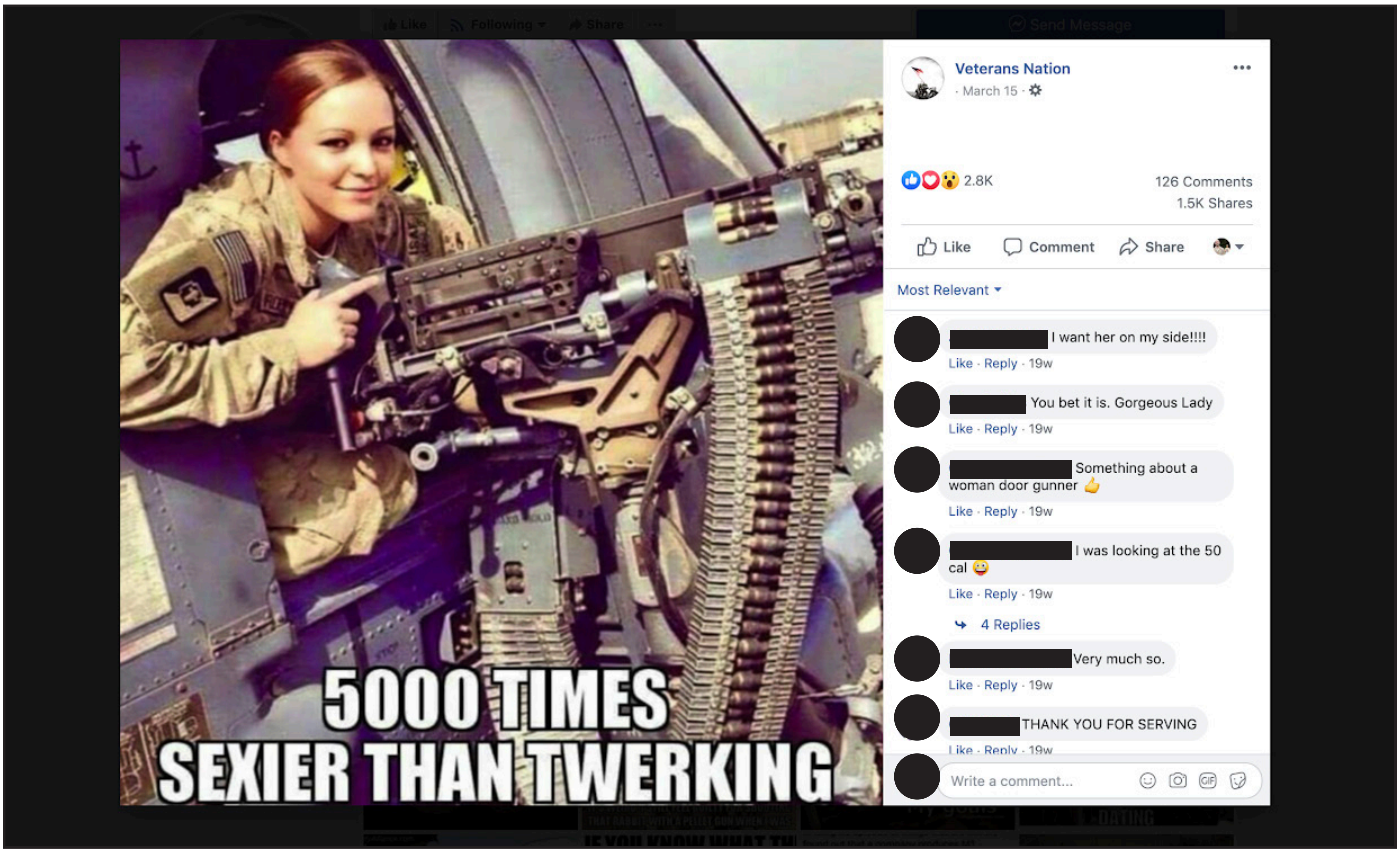
Most Relevant

Veterans Nation This is a closed group where U.S Soldiers unite, engage and share their passion for protecting their country : https://rebrand.ly/join4group

Like · Reply · 50w 3

Write a comment...

Figure 122



Veterans Nation
· March 15 ·

2.8K 126 Comments
1.5K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] I want her on my side!!!!
Like · Reply · 19w

[redacted] You bet it is. Gorgeous Lady
Like · Reply · 19w

[redacted] Something about a woman door gunner 👍
Like · Reply · 19w

[redacted] I was looking at the 50 cal 😀
Like · Reply · 19w

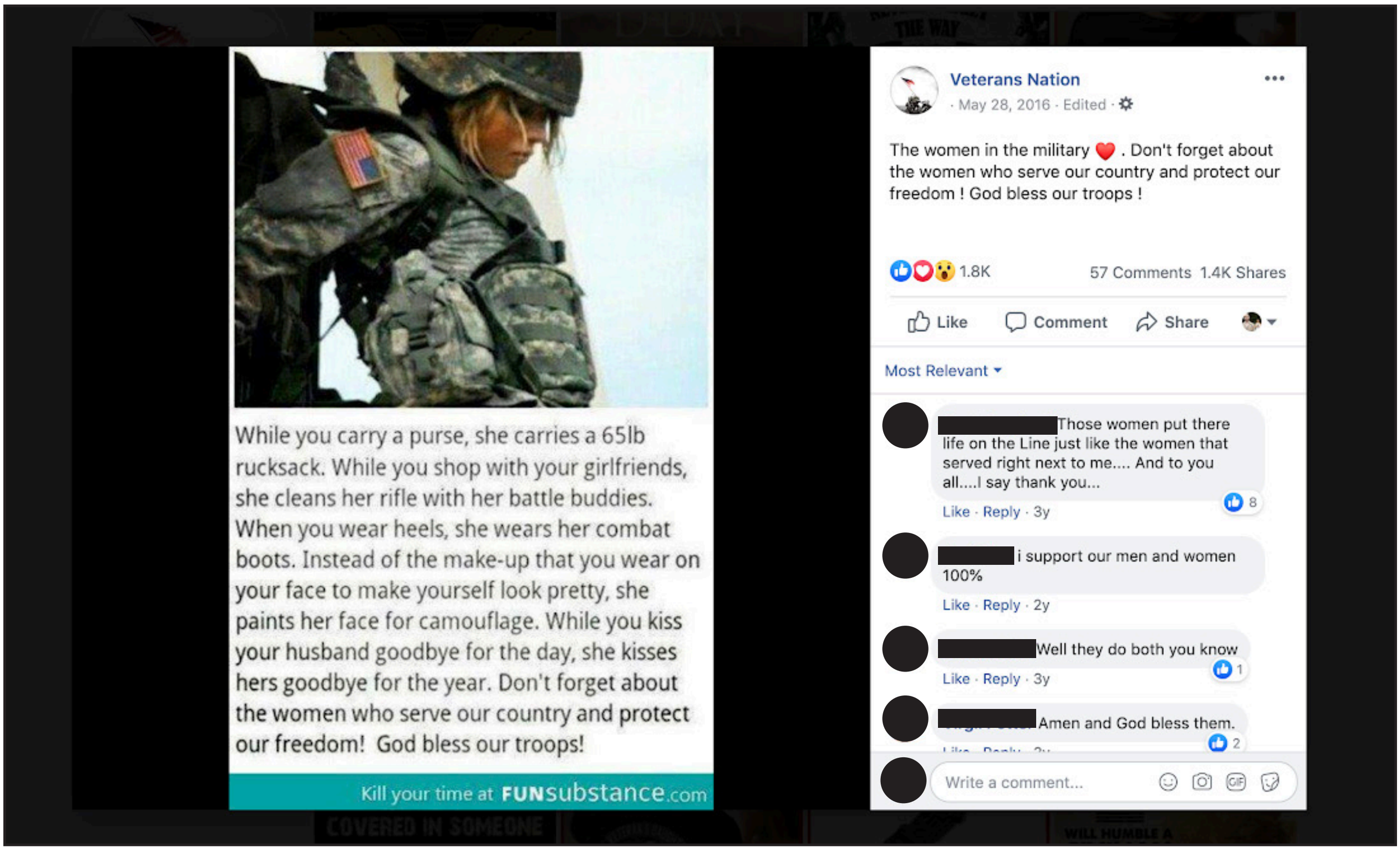
4 Replies

[redacted] Very much so.
Like · Reply · 19w

[redacted] THANK YOU FOR SERVING
Like · Reply · 19w

Write a comment...

Figure 123



While you carry a purse, she carries a 65lb rucksack. While you shop with your girlfriends, she cleans her rifle with her battle buddies. When you wear heels, she wears her combat boots. Instead of the make-up that you wear on your face to make yourself look pretty, she paints her face for camouflage. While you kiss your husband goodbye for the day, she kisses hers goodbye for the year. Don't forget about the women who serve our country and protect our freedom! God bless our troops!

Kill your time at FUNsubstance.com

Veterans Nation
· May 28, 2016 · Edited ·

The women in the military ❤️ . Don't forget about the women who serve our country and protect our freedom ! God bless our troops !

1.8K 57 Comments 1.4K Shares

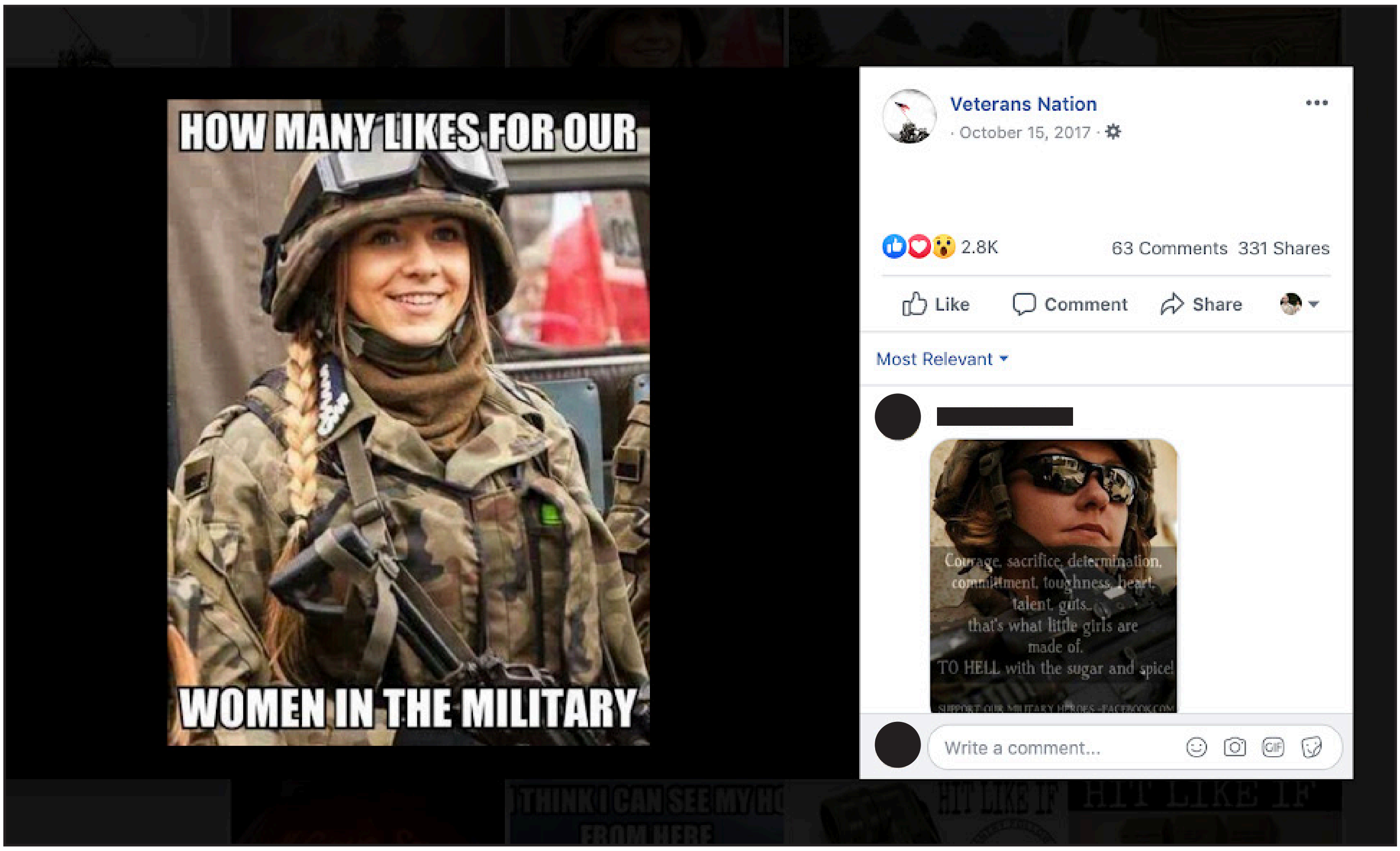
[redacted] Those women put there life on the Line just like the women that served right next to me.... And to you all....I say thank you... 8
Like · Reply · 3y

[redacted] i support our men and women 100%
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Well they do both you know 1
Like · Reply · 3y

[redacted] Amen and God bless them. 2

Figure 124



HOW MANY LIKES FOR OUR WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Veterans Nation
· October 15, 2017 ·

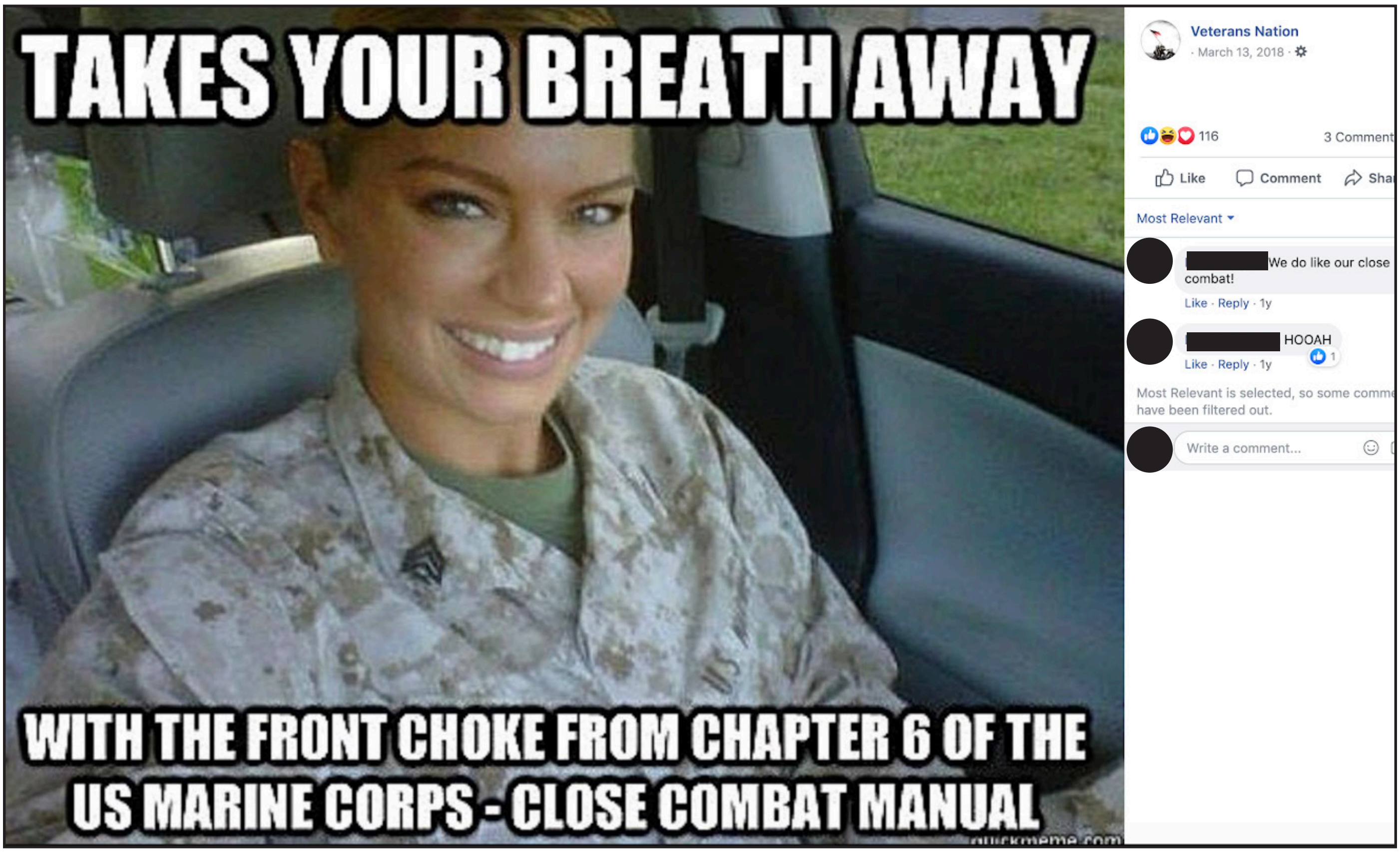
2.8K 63 Comments 331 Shares

[redacted]

Courage, sacrifice, determination, commitment, toughness, heart, talent, guts... that's what little girls are made of. TO HELL with the sugar and spice!

SUPPORT OUR MILITARY HEROES -FACEBOOK.COM

Figure 125


TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY
WITH THE FRONT CHOKE FROM CHAPTER 6 OF THE US MARINE CORPS - CLOSE COMBAT MANUAL
quickmeme.com

Veterans Nation
· March 13, 2018 ·

116 3 Comment

Like Comment Shar

Most Relevant

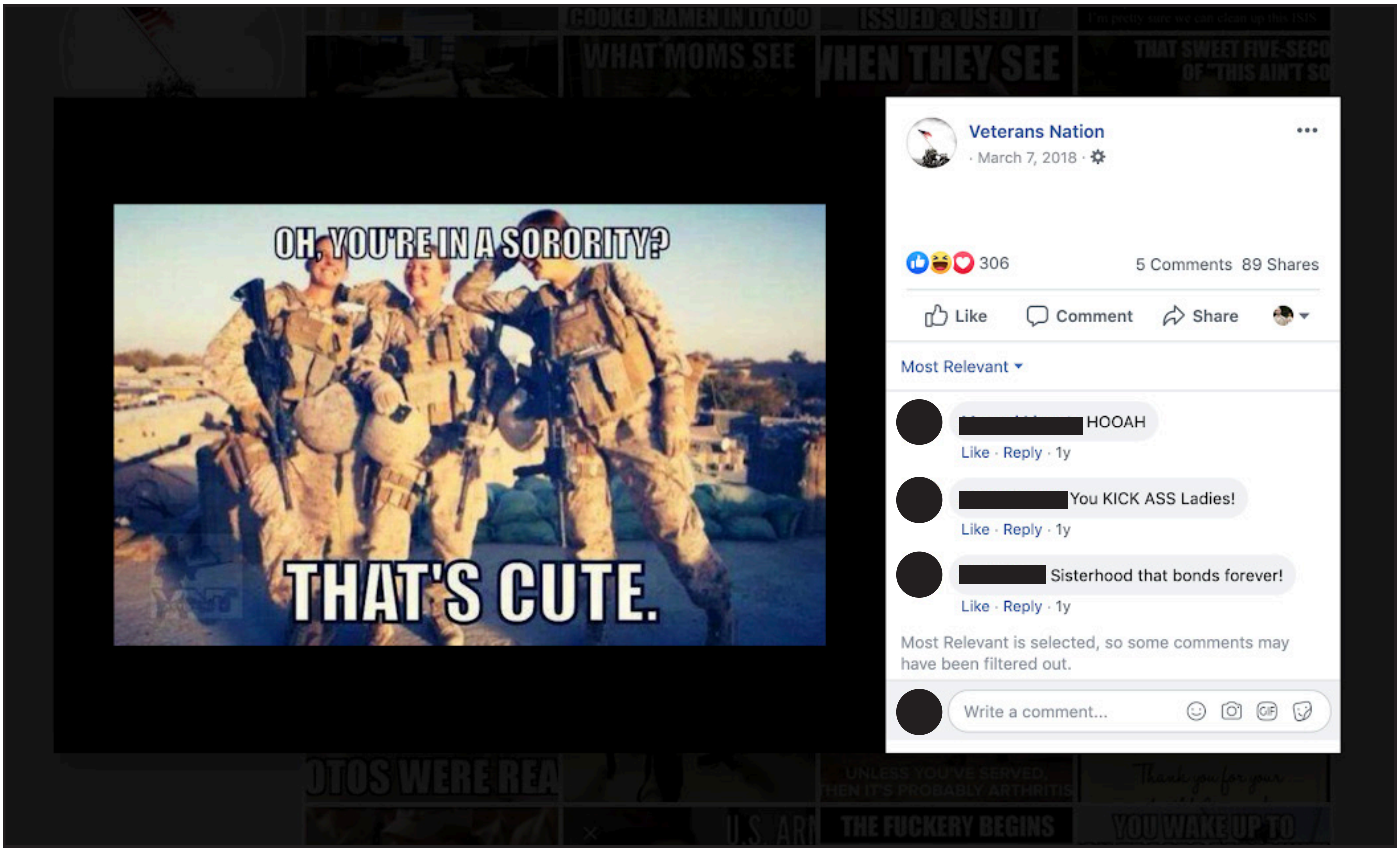
[redacted] We do like our close combat!
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] HOOAH 1
Like · Reply · 1y

Most Relevant is selected, so some comme have been filtered out.

Write a comment...

Figure 126



Veterans Nation
· March 7, 2018 ·

306 5 Comments 89 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] HOOAH
Like · Reply · 1y

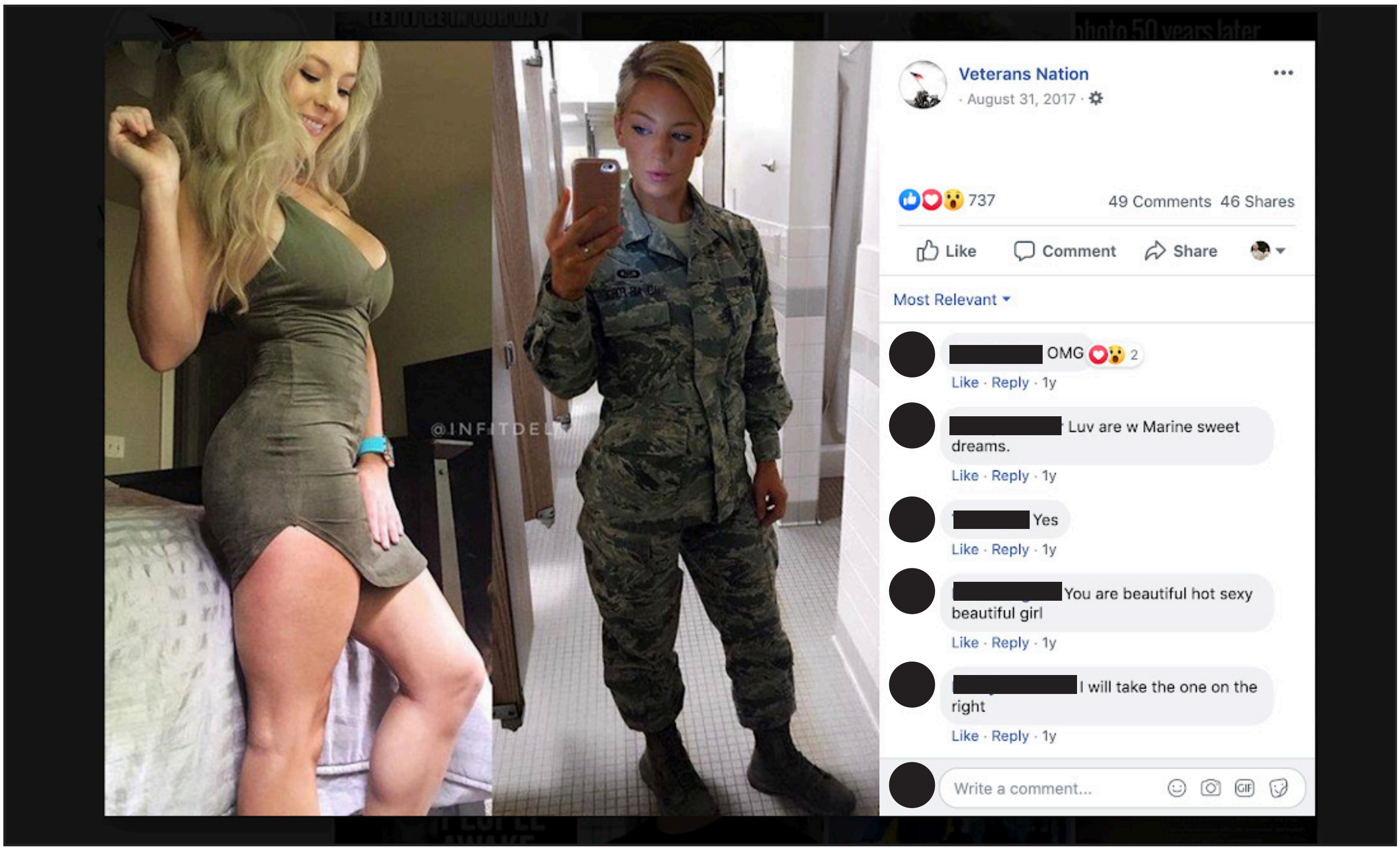
[redacted] You KICK ASS Ladies!
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Sisterhood that bonds forever!
Like · Reply · 1y

Most Relevant is selected, so some comments may have been filtered out.

Write a comment...

Figure 127



Veterans Nation
· August 31, 2017 ·

737 49 Comments 46 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] OMG 2
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Luv are w Marine sweet dreams.
Like · Reply · 1y

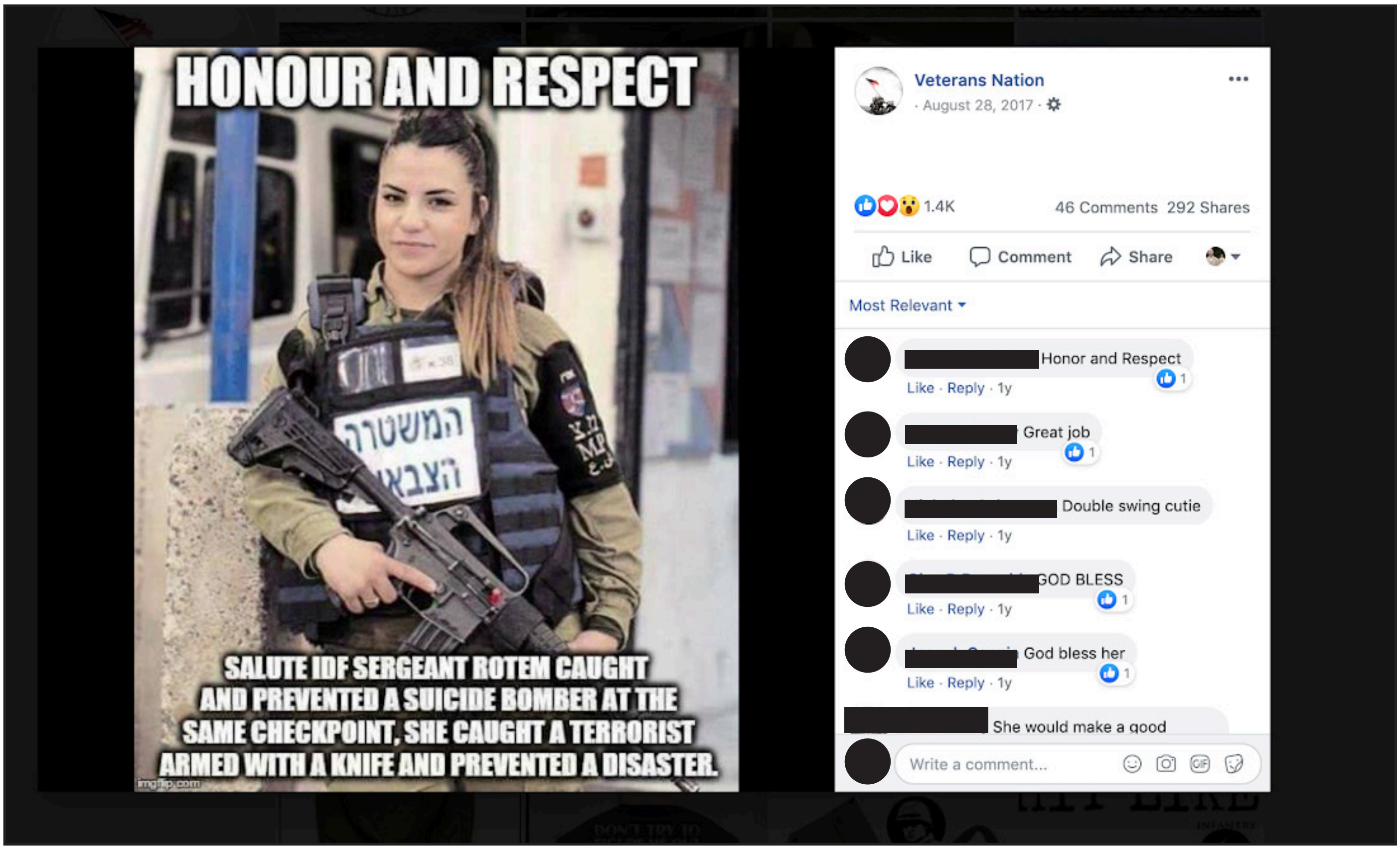
[redacted] Yes
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] You are beautiful hot sexy beautiful girl
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] I will take the one on the right
Like · Reply · 1y

Write a comment...

Figure 128


HONOUR AND RESPECT
SALUTE IDF SERGEANT ROTEM CAUGHT AND PREVENTED A SUICIDE BOMBER AT THE SAME CHECKPOINT, SHE CAUGHT A TERRORIST ARMED WITH A KNIFE AND PREVENTED A DISASTER.
imgflip.com

Veterans Nation
· August 28, 2017 ·

1.4K 46 Comments 292 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Honor and Respect 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Great job 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Double swing cutie
Like · Reply · 1y

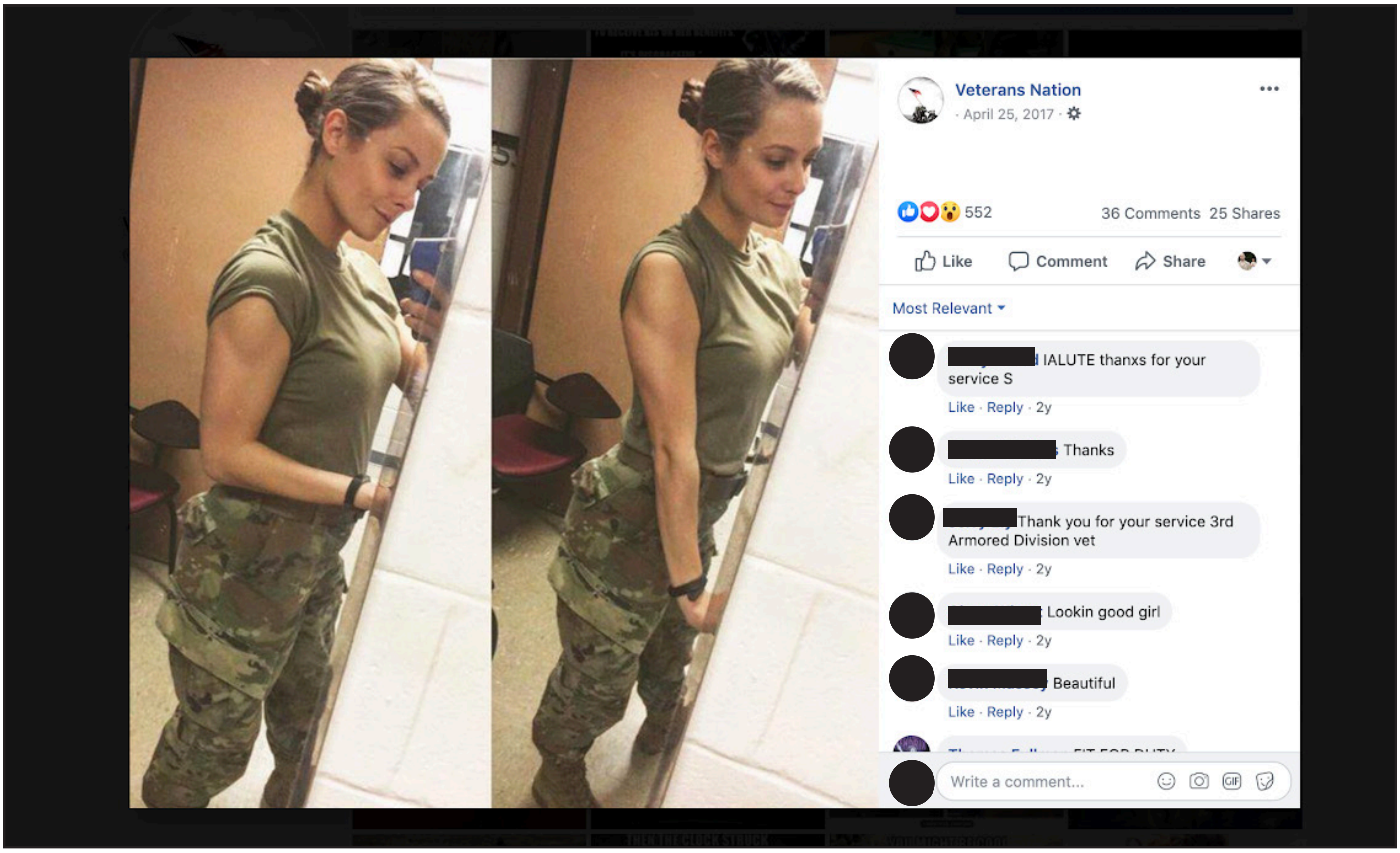
[redacted] GOD BLESS 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] God bless her 1
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] She would make a good

Write a comment...

Figure 129: While the men pictured in these memes are always in American uniforms, the foreign admins frequently exploit military women from other countries, especially Israelis.



Veterans Nation
· April 25, 2017 ·

552 · 36 Comments 25 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] IALUTE thanxs for your service S
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Thanks
Like · Reply · 2y

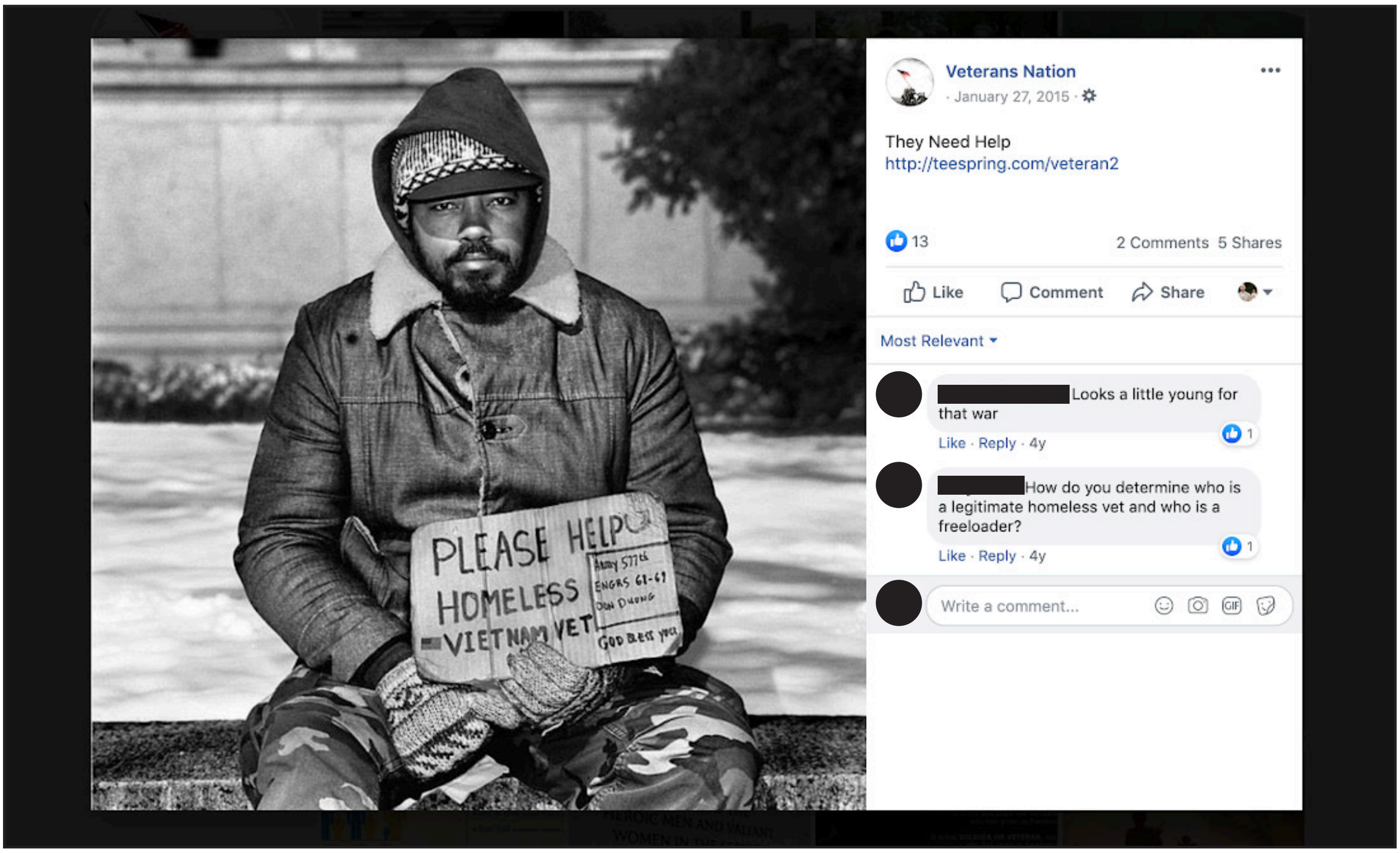
[redacted] Thank you for your service 3rd Armored Division vet
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Lookin good girl
Like · Reply · 2y

[redacted] Beautiful
Like · Reply · 2y

Write a comment...

Figure 130



Veterans Nation
· January 27, 2015 ·

They Need Help
http://teespring.com/veteran2

13 · 2 Comments 5 Shares

Like Comment Share

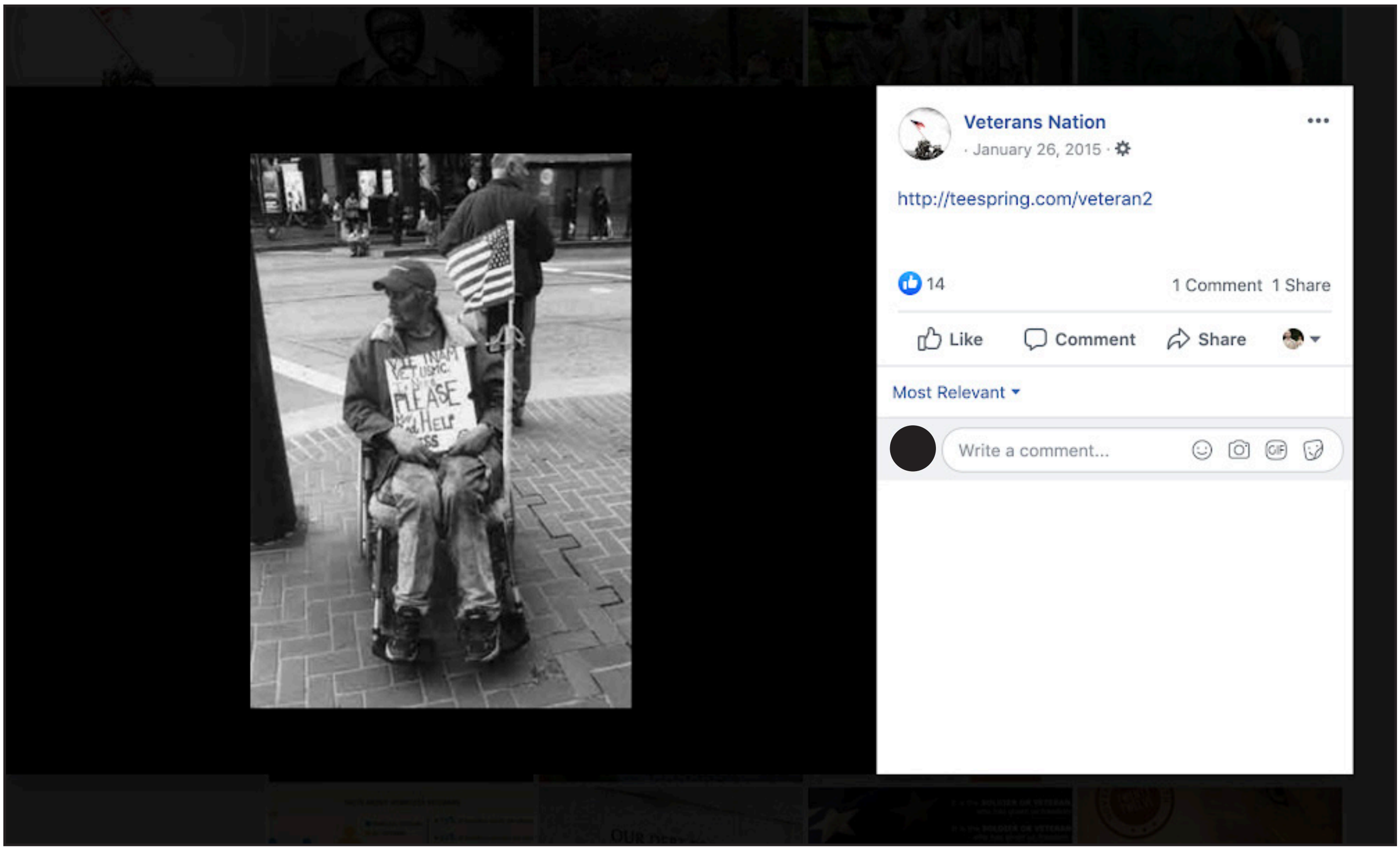
Most Relevant

[redacted] Looks a little young for that war
Like · Reply · 4y · 1

[redacted] How do you determine who is a legitimate homeless vet and who is a freeloader?
Like · Reply · 4y · 1

Write a comment...

Figure 131: Foreign admins often imply that purchasing their merchandise aids and assists veterans in need.



Veterans Nation
· January 26, 2015 ·

http://teespring.com/veteran2

14

1 Comment 1 Share

Figure 132

CHAPTER 5: What We Know About the Russian Ads That Targeted MilVets

Evaluating the IRA Ads

In October and November 2017, the United States House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) made available Facebook ads that were produced by the Russian IRA for the purposes of disrupting the 2016 election and dividing the American public in the wake of that election.

There were at least ten times that ads also targeted Facebook users who identified as being in the United States Army Reserves.

Facebook allows ad buyers to choose hyper-specific guidelines to define the population that the buyers want to target with ads. Ad-targeting criteria can be used to either include or exclude a host of biographical, geographical, social, or personal characteristics.

The Content Russia Has Already Used to Target MilVets in Paid Ads

The HPSCI provided ads that included both audience-building and divisive content, though the committee states that there were 80,000 additional pieces of organic content that they obtained from Facebook and did not release. Organic content is that which has not been boosted to appear in people's news feeds as paid ads.[168] Of the 3,519 IRA-linked ads that the committee made available to the public, there were at least 113 instances of MilVet-focused ads purchased by the Russians.[169]

(text continued on page 113)

Specifically Targeted Veterans Organizations

Some of these ads specifically targeted American servicemembers and veterans, as well as the members, and social-media followers of several government entities, MilVet organizations, MilVet-focused businesses, and prominent veterans,[170,171] including:

American Veterans (AMVETS)	(≥2 times)
Chris Kyle	(≥2 times)
Concerned Veterans for America (CVA)	(≥3 times)
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)	(≥18 times)
Dysfunctional Veterans (DV)	(≥1 time)
Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)	(≥2 times)
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)	(≥4 times)
Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)	(≥2 times)
United States Army Reserve	(≥10 times)
United States Department of Veterans Affairs	(≥12 times)
Veterans Advantage	(≥1 time)
Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW)	(≥3 times)
Vietnam Veterans Memorial[172]	(≥3 times)
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund	(≥3 times)
Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)	(≥8 times)
Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation	(≥6 times)
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)	(≥3 times)

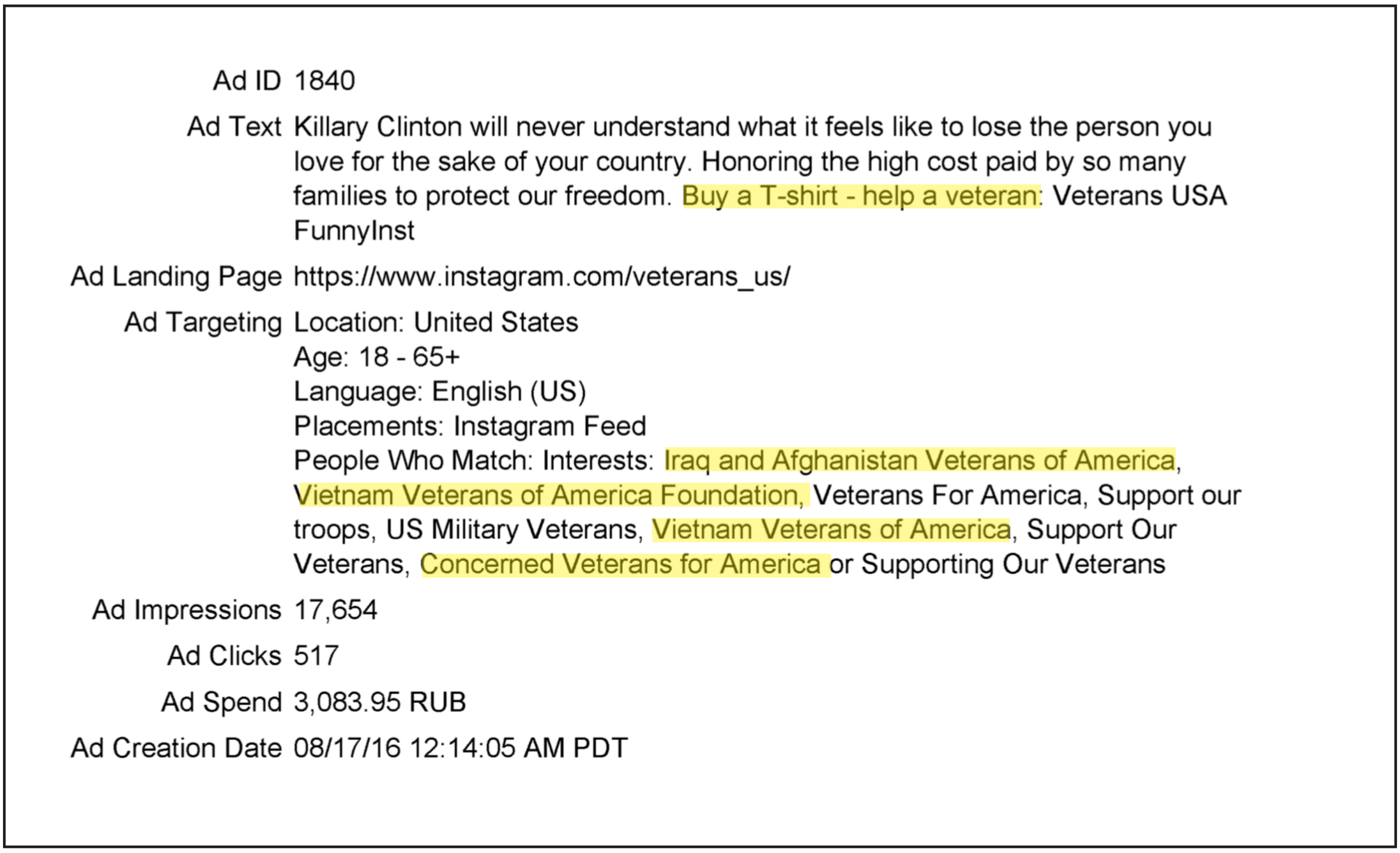
Targeting Criteria

For ads released by the HPSCI that were focused on MilVets, targeting criteria includes, but is not limited to:

- Age range
- Location: living in (city), located in (city), within (x) miles of (city)
- Language(s)
- Interests (Facebook's algorithms determine interests by the pages that users like and the content they frequently interact with)
- Employer
- Industry
- Politics (Facebook's algorithms determine political leanings by the pages that users like and the content they frequently interact with)
- Specific pages they like
- Their friend status with people who like certain pages (Russian-controlled or otherwise)
- Their friend status of people with connections to other people who like (or don't like) certain pages (Russian-controlled or otherwise)
- Military affiliation
- Those living with MilVets
- Family of MilVets
- People whose interests align with a particular culture or heritage: ie, African-American (US), Hispanic
- Religion and religiosity
- Political-party affiliation
- Hostility toward immigrants and refugees

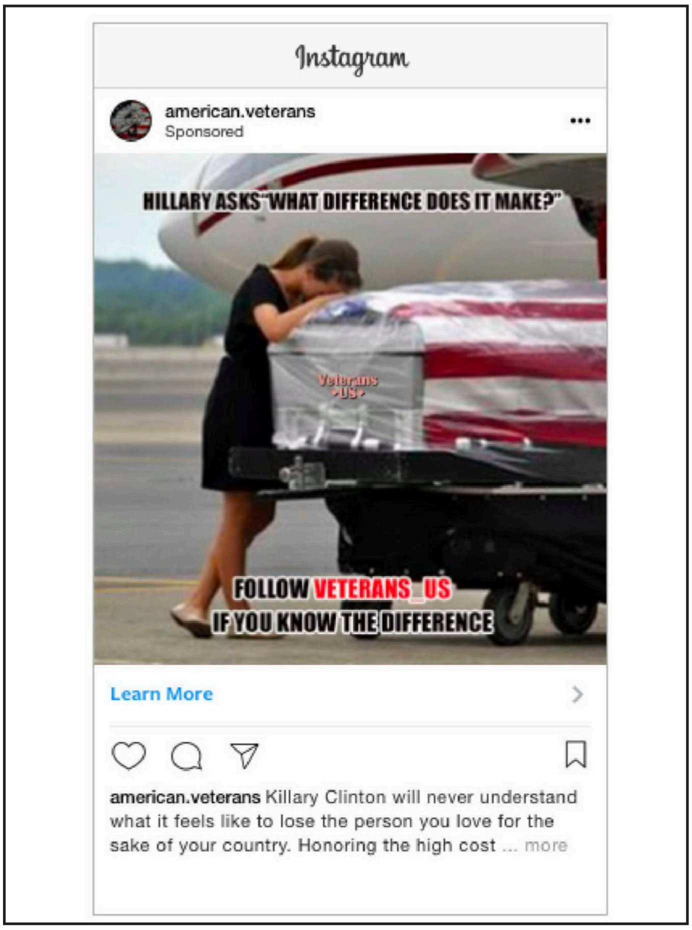
Topics

- Black solidarity / Identity / Rights
- Anti-Black-Lives-Matter, making references to “BLM terrorists”
- Latino solidarity / Identity / Rights
- Anti-Hispanic / Anti-Spanish-language
- Muslim identity / Rights
- LGBT Identity / Rights
- Anti-LGBT
- Iran killing Americans in Iraq
- Support for law enforcement
- Law-enforcement misconduct or failure
- Anti-government spending / Taxation
- Military mission failure in Vietnam / Iraq / Syria / Afghanistan
- Missing in Action (MIA)
- Events of military history (WWII and Vietnam)
- PTSD / Suicide
- Pro-Muslim / Pro-refugee
- Anti-Islam
- Christianity / Jesus / Bible
- Al-Qaeda [variation in spelling] / Osama Bin Laden
- Domestic terrorism / School shootings
- Secretary Hillary Clinton / Benghazi
- Senator Bernie Sanders
- President Barack Obama
- Candidate Donald Trump / President Donald Trump / “Make America Great Again” (MAGA)
- Support Our Troops / Respect Our Troops / Troops Killed in Action (KIA)
- Healthcare / Patient protection and Affordable Care Act
- Education
- Economy / Debt / Evictions / Unemployment / Homelessness
- Anti-immigration / Anti-Refugees
- Deportation of veterans by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- Drugs / Gangs
- Military families
- Service animals / Wounded veterans
- Cessation / Separatists / State pride
- “Green Light” bill
- Toxic exposures (tainted water at Camp Lejeune)
- Disposable veterans / Government lack of care for vets
- VA failure / Wait times



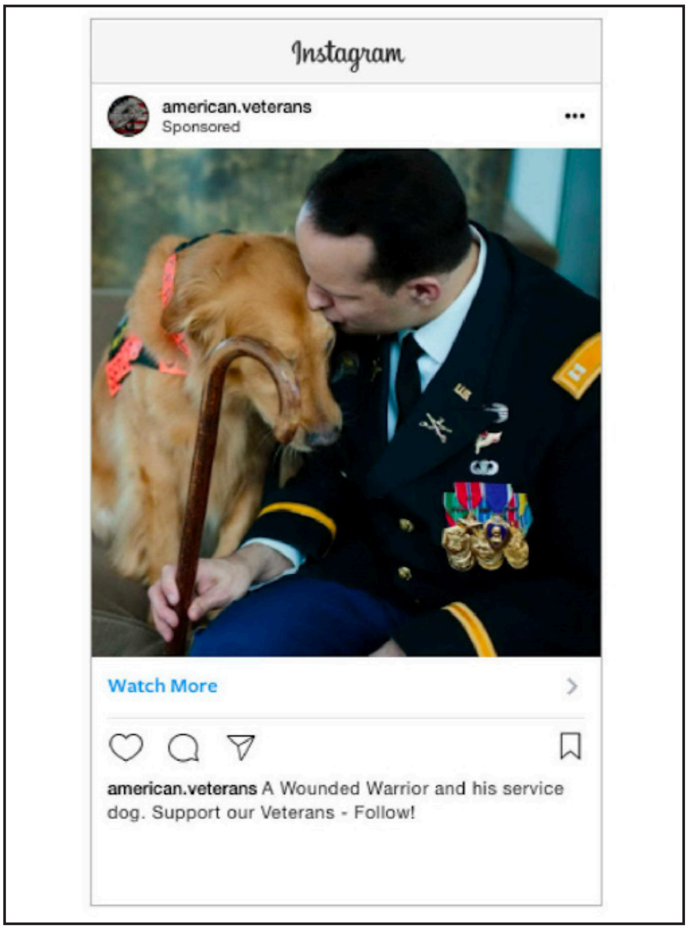
Ad ID	1840
Ad Text	Killary Clinton will never understand what it feels like to lose the person you love for the sake of your country. Honoring the high cost paid by so many families to protect our freedom. Buy a T-shirt - help a veteran: Veterans USA FunnyInst
Ad Landing Page	https://www.instagram.com/veterans_us/
Ad Targeting	Location: United States Age: 18 - 65+ Language: English (US) Placements: Instagram Feed People Who Match: Interests: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Veterans For America, Support our troops, US Military Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Support Our Veterans, Concerned Veterans for America or Supporting Our Veterans
Ad Impressions	17,654
Ad Clicks	517
Ad Spend	3,083.95 RUB
Ad Creation Date	08/17/16 12:14:05 AM PDT

Figure 133: This is the data provided by HPSCI to describe the Russian IRA ad #1840, which is shown in Figure 134 and specifically targeted IAVA, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, VVA, and CVA. This ad was selling MilVet-related merchandise, funding the IRA, and possibly scraping financial and other sensitive information from MilVets.



american.veterans Killary Clinton will never understand what it feels like to lose the person you love for the sake of your country. Honoring the high cost ... more

Figure 134: This is what Instagram users who follow IAVA, VVA, CVA, etc., saw in their feeds when being fed Russian IRA ad #1840.



american.veterans A Wounded Warrior and his service dog. Support our Veterans - Follow!

Figure 135: Captain Luis Carlos Montalvan and his service dog, Tuesday.

(text continued from page 108)

The HPSCI staff identified several categories of ads according to subject matter in a November 1, 2017, memo, including: Black Lives Matter, Race issues, Immigration, Islam/Sharia law, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, LGBT issues, and more.[173]

The unclassified January 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) states that the purpose of using divisive material by the IRA was to cause discord.[174] The MilVet-focused ads often centered on these issues and can be further refined under the subcategories (ads can fit multiple categories based on imagery and associated text) listed on the chart on page 111.[175]

Russians Selling MilVet Merchandise

Some of these ads exhibited behavior that is similar to most of the foreign-born social-media accounts, pages, and groups that VVA has been tracking in this investigation. For example, these Russian ads linked to third-party websites that sold MilVet-themed merchandise — which we've found most of the MilVet-focused pages that have foreign admins are currently doing. Because the URLs for the third-party websites were redacted from the ads released by HPSCI, we cannot confirm whether the foreign entities we've been evaluating are using the same third-party websites as the Russians. Who profits from sales of MilVet merchandise in any of these cases is also unknown.

Ad #1840 (Figures 133 and 134) is one example of a Russian ad that encouraged Instagram users to buy merchandise, purporting that doing so would help veterans.

The ad was targeted at a variety of types of veterans organizations: the congressionally chartered VVA; the now-defunct international humanitarian organization Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation; the mostly online 501c3 veterans organization IAVA; and the Koch-backed, conservative 501c4 veterans activism group, CVA.

The Russians paid 3,083.95 rubles to purchase this ad ($49.34 US on the date of the ad buy,[176] according to Google's online currency converter tool). For less than $50 this single ad was put into the feeds of Instagram users who met the specific targeting criteria of following the above veterans organizations — speaking English[177] and of age 18 or older — 17,654 times and was clicked-on by Instagram users 517 times.

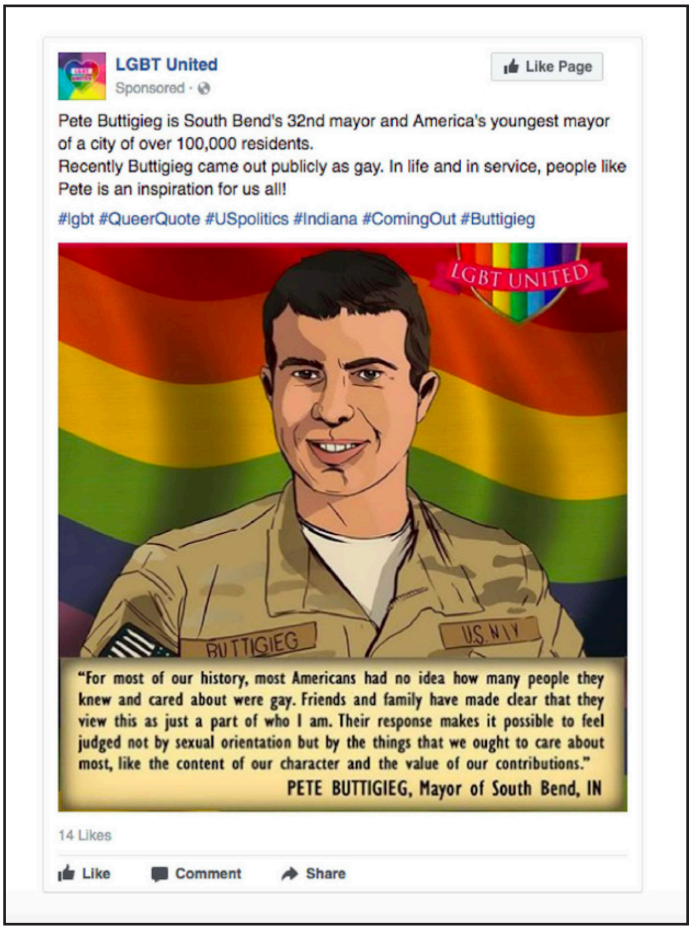
Captain Luis Carlos Montalvan

Audience-building content included a photograph of the late-author-and-disabled-veteran-advocate Captain Louis Carlos Montalvan. In the photo, Mr. Montalvan is sitting down, wearing his Army dress-blues uniform and holding a cane while kissing and cuddling with his service dog, Tuesday (Figure 135). Mr. Montalvan was the author of the 2011 book *Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him* and was working with Congress to ensure that the VA engaged in thorough research on the impact service dogs have on veterans with PTSD. Mr. Montalvan was a personal friend of the author of this report, as he was for many of the advocates who work in DC on MilVets policy. He died of suicide in December 2016,[178] but his photo will forever remain as evidence of a crime against the United States, since Russian propaganda networks used it for several paid ads.[179]

Indications of What MilVets Running for Office in 2020 Should Expect From Russia

The Russians have already targeted a MilVet who is currently running for the Democratic nomination for the 2020 presidential campaign, though it was in an ad paid for in June 2015. Russian Ad #657 features a cartoon of Mayor Pete Buttigieg, depicted in his Army uniform, and in front of a waving gay-pride flag (Figure 136). The ad advertised the Russian-controlled Facebook page "LGBT United," and highlighted Mr. Buttigieg's coming out as gay, as well as his military service (Figure 137).

Although this ad appears to be supportive of Mr. Buttigieg and LGBT individuals, the purpose of the ad-buy was to expand the audience for a page that was otherwise meant to create and amplify social conflict among Americans. The quote within the meme that is attributed to the mayor is used in this context to subconsciously elicit in the mind of LGBT Americans the painful history of being forced to remain closeted and unaccepted by friends, family, and American society. Mr. Buttigieg's military service and sexual orientation will continue to be used by Russians seeking to divide Americans as he becomes an ever-more popular figure at least throughout the remainder of, and likely beyond, the Democratic primaries for the 2020 presidential race.



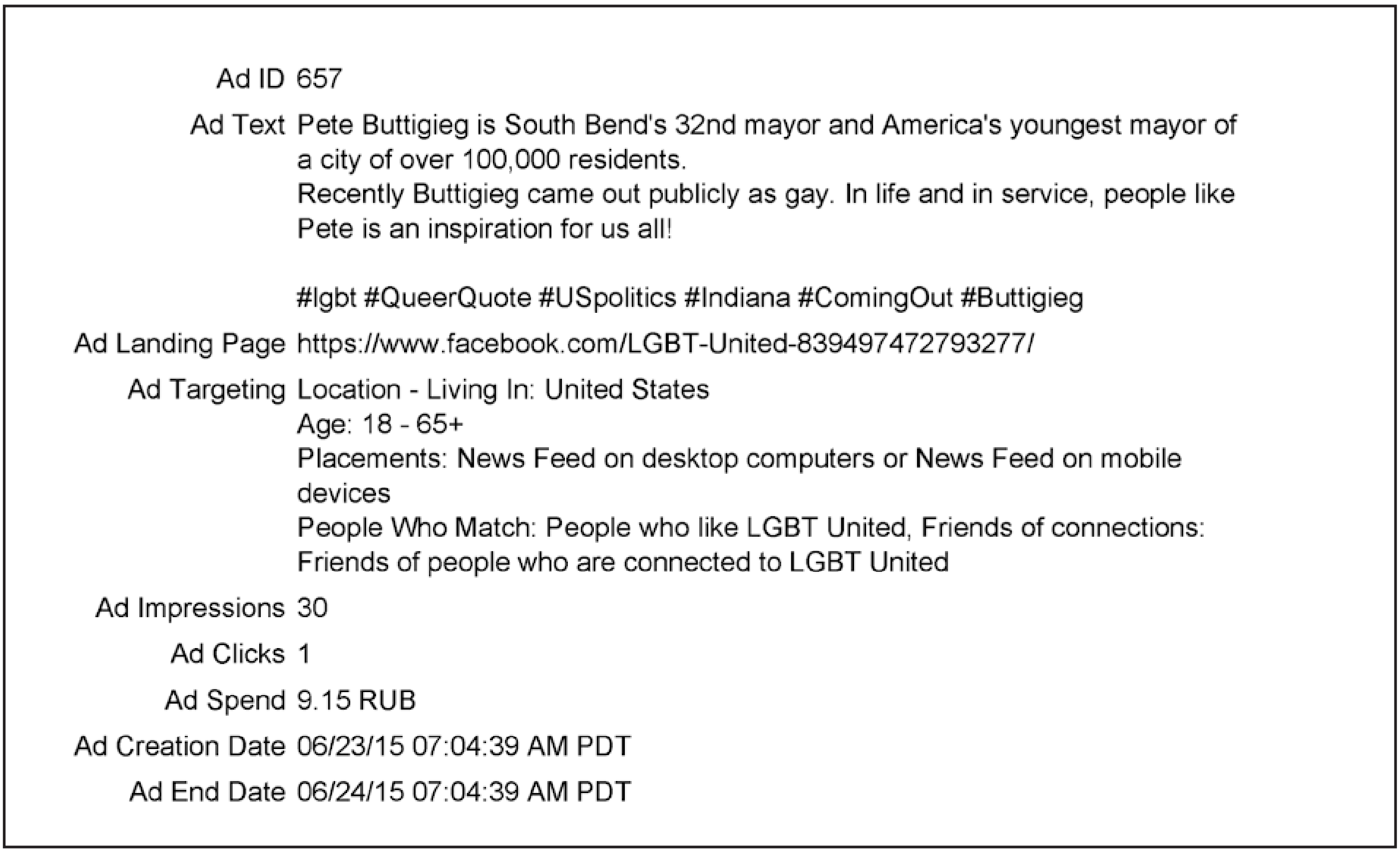
LGBT United
Sponsored ·

Pete Buttigieg is South Bend's 32nd mayor and America's youngest mayor of a city of over 100,000 residents.
Recently Buttigieg came out publicly as gay. In life and in service, people like Pete is an inspiration for us all!
#lgbt #QueerQuote #USpolitics #Indiana #ComingOut #Buttigieg

"For most of our history, most Americans had no idea how many people they knew and cared about were gay. Friends and family have made clear that they view this as just a part of who I am. Their response makes it possible to feel judged not by sexual orientation but by the things that we ought to care about most, like the content of our character and the value of our contributions."
PETE BUTTIGIEG, Mayor of South Bend, IN

14 Likes

Figure 136: Mayor Buttigieg has been on the radar of Russian intelligence since at least June 2015 as someone whose personal story and identity could be exploited to divide Americans along political lines.



Ad ID	657
Ad Text	Pete Buttigieg is South Bend's 32nd mayor and America's youngest mayor of a city of over 100,000 residents. Recently Buttigieg came out publicly as gay. In life and in service, people like Pete is an inspiration for us all! #lgbt #QueerQuote #USpolitics #Indiana #ComingOut #Buttigieg
Ad Landing Page	https://www.facebook.com/LGBT-United-839497472793277/
Ad Targeting	Location - Living In: United States Age: 18 - 65+ Placements: News Feed on desktop computers or News Feed on mobile devices People Who Match: People who like LGBT United, Friends of connections: Friends of people who are connected to LGBT United
Ad Impressions	30
Ad Clicks	1
Ad Spend	9.15 RUB
Ad Creation Date	06/23/15 07:04:39 AM PDT
Ad End Date	06/24/15 07:04:39 AM PDT

Figure 137: The spending, ad impressions, and ad clicks on this particular ad featuring Pete Buttigeig are very low — the HPSCI has not released information to the public regarding organic content; it's unclear how many clicks, impressions, etc., were garnered with this same exact content in social-media posts that weren't boosted as ads.

Chapter 6: Identity Theft of MilVets to Engage in Financial Fraud and Espionage

The names and photos of MilVets — both living and deceased — are often used by foreign entities to create imitation accounts. There are two primary nefarious uses for these fake accounts: to engage in financial fraud that targets Americans both inside and outside the MilVet community; and to infiltrate the national security and intelligence communities in order to recruit Americans to commit espionage.

The Yahoo Boys

It is common for these falsified accounts to purport to be representing individuals in desperate situations: deployed, widowed, separated from their children, and in dire need of financial assistance to get home to the US. The most notorious romance scams originate from Nigeria and other West African countries,[180] where due to economic conditions, it is relatively common for young men to engage in cybercrime.[181]

These cybercriminals proudly call themselves "Yahoo Boys," a nickname earned from the early days of the internet when Yahoo! email addresses were used to facilitate financial scams. Yahoo Boys steal the identities of servicemembers because those identities help to explain otherwise-suspicious connectivity issues, timing of messages, and delayed responses when the scammers interact with their victims. Servicemembers are also targeted for identity theft because the scammers are able to take advantage of the patriotism of Americans and a desire to take care of those who serve our country.

Yahoo Boys frequently troll the comment sections of Facebook groups and other online forums that are dedicated to supporting widowers and widows.[182] The scammers, using the identities of American servicemembers, leave comments on posts of people who share their stories of the loss of a loved one. The scammers pretend they are sympathetic, posting (insincere) kind words to the heartbroken widowers and widows and taking advantage of their vulnerable state by building relationships with them at their time of greatest need. The Yahoo Boys frequently target older Americans who may not be very familiar with the internet and are therefore more susceptible to online scams.[183]

This problem is not limited to Facebook. Yahoo Boys also use Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other social-media platforms and messaging apps to assume the identities of American servicemembers and veterans to target Americans with financial scams.

A recent investigation by the *New York Times* revealed that scores of fake profiles were flagged and reported to the attention of Facebook and Instagram for imitating the Department of Defense's top leaders; yet the majority of the reports either resulted in responses saying that the profiles didn't violate the companies' terms — or the reports went completely unanswered.[184]

This has been the experience of Kathy Waters, one of the founders of a group called Advocating Against Romance Scams. Ms. Waters told us that she first became aware of this scam when an elderly friend was targeted by a scammer purporting to be Colonel Bryan Denny (Ret). Ms. Waters later found dozens of fake profiles using variations of Col. Denny's name and his photos. Since 2017 the group has advocated for the federal government to take action against the Yahoo Boys, with little to no success. The *New York Times* found that the "F.B.I. said it received nearly 18,500 complaints from victims of romance or similar internet scams last year, with reported losses exceeding $362 million."[185]

(text continued on page 118)

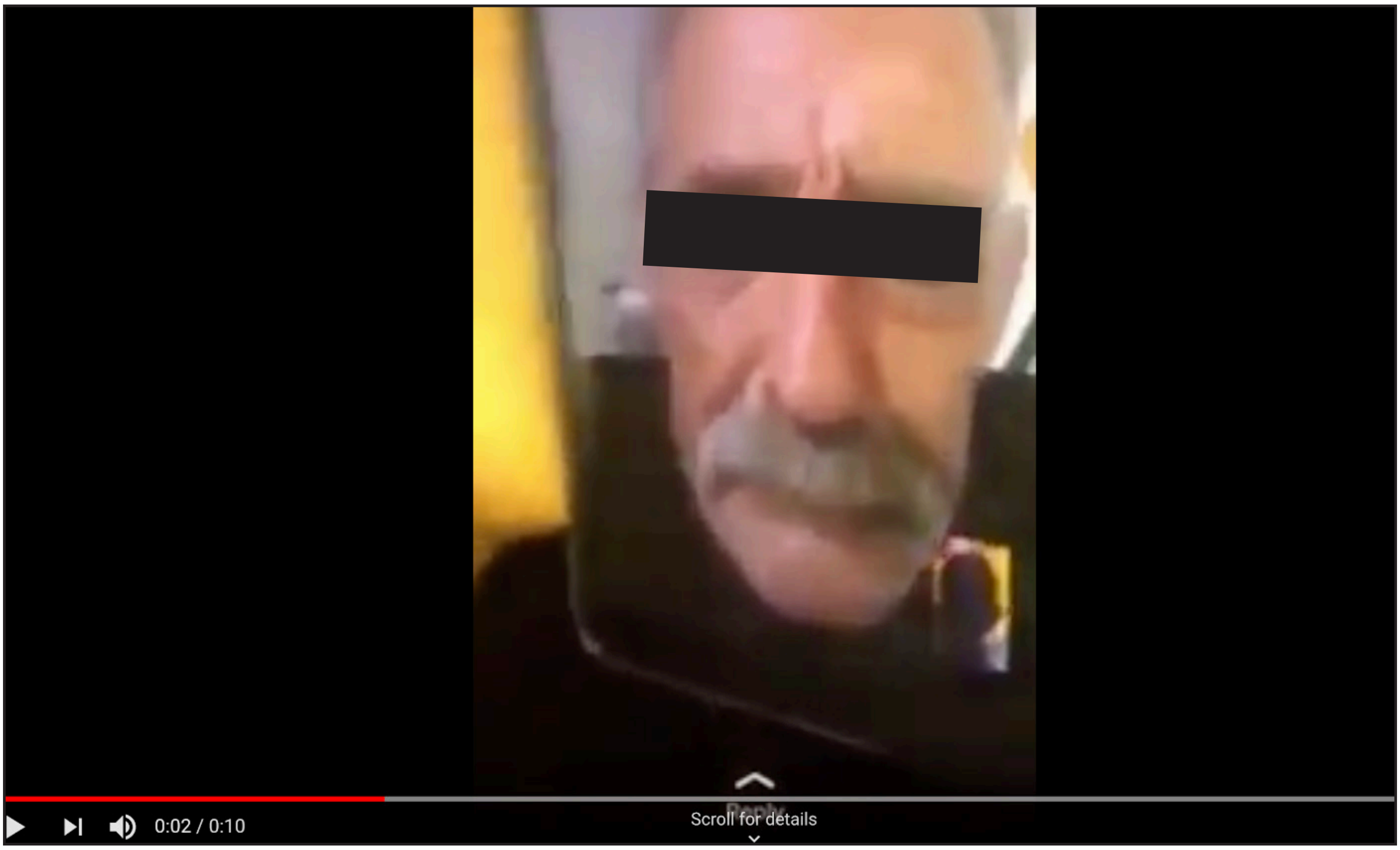

[redacted]

Figure 138: Quote from Yahoo Boys filming a video chat with an elderly victim after they scammed him: "You like nudes? You cry now, cry!"

[redacted]

Figure 139: Quote from senior victim: "Goddammit please give me my money back. I don't have money like this. My mom won't even talk to me 'cuz of this."

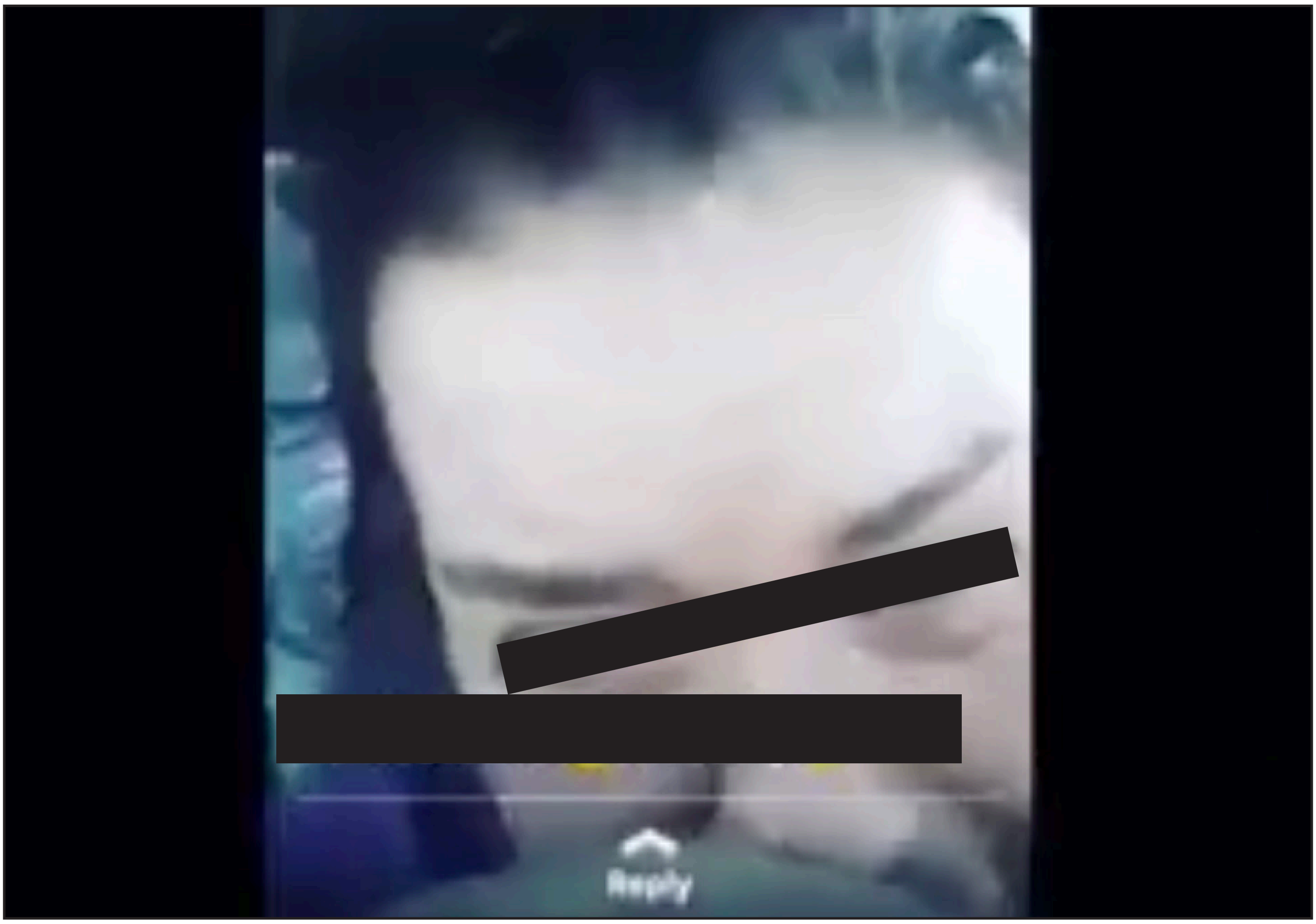


Figure 140: "Don't lie to me! I bought you a card this morning. That's not fair! I don't understand!" an elderly woman cries when a Yahoo Boy reveals the scam and teases her. [redacted]

(text continued from page 116)

According to Ms. Waters, the FBI won't prioritize these types of financial scams because they're less than $1,000,000 *per occurrence* — despite the fact that these scams have cost many Americans their entire retirement savings.

Although Yahoo Boys generally hide their identities, some of these impostors have publicly boasted about their crimes, even posting videos on YouTube and Instagram of them teasing elderly victims as these seniors cry and beg for their life savings to be returned (Figures 138-140).[186,187]

The effects of the financial crimes are both financially and emotionally devastating. After learning that the "soldier" whom she had given her life savings to was actually a scammer, Renee Holland (the primary subject of the *New York Times'* report) attempted suicide. She died while the reporter was still working on the story — as a result of a double-murder-suicide committed by her husband.[188]

The effects on the MilVets who are victims of the identity thefts and financial crimes, as well as the effects on their families, are loathsome in many ways. Victims who have fallen for the identity theft of servicemembers and veterans may approach families to inform them that photos of their deceased loved ones were used by the Yahoo Boys to commit fraud, and this knowledge is a constant, painful reminder of the loss suffered by surviving families and retraumatizes them. MilVets who have their identities frequently used in romance scams often give up their use of social-media altogether — which eliminates useful, healing tools to remain connected with the people with whom they served.

Chinese Espionage

"Deepfake" technology is developing at a rapid pace, both for legitimate commercial reasons and to engage in fraudulent activity. Deepfakes can be used to create comical video clips that friends send to one another, in the same way that goofy Snapchat and

Instagram filters make a user appear as a sparkling fairy or with virtual cat ears that follow and respond to the user's facial expressions and head movements. They can also be used to create hyper-realistic internet personas with the goal of committing espionage.

Tech-savvy developers focused on realism are producing apps that can quickly churn out falsified images, audio, and videos that are so convincing they're difficult for both people and computers to detect. Hostile Chinese intelligence services, according to reporting by the Associated Press, have been using computer-generated deepfake images to create phantom profiles of people (who do not exist) that portray them as members of the American defense and intelligence communities, while displaying their social-media connections to build credibility (real people routinely accept all invitations to add to their social network) — primarily on the professional networking site LinkedIn.[189] Chinese agents catfish (lure someone in to a relationship by using a fake persona) government officials and employees, offering cash for information and recruitment.[190]

Spotting Fakes and the Imitation of Army Staff Sergeant Sherri Vlastuin

Finding these types of scam profiles can be as easy as doing a search for a veteran, particularly those who are public figures or social-media influencers. Staff Sergeant Sherri Vlastuin, an Army medic[191] and Instagram influencer,[192] is the victim of identity theft by scores of social-media accounts that imitate her on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn (Figures 141-143). One LinkedIn profile falsely identifies Ms. Vlastuin as being affiliated with Army Intelligence,[193] which may indicate that her identity is being used to target Americans in the intelligence community (Figure 144).

Staff Sergeant Vlastuin's real Instagram profile (Figure 145) has over 36,500 followers and features a warning in her bio that references her persistent problem of being imitated online: "One & only account #SayNoToCatfish."[194]

As an Instagram influencer with a large following, her account is not simply a way to provide life updates to her friends, but instead it's a valuable tool she puts effort into to keep relevant and earn income.

Instagram influencers are among the reasons that other users join the social network and frequently check the app or website for updates. Through selective uploading of high-quality content, influencers establish their own personal brand, and that brand can be used to alter the beliefs, actions, values, and commercial activity of other users.

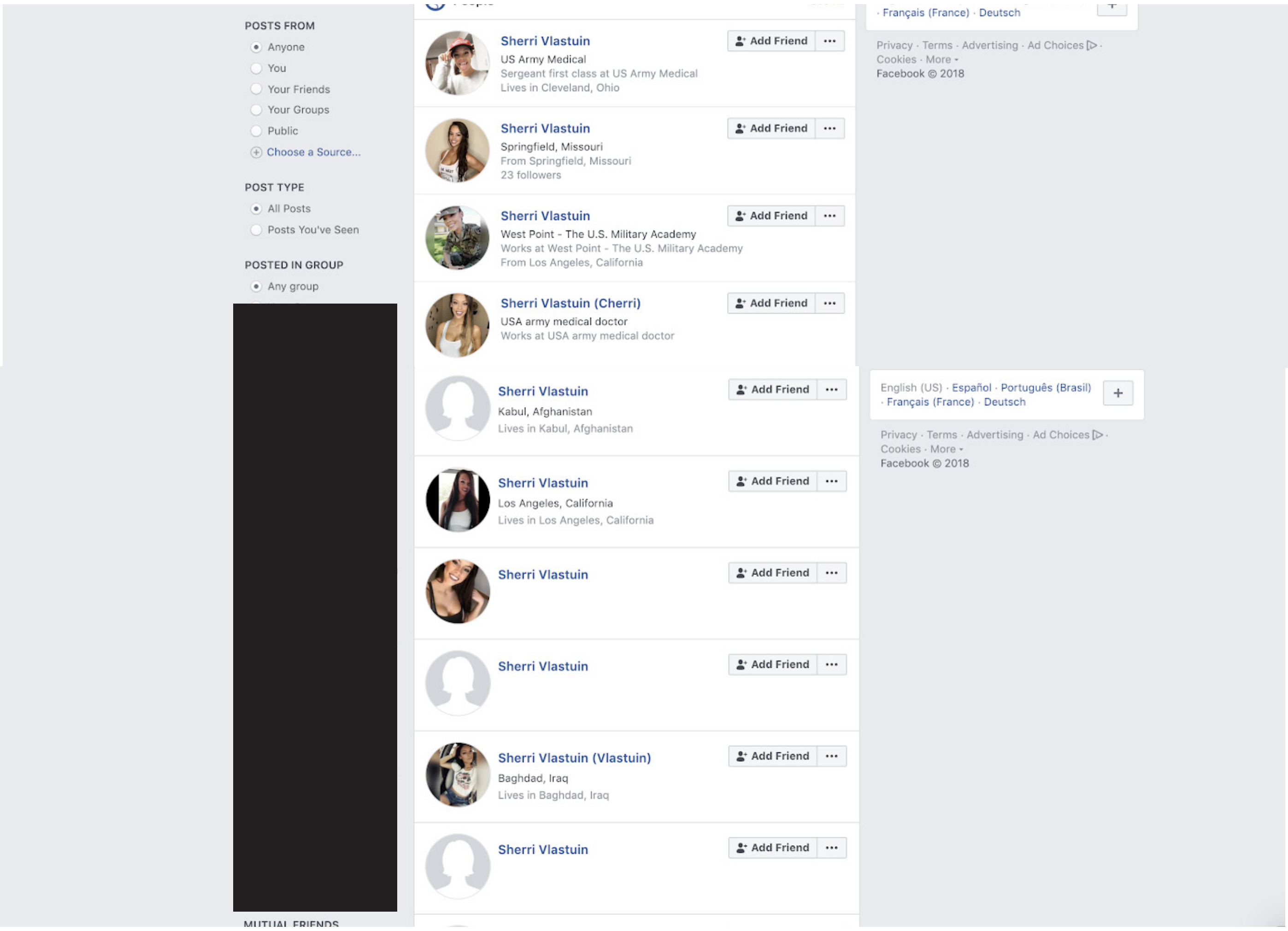
Unfortunately, Staff Sergeant Vlastuin's content can be easily scraped (a technique that extracts data from a website) and reused by other internet users for their own brand-building or for more-nefarious purposes. When she was interviewed by VVA, she said that "my mother, my niece, my family — they all get used in made-up stories for these scams to catfish people." She went on to explain that strangers often reach out to her via her official Army email account to ask why she was suddenly ignoring them, and she has to explain that she had never interacted with them before and that they were the victims of an online scam.

Staff Sergeant Vlastuin reported frequently contemplating giving up her online presence altogether so that her content could no longer be used by scammers and so that she would no longer have to bear the burden of hearing from victims who believed she'd been romantically involved with them. However, she has said that she feels if she were to give up her online presence she'd be throwing away her Influencer status and the potential earned income of the brand she has so carefully cultivated. In the meantime, she has given up on proactively trying to have her imitation accounts shut down because she finds it a frustrating and often fruitless endeavor.

Members of Congress With Military Backgrounds Used for Romance Scams

Victims of identity theft can range from young privates in the Army and corporals in the Marines to America's top commanders. Veterans who have gone on to become politicians are also used in romance scams, such as Democrat Patrick J. Murphy and Republicans Lee Zeldin and Adam Kinzinger.

(text continued on page 122)



POSTS FROM

- ● Anyone
- ○ You
- ○ Your Friends
- ○ Your Groups
- ○ Public
- ⊕ Choose a Source...

POST TYPE

- ● All Posts
- ○ Posts You've Seen

POSTED IN GROUP

- ● Any group

[redacted]

MUTUAL FRIENDS

Sherri Vlastuin
US Army Medical
Sergeant first class at US Army Medical
Lives in Cleveland, Ohio
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Springfield, Missouri
From Springfield, Missouri
23 followers
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
West Point - The U.S. Military Academy
Works at West Point - The U.S. Military Academy
From Los Angeles, California
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin (Cherri)
USA army medical doctor
Works at USA army medical doctor
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Kabul, Afghanistan
Lives in Kabul, Afghanistan
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Los Angeles, California
Lives in Los Angeles, California
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin (Vlastuin)
Baghdad, Iraq
Lives in Baghdad, Iraq
Add Friend

Sherri Vlastuin
Add Friend

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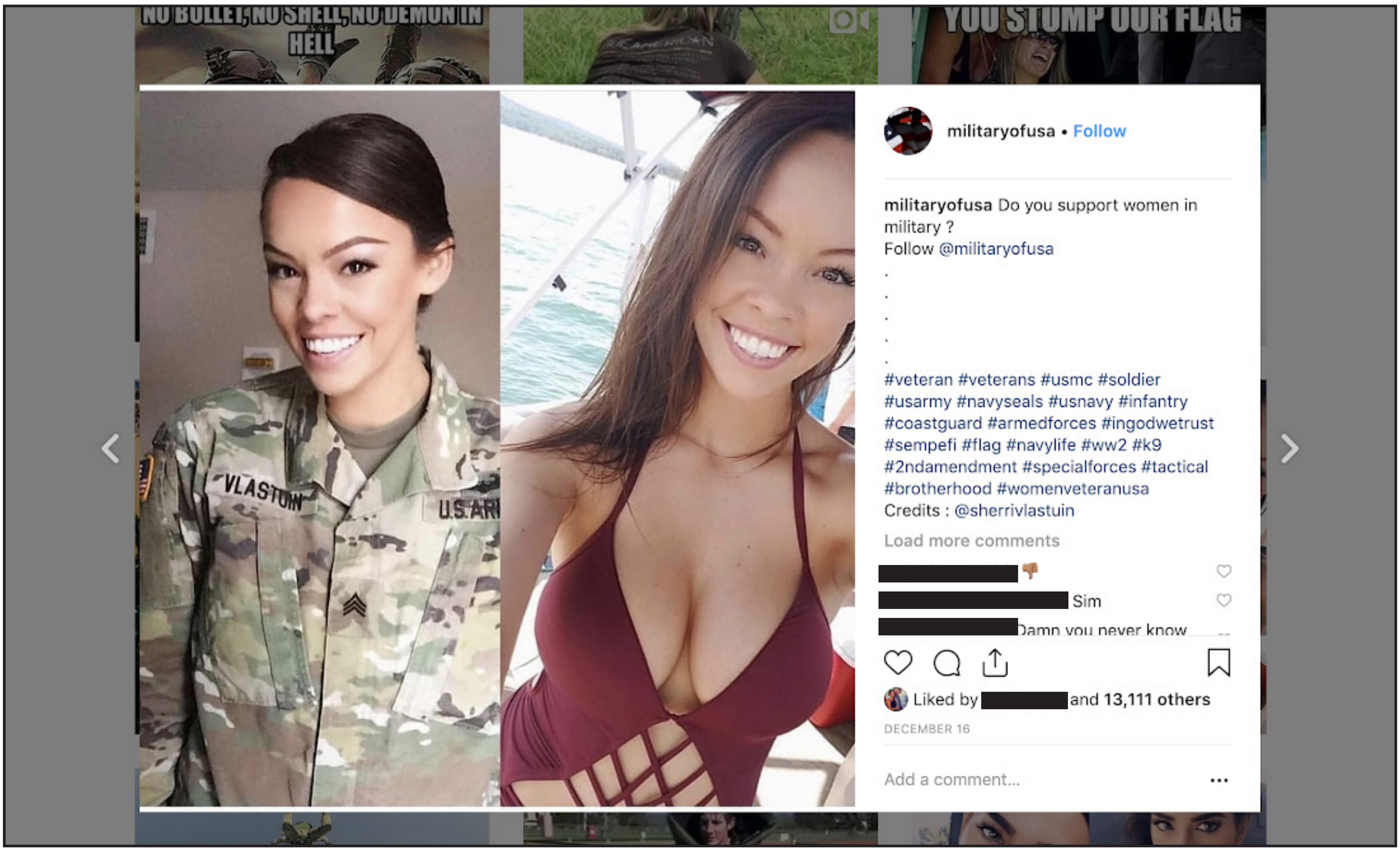
Figures 141 and 142



militaryofusa • Follow

militaryofusa Do you support women in military ?
Follow @militaryofusa
.
.
.
.
.
#veteran #veterans #usmc #soldier #usarmy #navyseals #usnavy #infantry #coastguard #armedforces #ingodwetrust #sempefi #flag #navylife #ww2 #k9 #2ndamendment #specialforces #tactical #brotherhood #womenveteranusa
Credits : @sherrivlastuin

Load more comments

[redacted] 👎

[redacted] Sim

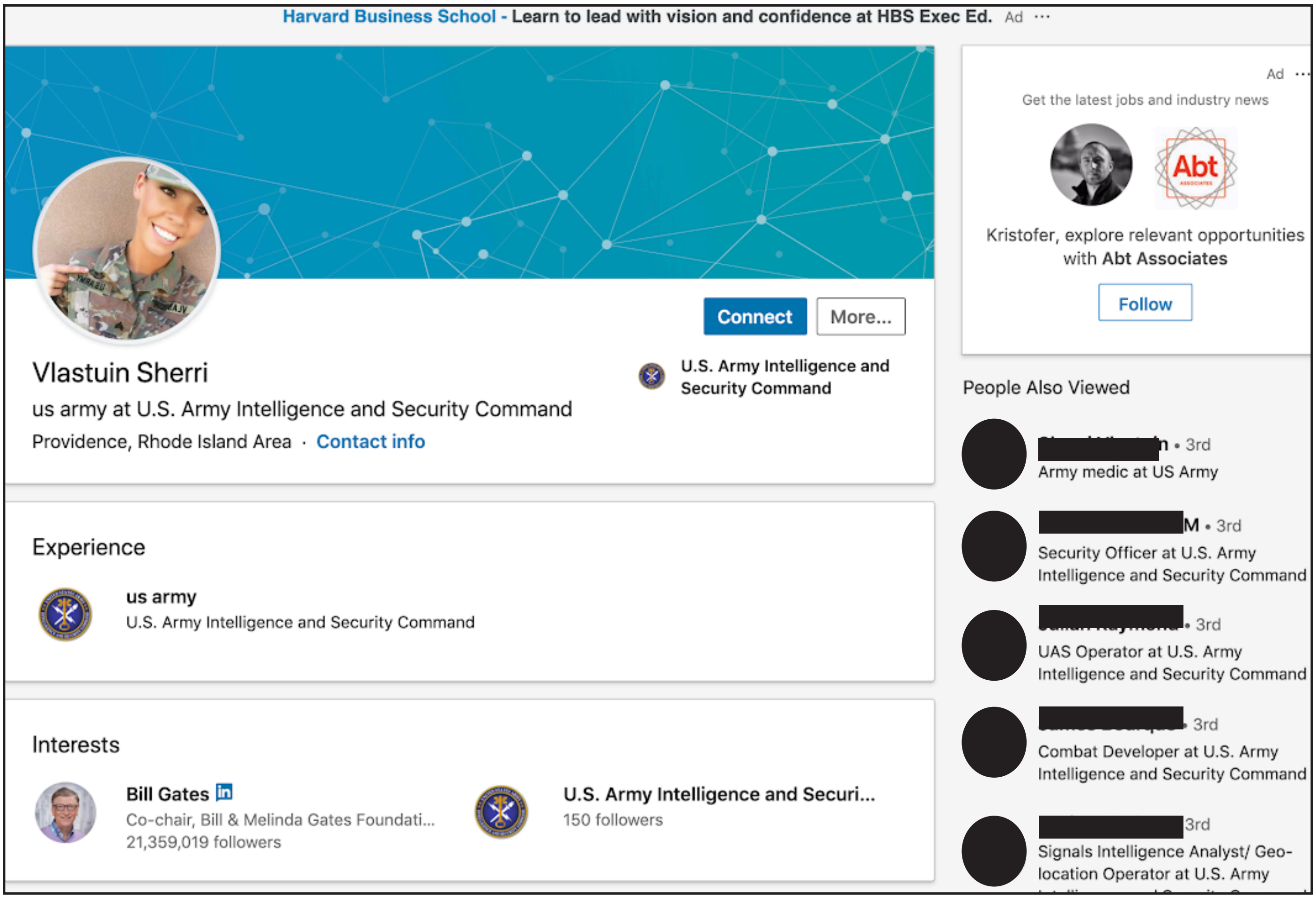
[redacted] Damn you never know

Liked by [redacted] and 13,111 others

DECEMBER 16

Add a comment...

Figure 143



Vlastuin Sherri
us army at U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command
Providence, Rhode Island Area · Contact info

U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command

Experience

us army
U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command

Interests

Bill Gates
Co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundati...
21,359,019 followers

U.S. Army Intelligence and Securi...
150 followers

People Also Viewed

[redacted] • 3rd
Army medic at US Army

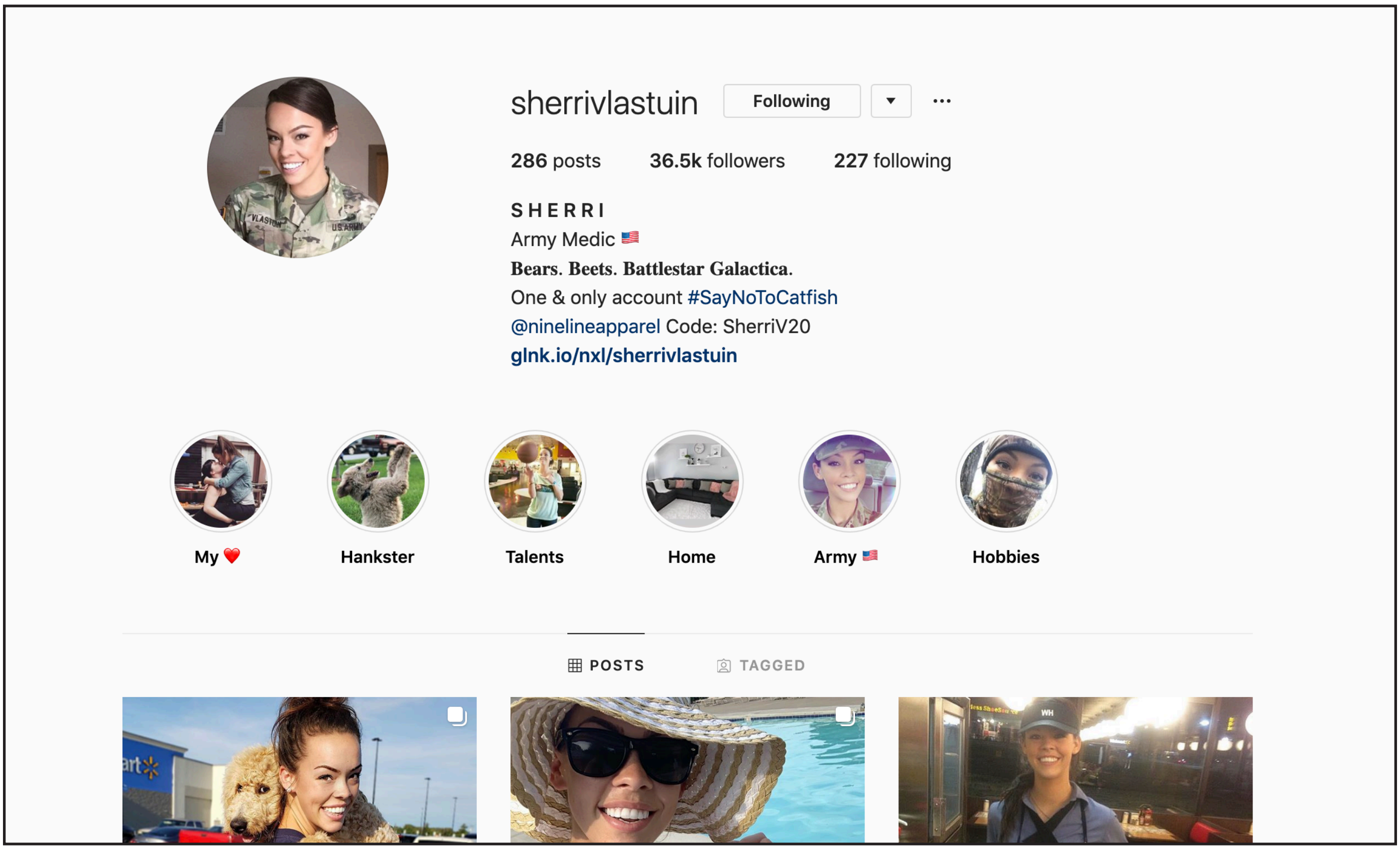
[redacted] M • 3rd
Security Officer at U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command

[redacted] • 3rd
UAS Operator at U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command

[redacted] • 3rd
Combat Developer at U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command

[redacted] 3rd
Signals Intelligence Analyst/ Geo-location Operator at U.S. Army

Figure 144

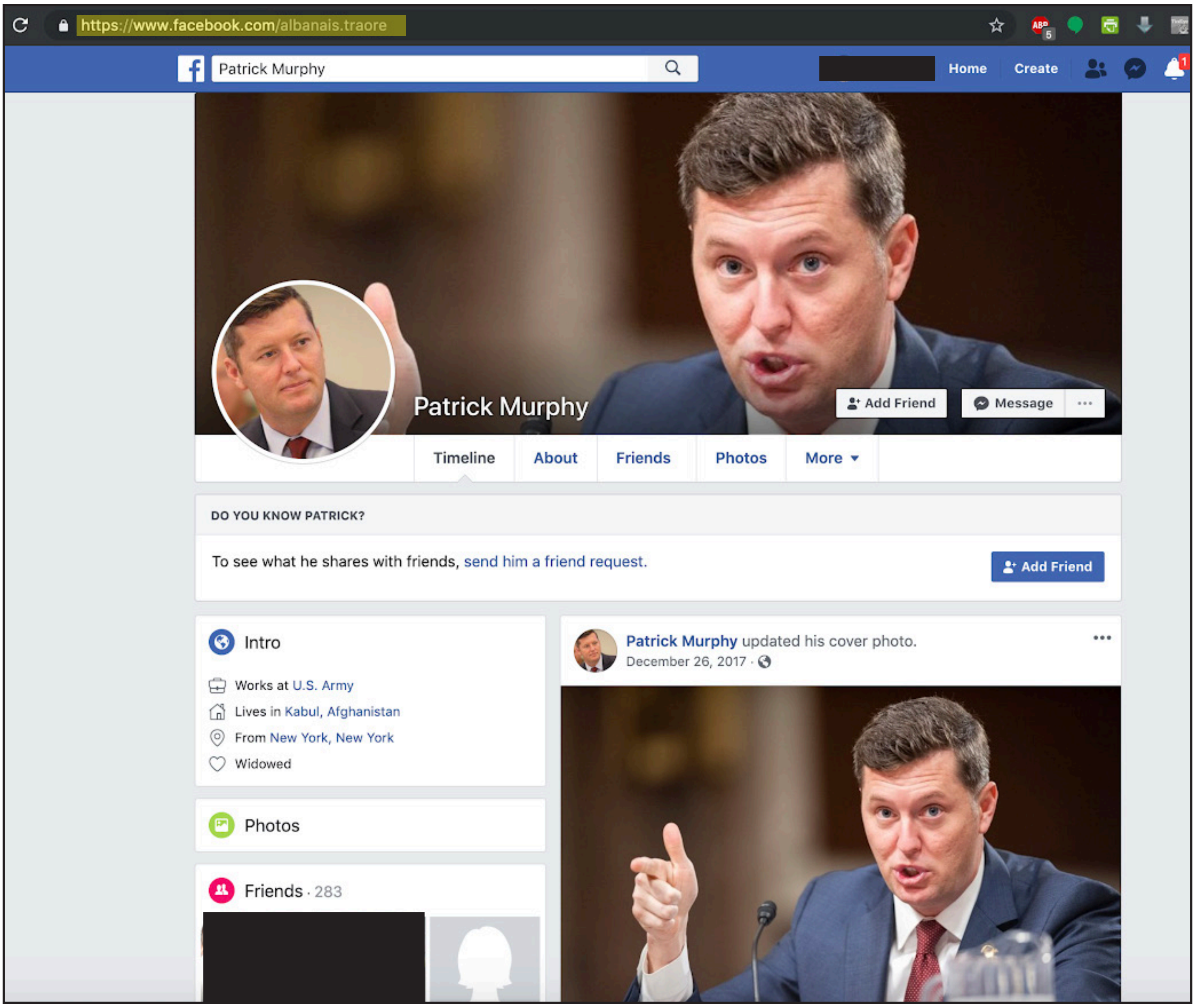


sherrivlastuin

286 posts 36.5k followers 227 following

SHERRI
Army Medic 🇺🇸
Bears. Beets. Battlestar Galactica.
One & only account #SayNoToCatfish
@ninelineapparel Code: SherriV20
glnk.io/nxl/sherrivlastuin

Figure 145



[redacted]

Patrick Murphy

DO YOU KNOW PATRICK?

To see what he shares with friends, send him a friend request.

Add Friend

Intro

Works at U.S. Army

Lives in Kabul, Afghanistan

From New York, New York

Widowed

Photos

Friends · 283

[redacted]

Patrick Murphy updated his cover photo.
December 26, 2017 ·

Figure 146: This profile, with a URL indicating that it originally belonged to a person named Albanais Traore but now purports to be Patrick Murphy, has Facebook friends who are mostly from West Africa. As is common in many romance scams, this profile makes it appear as if Patrick Murphy is currently deployed to Afghanistan.

(text continued from page 119)

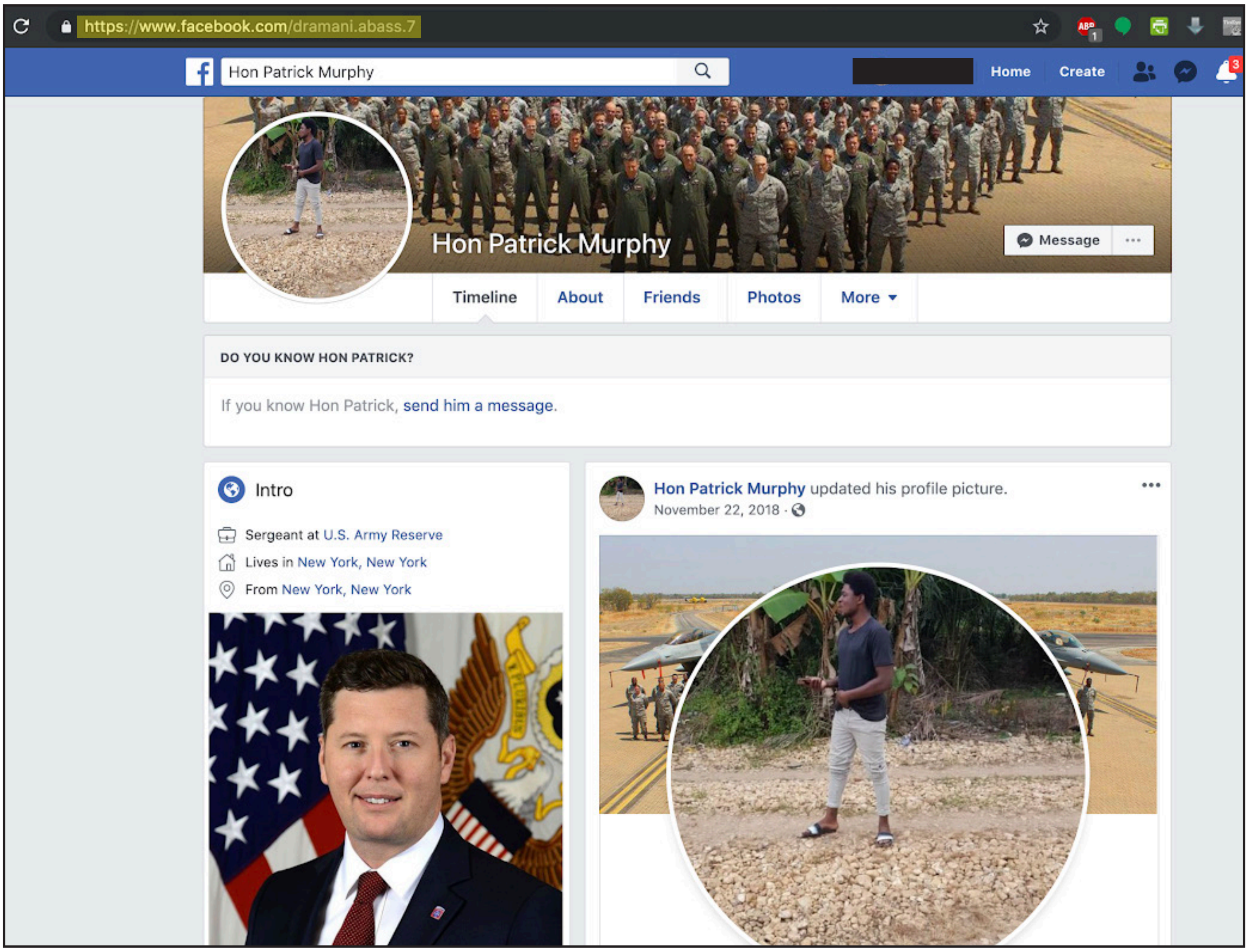
Members of Congress With Military Backgrounds

Former Congressman Patrick J. Murphy (PA-8)

Patrick J. Murphy's likeness and name have been co-opted on various social-media platforms to target vulnerable Americans several times. Mr. Murphy, an Army veteran, the former congressman for Pennsylvania's Eighth Congressional district, and the former acting Under Secretary of the US Army, was recently contacted by two victims who fell for scams using his name and photo. These victims have no recourse for their financial losses, and it is unlikely that the criminals who scammed them will be brought to justice without significant policy changes.

Despite Mr. Murphy's efforts to track down and report profiles that use his name and photos, there are currently several Facebook accounts still purporting to be Mr. Murphy. One identifies him as widowed and located in Kabul, Afghanistan. This account is based in Africa and was originally affiliated with the name Albanais Traore[195] (Figure 146). Another African-based Facebook account purporting to be Mr. Murphy was originally affiliated with the name Dramani Abass[196] (Figure 147). Another account is based in Burma[197,198] (Figure 148). A fourth profile, created in 2016, does not display enough publicly available data to determine its origin[199] (Figure 149).

(text continued on page 124)



https://www.facebook.com/dramani.abass.7

Hon Patrick Murphy

[redacted]

Hon Patrick Murphy

DO YOU KNOW HON PATRICK?

If you know Hon Patrick, send him a message.

Intro

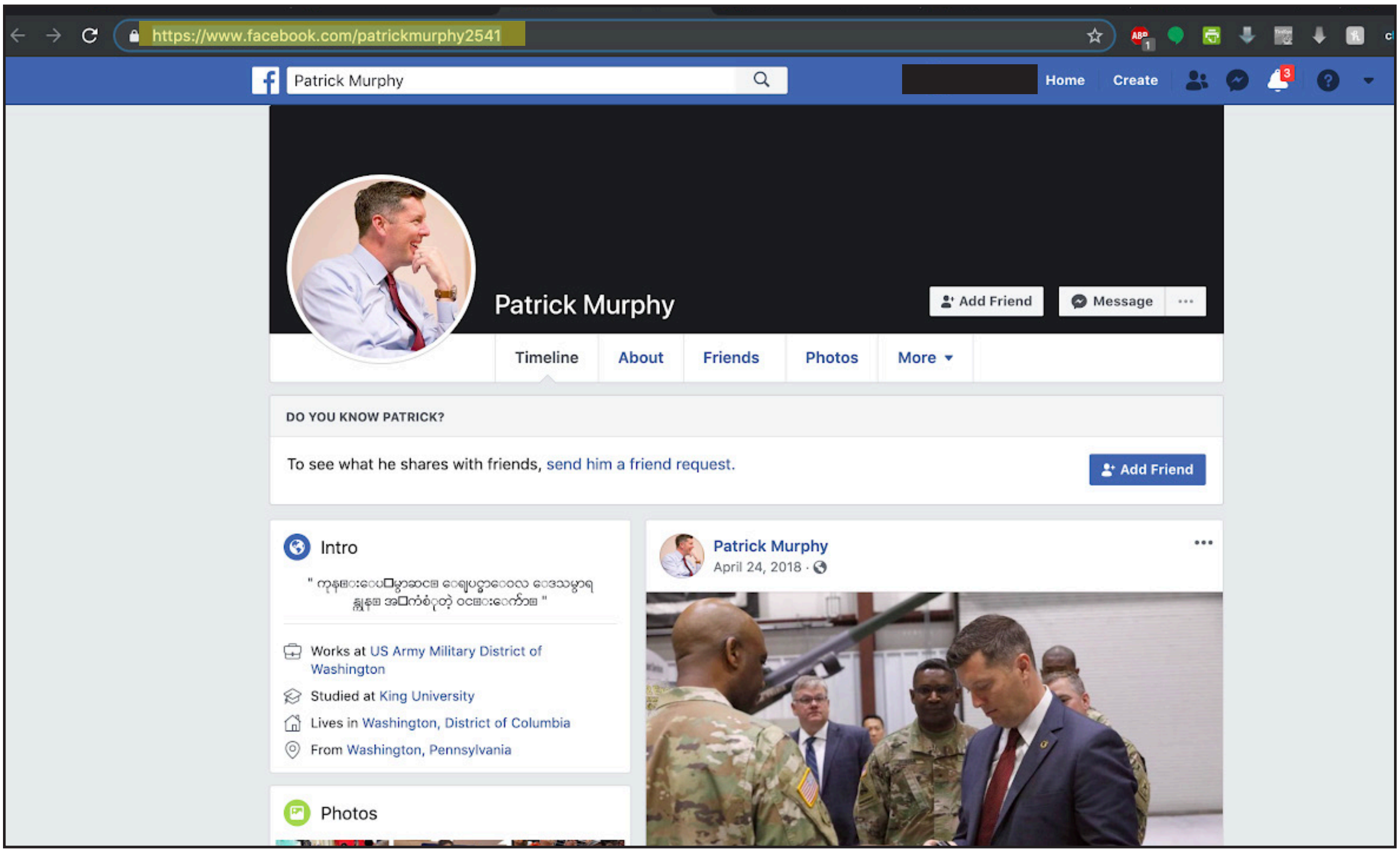
Sergeant at U.S. Army Reserve

Lives in New York, New York

From New York, New York

Hon Patrick Murphy updated his profile picture.
November 22, 2018 ·

Figure 147: This “Hon Patrick Murphy” profile’s URL indicates that it was originally created by one Dramani Abass.



https://www.facebook.com/patrickmurphy2541

Patrick Murphy

[redacted]

Patrick Murphy

DO YOU KNOW PATRICK?

To see what he shares with friends, send him a friend request.

Intro

" ကုန□းေပ□မွာဆင□ ေရျပင္ဘာေလ ေဒသမွာရ
ွ္နေ□ အ□က္စ္ုတဲ့ ဝင□းေက်ာ□ "

Works at US Army Military District of Washington

Studied at King University

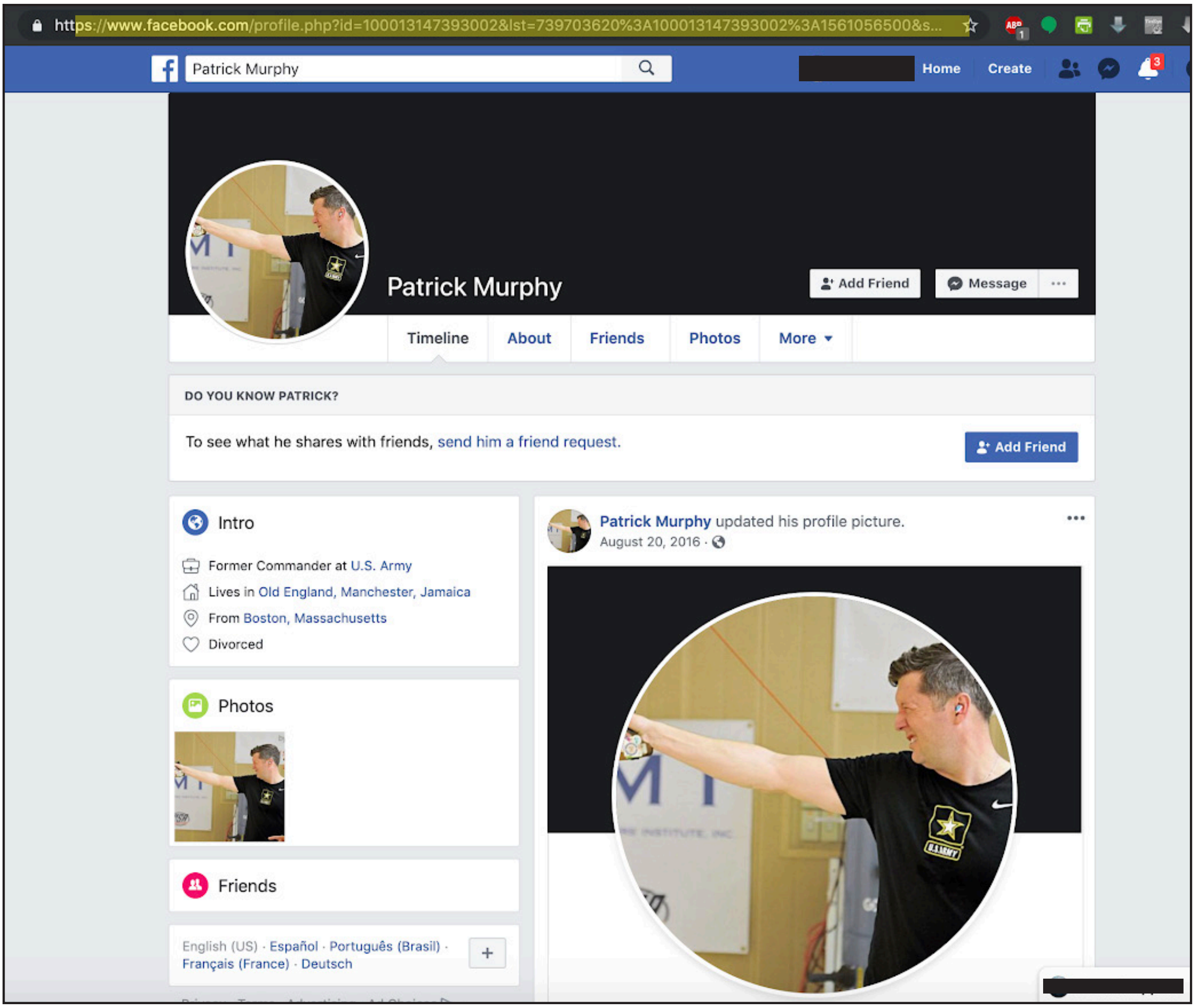
Lives in Washington, District of Columbia

From Washington, Pennsylvania

Photos

Patrick Murphy
April 24, 2018 ·

Figure 148: The troll who runs this Facebook profile used the Burmese alphabet for the intro.



https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100013147393002&lst=739703620%3A100013147393002%3A1561056500&s...

Patrick Murphy

DO YOU KNOW PATRICK?

To see what he shares with friends, send him a friend request.

Intro

Former Commander at U.S. Army
Lives in Old England, Manchester, Jamaica
From Boston, Massachusetts
Divorced

English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch

Patrick Murphy updated his profile picture.
August 20, 2016 ·

[redacted]

Figure 149

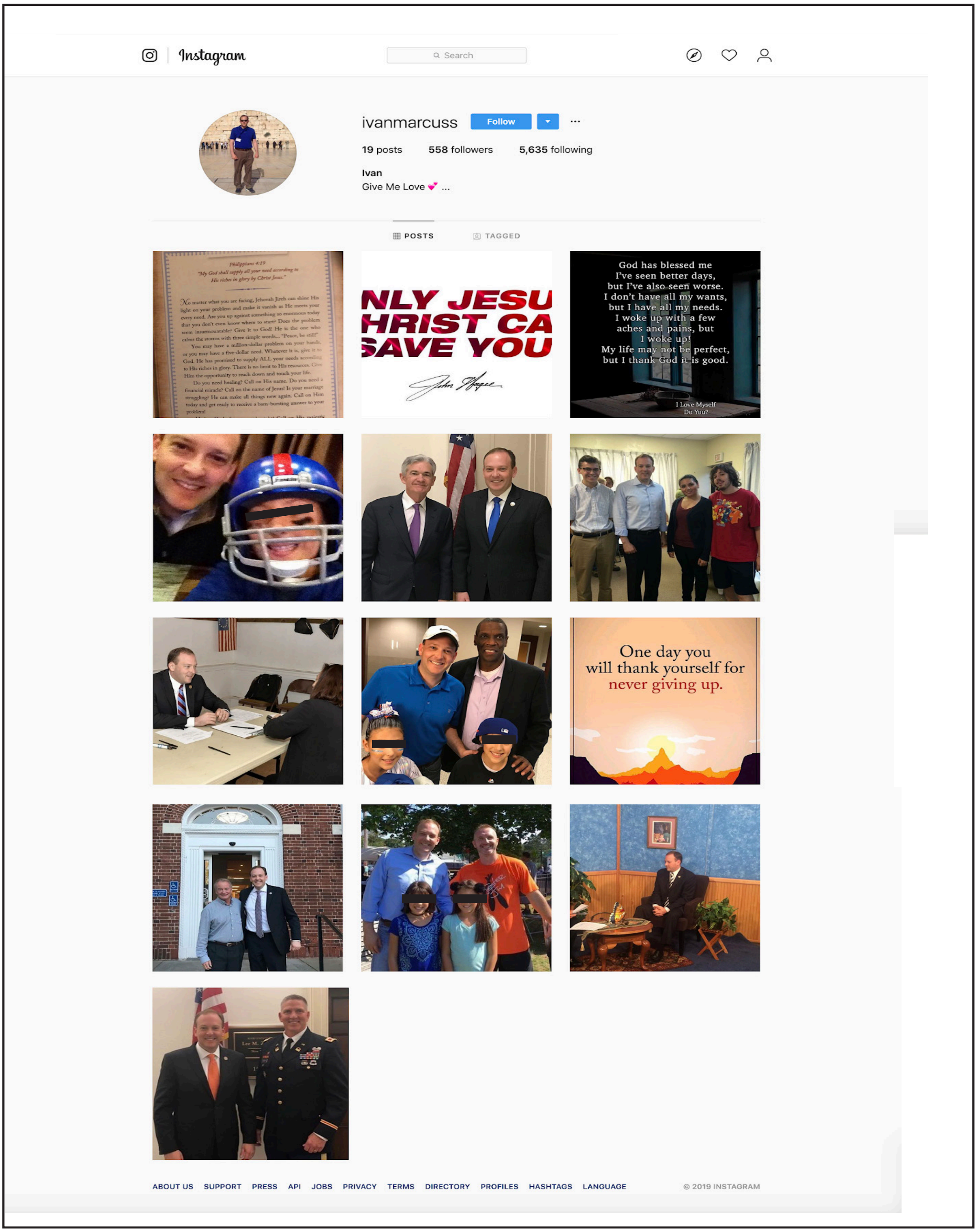
(text continued from page 122)

Congressman Lee Zeldin (NY-1)

The likeness of Congressman Lee Zeldin, an Army veteran and representative for New York's First Congressional District, is being co-opted on Instagram to engage in romance scams.[200] Some of these photos include pictures of Zeldin posing with his twin daughters — but not his wife — to give potential victims the impression that Zeldin is a widower or divorced (Figures 150-152). The Instagram bio using Mr. Zeldin's photos says only, "Give Me Love." The Instagram account posts a meme saying "ONLY JESUS CHRIST CAN SAVE YOU," but Mr. Zeldin is Jewish. References to religion, especially Christianity, are common in romance scams.

Congressman Adam Kinzinger (IL-7)

Congressman Adam Kinzinger, the representative for Illinois's Sixteenth Congressional District, serves in the Air National Guard as a lieutenant colonel and has confronted Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg directly about his persistent problem of being imitated online.[201] Mr. Kinzinger wrote a letter to Facebook on July 31, 2019, to address this issue.[202] In the letter, Kinzinger notes that he has been the victim of online imitation for over a decade. He also writes about his congressional staff having to spend much of their valuable time tracking down these fake accounts in order to stop them from engaging in romance scams and other forms of financial fraud. Kinzinger has been in touch with victims who have lost tens of thousands of dollars to scammers who have used his name and likeness.



ivanmarcuss

19 posts 558 followers 5,635 following

Ivan
Give Me Love 💕 ...

Philippians 4:19
"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

No matter what you are facing, Jehovah Jireh can shine His light on your problem and make it vanish as He meets your every need. Are you up against something so enormous today that you don't even know where to start? Does the problem seem insurmountable? Give it to God! He is the one who calms the storms with three simple words... "Peace, be still!"

You may have a million-dollar problem on your hands, or you may have a five-dollar need. Whatever it is, give it to God. He has promised to supply ALL your needs according to His riches in glory. There is no limit to His resources. Give Him the opportunity to reach down and touch your life.

Do you need healing? Call on His name. Do you need a financial miracle? Call on the name of Jesus! Is your marriage struggling? He can make all things new again. Call on Him today and get ready to receive a barn-bursting answer to your problem!

NLY JESU
HRIST CA
SAVE YOU

God has blessed me
I've seen better days,
but I've also seen worse.
I don't have all my wants,
but I have all my needs.
I woke up with a few
aches and pains, but
I woke up!
My life may not be perfect,
but I thank God it is good.

I Love Myself
Do You?

One day you
will thank yourself for
never giving up.

ABOUT US SUPPORT PRESS API JOBS PRIVACY TERMS DIRECTORY PROFILES HASHTAGS LANGUAGE
© 2019 INSTAGRAM

Figures 150-152: The troll who operates this Instagram account is using Congressman Lee Zeldin's children as bait for a romance scam. We have censored their faces as they are minors.

CHAPTER 7: Facebook's Switch to "Groups" and the Dangers of "Community" and "Privacy" Focus

In light of the increased pressure on Facebook to maintain users' privacy and slow the spread of 2016-style disinformation campaigns, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that the company will shift away from pages and instead focus on groups. The intent is to "shift Facebook away from being a public town square and to private communications."[203] While some users and policymakers may appreciate the shift, the foreign admins who target troops have already adapted to get ahead of Facebook's redesign.

Facebook pages were designed so that companies, public officials, and groups could communicate more easily with their customers, constituents, or members — while being able to control and project their brand's image. Pages are different from "profiles," which are meant to be personal.[204] A person's Facebook profile is the core of their user experience — it's what they use to upload photos, create albums, send and accept friend requests, and post updates about their lives so that they can remain connected with friends and family across the globe. Pages, on the other hand, are akin to a digital storefront, complete with online stores and customer-service messaging. Facebook pages can be viewed by any Facebook user (unless they are individually banned or blocked), whereas Facebook profiles can be set with restrictive privacy settings according to the preference of the individual. Facebook users can leave comments on most status updates, photos, and links posted by pages — and leave detailed reviews for the page and the brand it represents. Facebook users can also share anything posted by pages onto their own timeline, so that the individual users' friends and followers can see them.

Pages don't necessarily have to represent a real-world entity. Pages can also be parodies or unofficial fan clubs, or a tool to aggregate and disseminate information and news about any particular topic of interest.

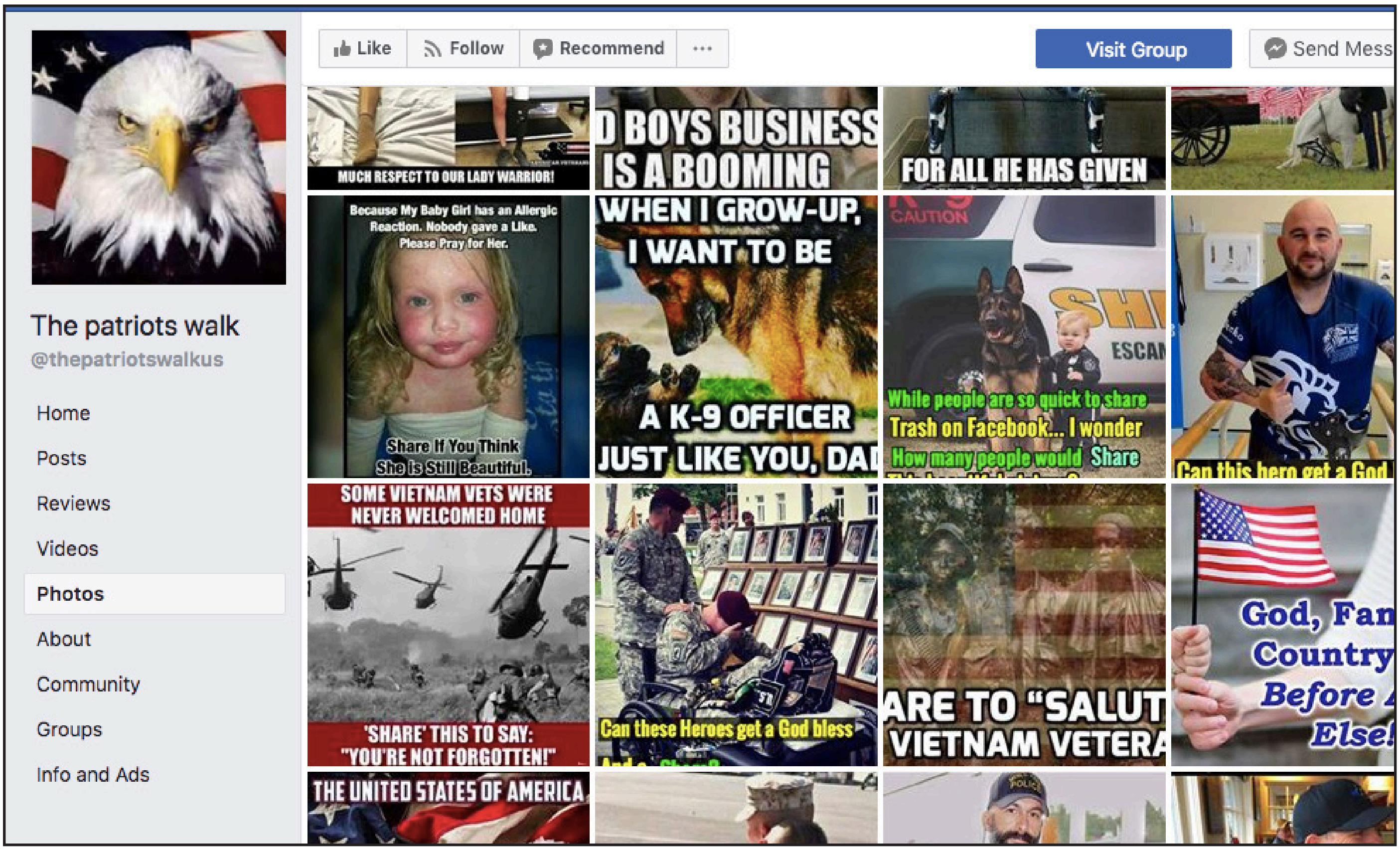
Any Facebook user can create and be an administrator (aka admin) for a page and can authorize and assign other Facebook users administrator privileges to help manage the page.

I, the author of this report, have my own personal Facebook account. I use this account to post everyday updates about my life and photos from both work and my personal life, to share news and information that I find important, and to assist VVA's communications team with the management of VVA's official Facebook page. With the administrator privileges granted to my personal account by VVA, I can schedule posts to be displayed at a particular time and date, put up photos, stream live video, communicate with users who send messages to the page, and moderate comments on any of VVA's public posts. I can also see how our audience, the people who follow our Facebook page, are reacting to and engaging with the things that we post. I can schedule real-world or virtual events, and set "premieres" to encourage our followers to view new video content together. I can choose to reveal my personal account on VVA's page as an admin, or I can hide it and have only my country of origin revealed on the page. These administrator privileges can be given, limited, and taken away by the "owner" of the VVA Facebook page, which is VVA's communications director (via their personal Facebook account).

VVA uses our Facebook page as one of our primary tools in informing our members of the work that the organization is doing on a day-to-day basis, of events that they can participate in, and of the priorities of the organization. Our Facebook page is a force for good.

However — the brand-building, dissemination of information, event scheduling, and audience-monitoring tools that Facebook pages provide can also be used for nefarious purposes, as they were by the Russian IRA.

(text continued on page 129)

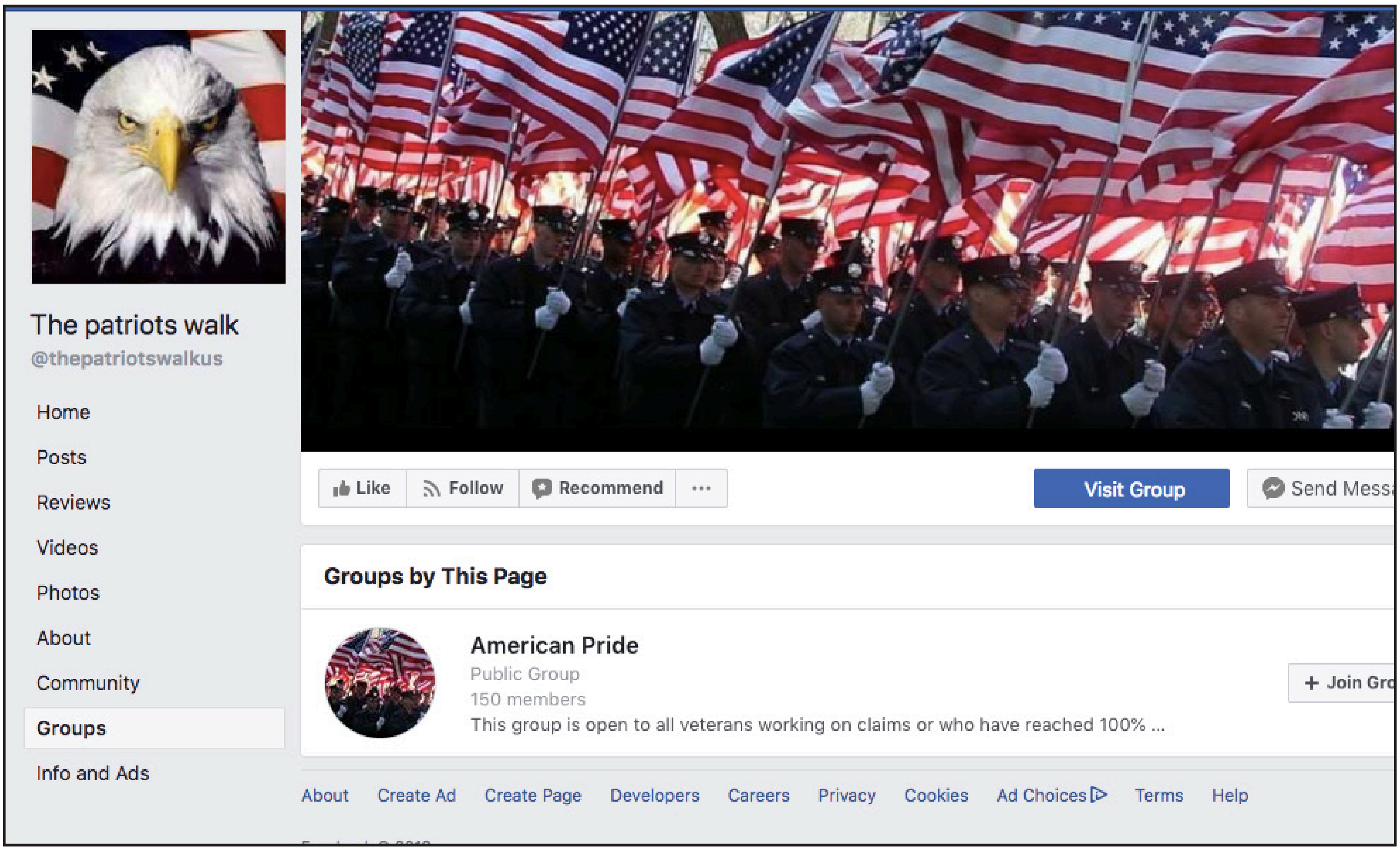


The patriots walk

@thepatriotswalkus

Home
Posts
Reviews
Videos
Photos
About
Community
Groups
Info and Ads
Like
Follow
Recommend
···
Visit Group
Send Mess
MUCH RESPECT TO OUR LADY WARRIOR!
D BOYS BUSINESS IS A BOOMING
FOR ALL HE HAS GIVEN
Because My Baby Girl has an Allergic Reaction. Nobody gave a Like. Please Pray for Her.
Share If You Think She Is Still Beautiful.
WHEN I GROW-UP, I WANT TO BE A K-9 OFFICER JUST LIKE YOU, DAI
While people are so quick to share Trash on Facebook... I wonder How many people would Share
Can this hero get a God
SOME VIETNAM VETS WERE NEVER WELCOMED HOME
'SHARE' THIS TO SAY: "YOU'RE NOT FORGOTTEN!"
Can these Heroes get a God bless
ARE TO "SALUT VIETNAM VETERA
God, Fan Country Before Else!
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Figure 153: "The patriots walk" featured MilVet and law-enforcement memes with distinctive green and yellow meme text that is frequently seen on other pages with foreign admins.



The patriots walk

@thepatriotswalkus

Groups by This Page

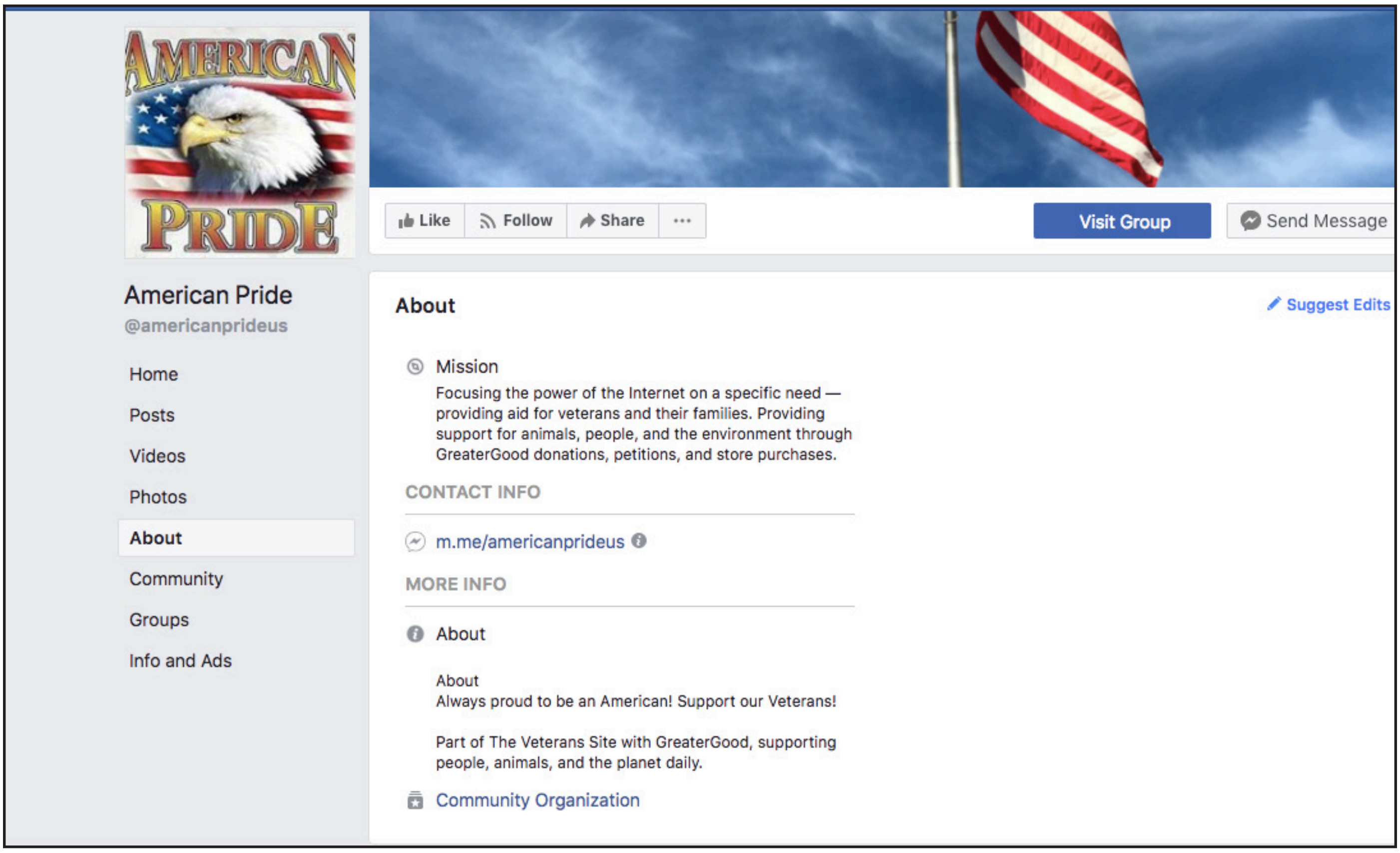
American Pride

Public Group

150 members

This group is open to all veterans working on claims or who have reached 100% ...

Figure 154: "The patriots walk" Facebook page is connected to a Facebook group called "American Pride," which specifically targets severely disabled veterans who have disability ratings of 100 percent from the VA.



About

Mission

Focusing the power of the Internet on a specific need — providing aid for veterans and their families. Providing support for animals, people, and the environment through GreaterGood donations, petitions, and store purchases.

CONTACT INFO

m.me/americanprideus

MORE INFO

About

About
Always proud to be an American! Support our Veterans!

Part of The Veterans Site with GreaterGood, supporting people, animals, and the planet daily.

Community Organization

Figure 155: The "About" tab of the "American Pride" Facebook page contained subtle hints of an admin who was a non-native English speaker.

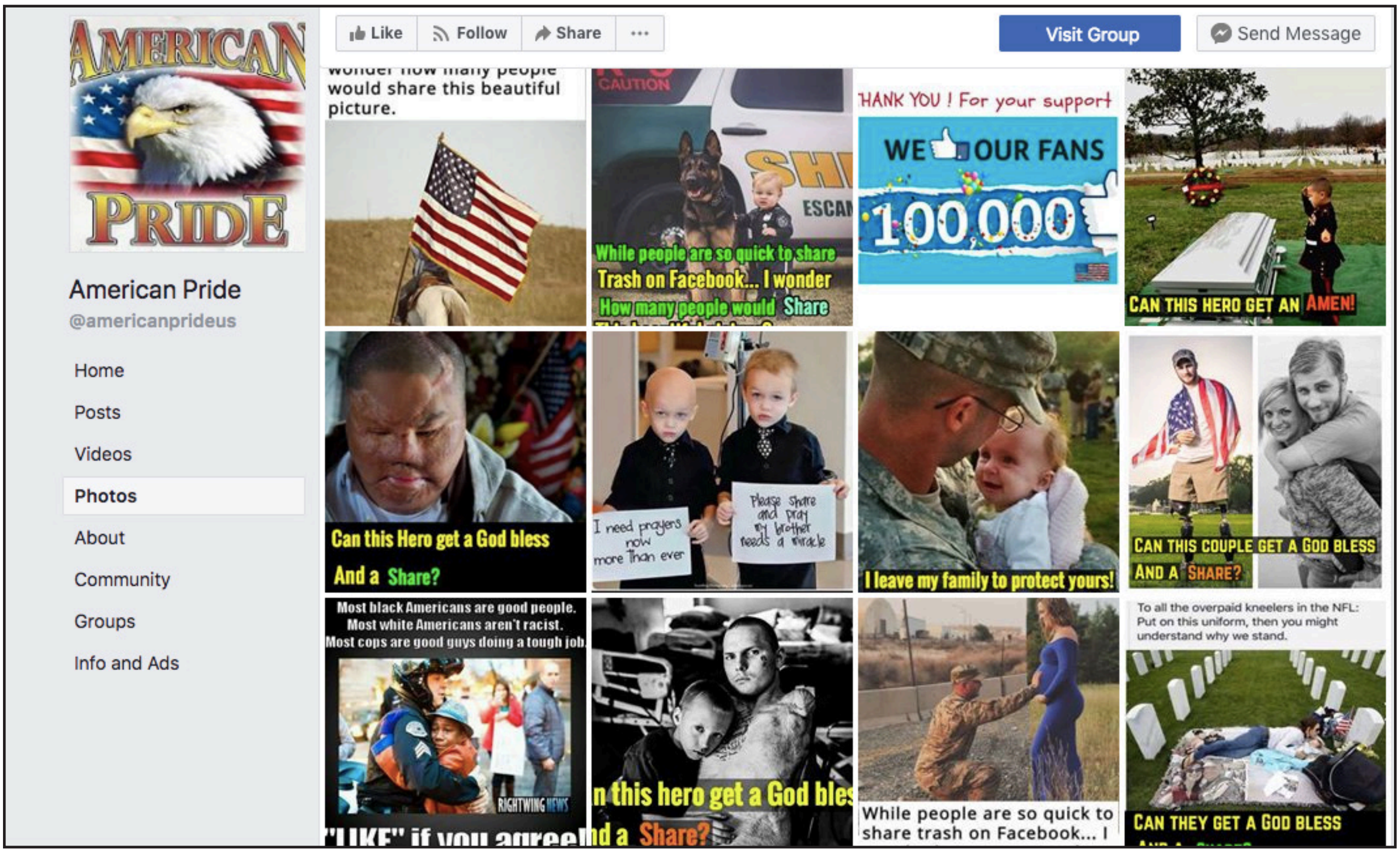

AMERICAN PRIDE
Like
Follow
Share
Visit Group
Send Message
American Pride
@americanprideus
Home
Posts
Videos
Photos
About
Community
Groups
Info and Ads
wonder how many people would share this beautiful picture.
While people are so quick to share Trash on Facebook... I wonder How many people would Share
THANK YOU ! For your support
WE OUR FANS
100,000
CAN THIS HERO GET AN AMEN!
Can this Hero get a God bless And a Share?
I need prayers now more than ever
Please share and pray my brother needs a miracle
I leave my family to protect yours!
CAN THIS COUPLE GET A GOD BLESS AND A SHARE?
Most black Americans are good people. Most white Americans aren't racist. Most cops are good guys doing a tough job.
RIGHTWING NEWS
"LIKE" if you agree
n this hero get a God bles
nd a Share?
While people are so quick to share trash on Facebook... I
To all the overpaid kneelers in the NFL: Put on this uniform, then you might understand why we stand.
CAN THEY GET A GOD BLESS

Figure 156: The "American Pride" and "The patriots walk" pages posted content from the same source, as revealed by the common yellow, green, and orange meme text.

(text continued from page 126)

Over the course of our investigation, VVA has found scores of veteran-focused pages operating in a manner that is similar to that of the IRA, though admins are controlling these pages from dozens of countries.

Since November 2017 Facebook's Threat Intelligence Team has, to their credit, removed every veteran-focused page with foreign admins that we have specifically flagged for them. We have flagged pages that were specifically imitating VVA, as well as pages that were spreading dangerous rhetoric — though we have opted not to report the majority of the pages that we're following. This is so that we can continue to gather evidence in the hope that law enforcement will step in and interdict the individuals — the criminals — who are seeking to exploit servicemembers and veterans and engage in election interference.

To simply request that Facebook close fraudulent pages when they are reported does little to disincentivize the activity of the people behind the screens. Though it may frustrate the admins temporarily, they've got everything they need to simply rebrand and create a new page that does exactly the same thing.

Facebook groups have been a useful tool for these foreign admins to maintain their audience of American veterans in the event their page is taken down and their personal account is banned. Facebook groups are similar to pages in that they are "owned" and moderated by a controlled set of admins, but they're designed in a way that usually allows any member to project their voice by posting to all other members of the group. Admins can relax settings so that it's a free-for-all, or they can tightly control the group so that posts by members need to be approved before being revealed to the entire group. As they can with a page, group admins are able to set the tone of the conversation within a group, as well as censor or hide whatever content or comments don't serve their purpose.

There are three different group types: public, closed, and secret,[205,206] and admins can control privacy settings for the group to the various levels — which presents specific challenges to independent investigators who are not associated with the Facebook pages.

Public groups can be seen by anyone — including people who are not logged onto Facebook accounts (for example, they may come across the group as a result of a Google search, or a friend sent them a link to the group). People who are logged onto Facebook can request to join a group via their personal profile or as a page that they manage, which the moderators can approve or deny. While investigators don't have to join a public group to monitor it, investigators will lose the ability to monitor it if the group type and privacy settings are changed by its admins.

The names and group descriptions of closed groups can be seen by anyone, but the list of members is hidden to non-members. Posts within the group are also hidden unless membership is approved by an admin. These request-to-join and admin-approval requirements to see what is posted in closed groups presents a level of obscurity that is not a problem for investigators monitoring Facebook pages (as it is when trying to monitor groups).

Secret groups are completely hidden and will not appear even in search results on Facebook for non-members of the group. They are invite-only, so admins tightly control not only the conversation within the group but also who can see that the group even exists.

Group privacy settings can also be set so that members cannot use the typical "share" button to distribute the content that is posted within the group to places on Facebook outside of that group. Members can, however, copy and paste text and links, as well as screen-capture or download and repost images. This barrier to sharing helps to bury the trail to the original source of the content because when individual users post it, it looks like organic content belonging to their individual account.

Groups can now be affiliated with Facebook pages so that they appear in the "Community" tab of the page. In addition to individual Facebook accounts being used to moderate these groups, admins can use the page itself to act as an administrator within the group.

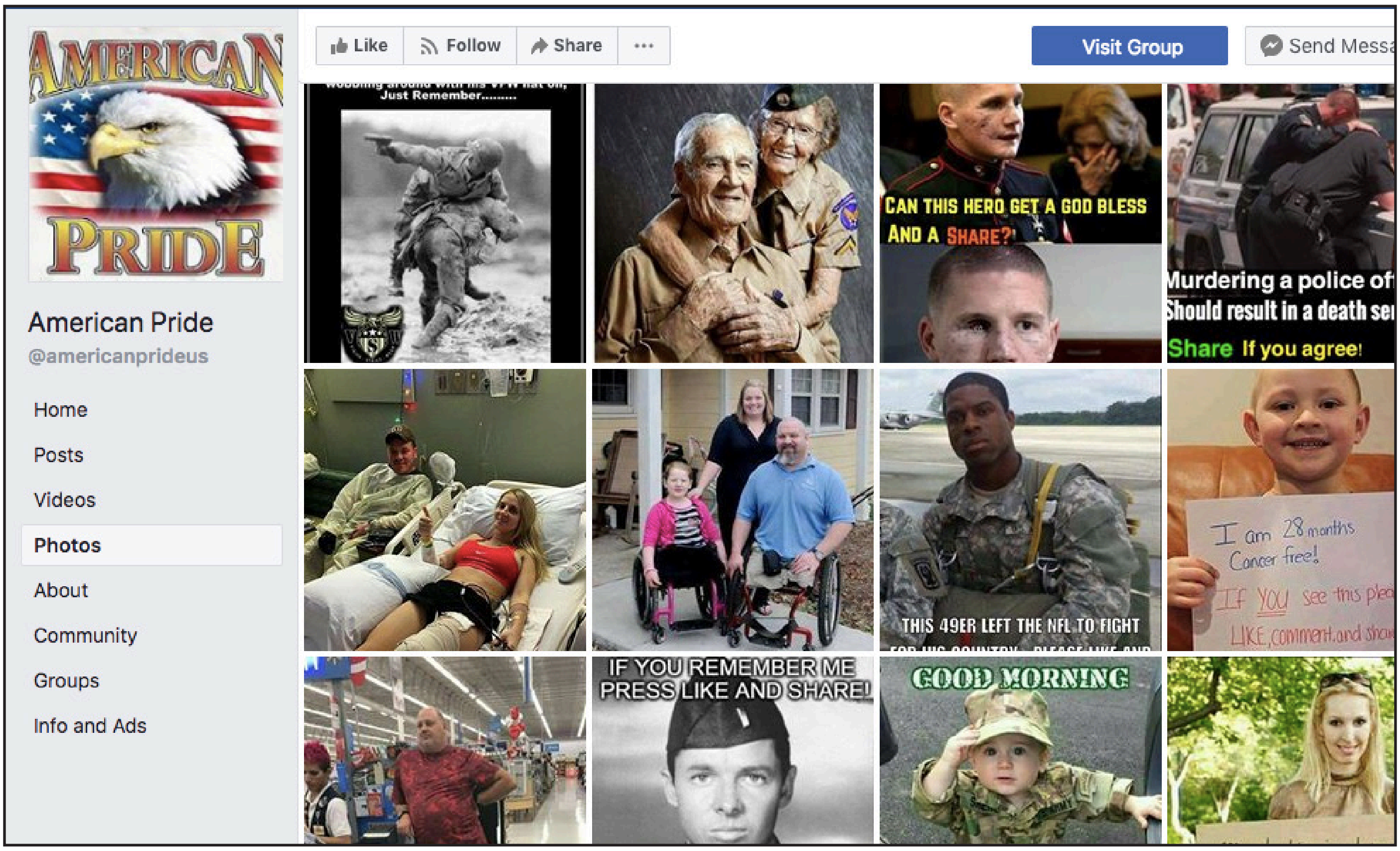


Figure 157

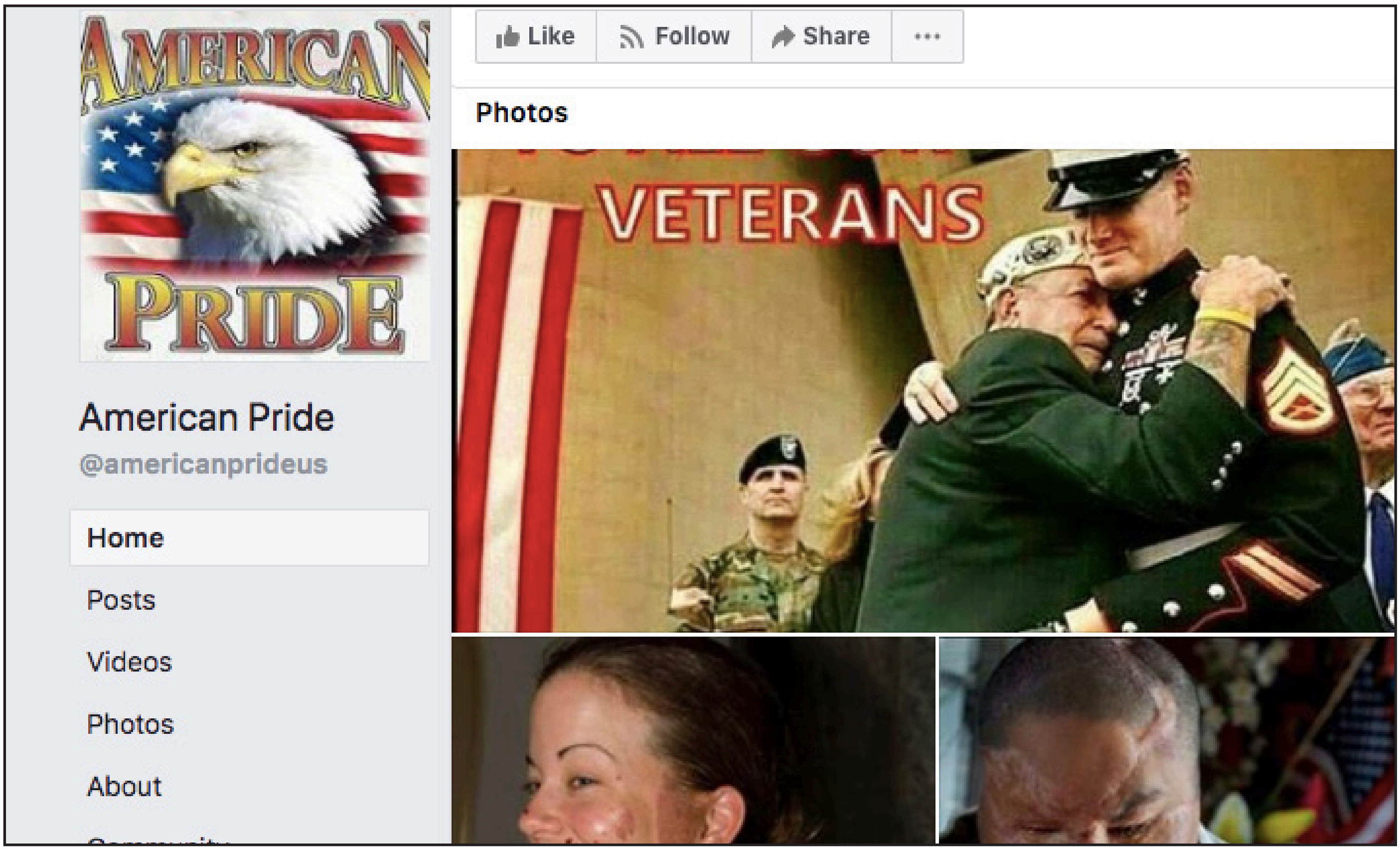
During our investigation we discovered that foreign admins sometimes recruit "useful idiots" to serve as backup administrators for both their pages and groups. This makes it so that if the foreign admin's personal account and/or page is banned by Facebook, the admin can simply create a new account and recover its following by being granted administrator privileges by the useful idiot. Allegations that Facebook is suppressing dissenting voices[207] has primed some Americans who are serving as useful idiots (and unknowingly aiding foreign admins) to believe that foreign admins who are banned for things like fraudulent behavior or election interference are instead victims of censorship — rather than foreign agents seeking to disrupt our democracy and prey on innocent Americans. Once the foreign admins resume control of the group, they can create a new page that features the very same content previously posted — and because they are already familiar with the self-selected group members, the admins can quickly rebuild a page with a massive following.[208]

The Evolution of a Backup Group: "American Pride" Becomes "SHARED" Becomes "Animals Worldwide"

On April 30, 2018, a Facebook page called "American Pride" was created, and on July 5, 2018, a Facebook page called "Patriots Walk" was created. Both of these pages built audiences using the same content — which was easily recognizable by the frequent memes with veterans in uniform and bright orange-green-and-yellow meme-text overlays (Figures 153-158).

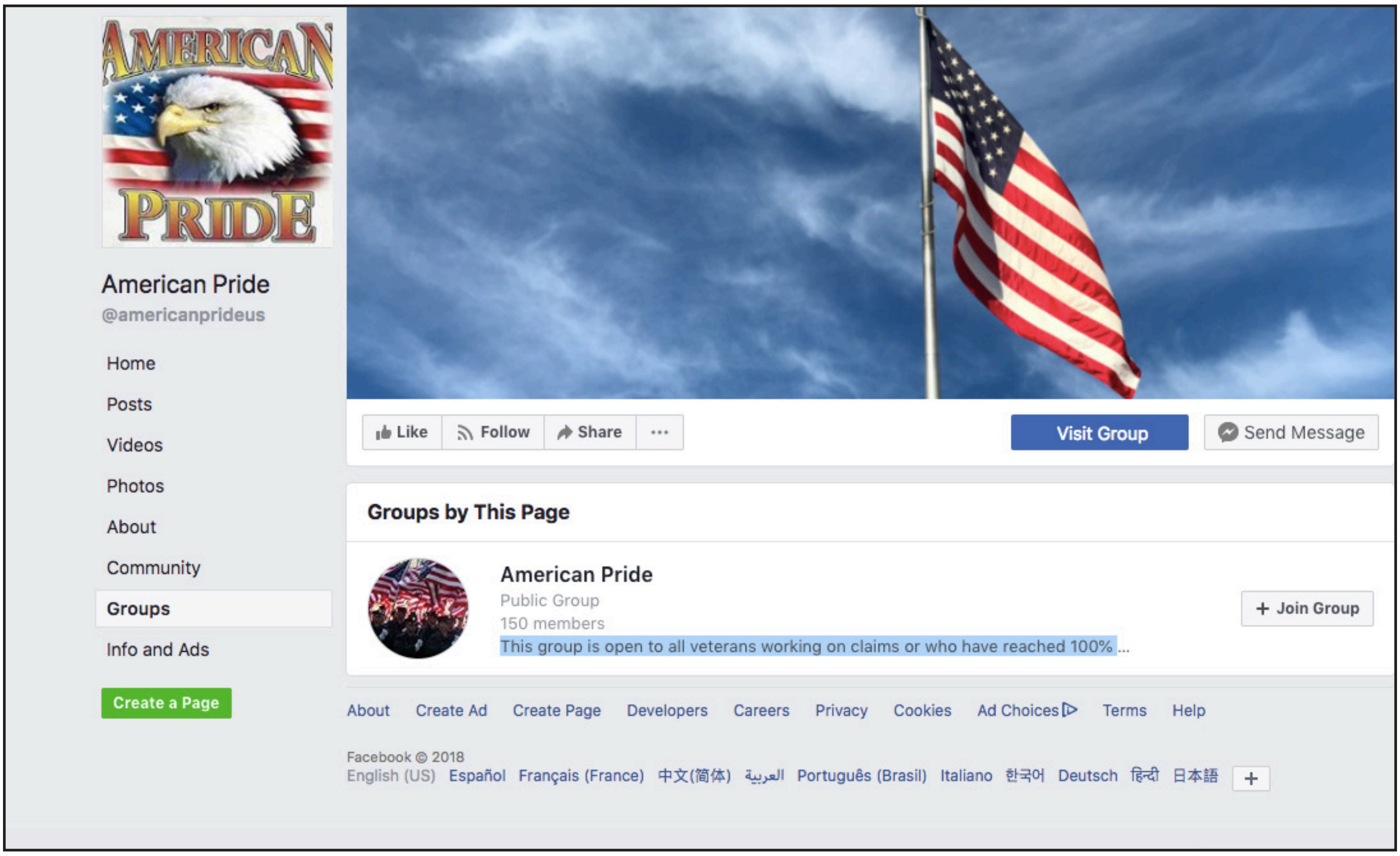
By the time we found these pages on July 17, 2018, "American Pride" had 116,318 followers, while "Patriots Walk" had far fewer, with only 141 followers. Together, these pages acted as administrators for the Facebook group also using the name American Pride, which had 155 members within one week of its creation (Figures 159 and 160). The group's description specifically targeted disabled veterans, reading: "This group is open to all veterans working on claims or who have reached 100% who would like to offer help to fellow vets still dealing with open claims and appeals" (Figure 161).

(text continued on page 134)



AMERICAN
PRIDE
American Pride
@americanprideus
Home
Posts
Videos
Photos
About
Like
Follow
Share
...
Photos
VETERANS

Figure 158



American Pride
@americanprideus

- Home
- Posts
- Videos
- Photos
- About
- Community
- Groups
- Info and Ads

Create a Page

Groups by This Page

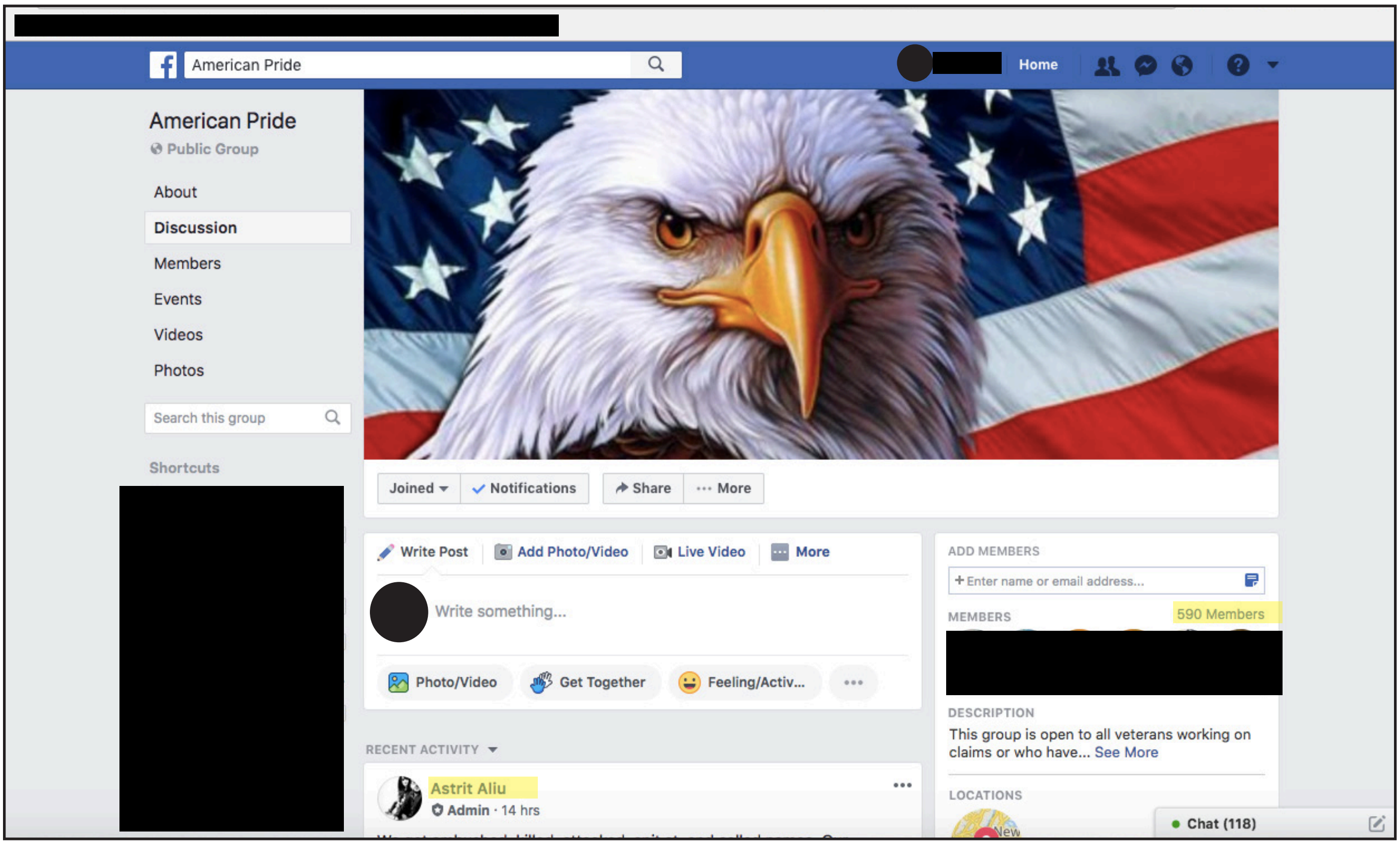
American Pride
Public Group
150 members
This group is open to all veterans working on claims or who have reached 100% ...

+ Join Group

About Create Ad Create Page Developers Careers Privacy Cookies Ad Choices Terms Help

Facebook © 2018
English (US) Español Français (France) 中文(简体) العربية Português (Brasil) Italiano 한국어 Deutsch हिन्दी 日本語 +

Figure 159: The "American Pride" Facebook page is connected to the same group as the Facebook page "The patriots walk," which indicates that both pages are controlled by the same admins.



[redacted]

American Pride
Public Group

- About
- Discussion
- Members
- Events
- Videos
- Photos

Search this group

Shortcuts

[redacted]

[redacted] Write something...

RECENT ACTIVITY

Astrit Aliu
Admin · 14 hrs

ADD MEMBERS
+ Enter name or email address...

MEMBERS 590 Members

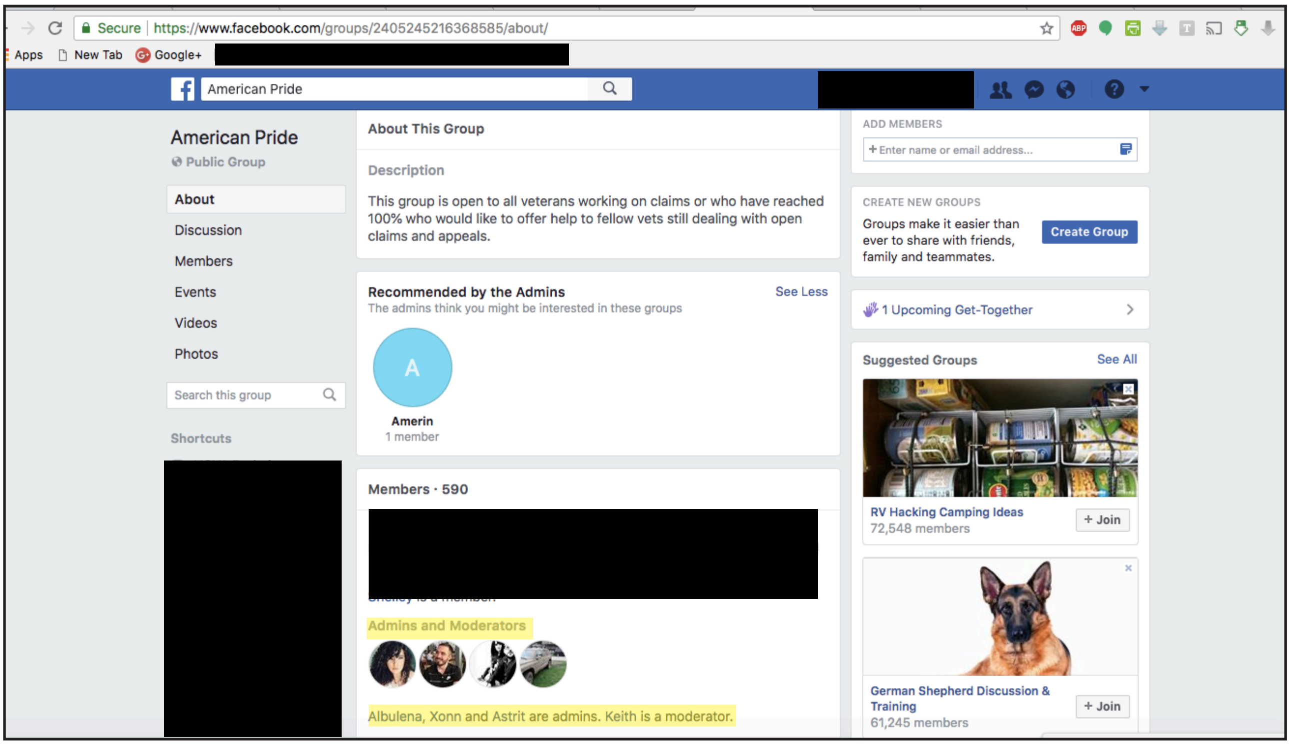
[redacted]

DESCRIPTION
This group is open to all veterans working on claims or who have... See More

LOCATIONS

Chat (118)

Figure 160



Secure | https://www.facebook.com/groups/2405245216368585/about/
Apps
New Tab
Google+

[redacted]

[redacted]

American Pride
Public Group

[redacted]

About This Group

Description

This group is open to all veterans working on claims or who have reached 100% who would like to offer help to fellow vets still dealing with open claims and appeals.

Recommended by the Admins See Less
The admins think you might be interested in these groups

Amerin
1 member

Members · 590

[redacted]

Admins and Moderators

Albulena, Xonn and Astrit are admins. Keith is a moderator.

ADD MEMBERS
+ Enter name or email address...

CREATE NEW GROUPS
Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates.
Create Group

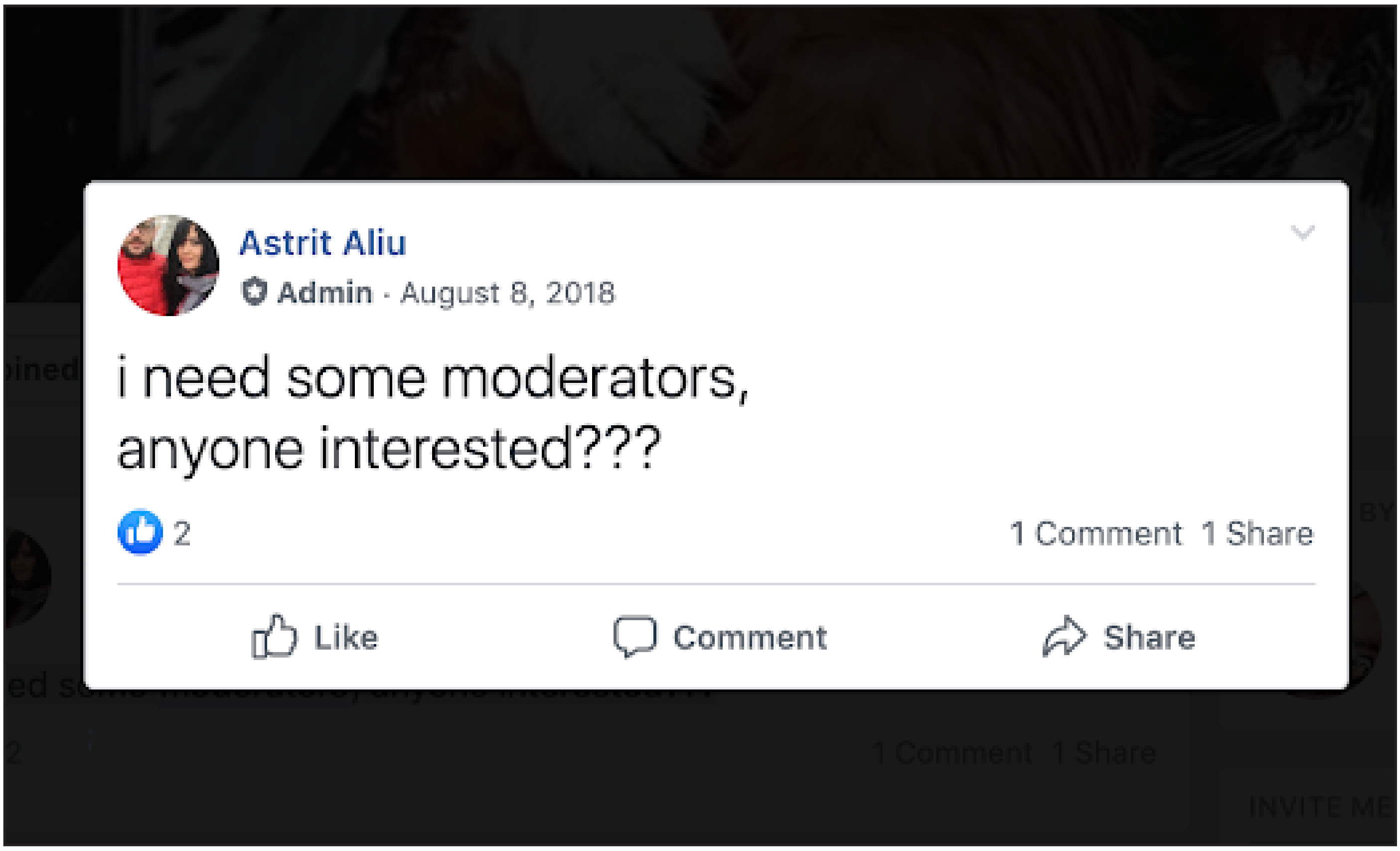
1 Upcoming Get-Together

Suggested Groups See All

RV Hacking Camping Ideas
72,548 members
+ Join

German Shepherd Discussion & Training
61,245 members
+ Join

Figure 161: Here you can see that the admins of the "American Pride" Facebook group were misleading veterans into believing that its purpose was to assist with VA disability claims.

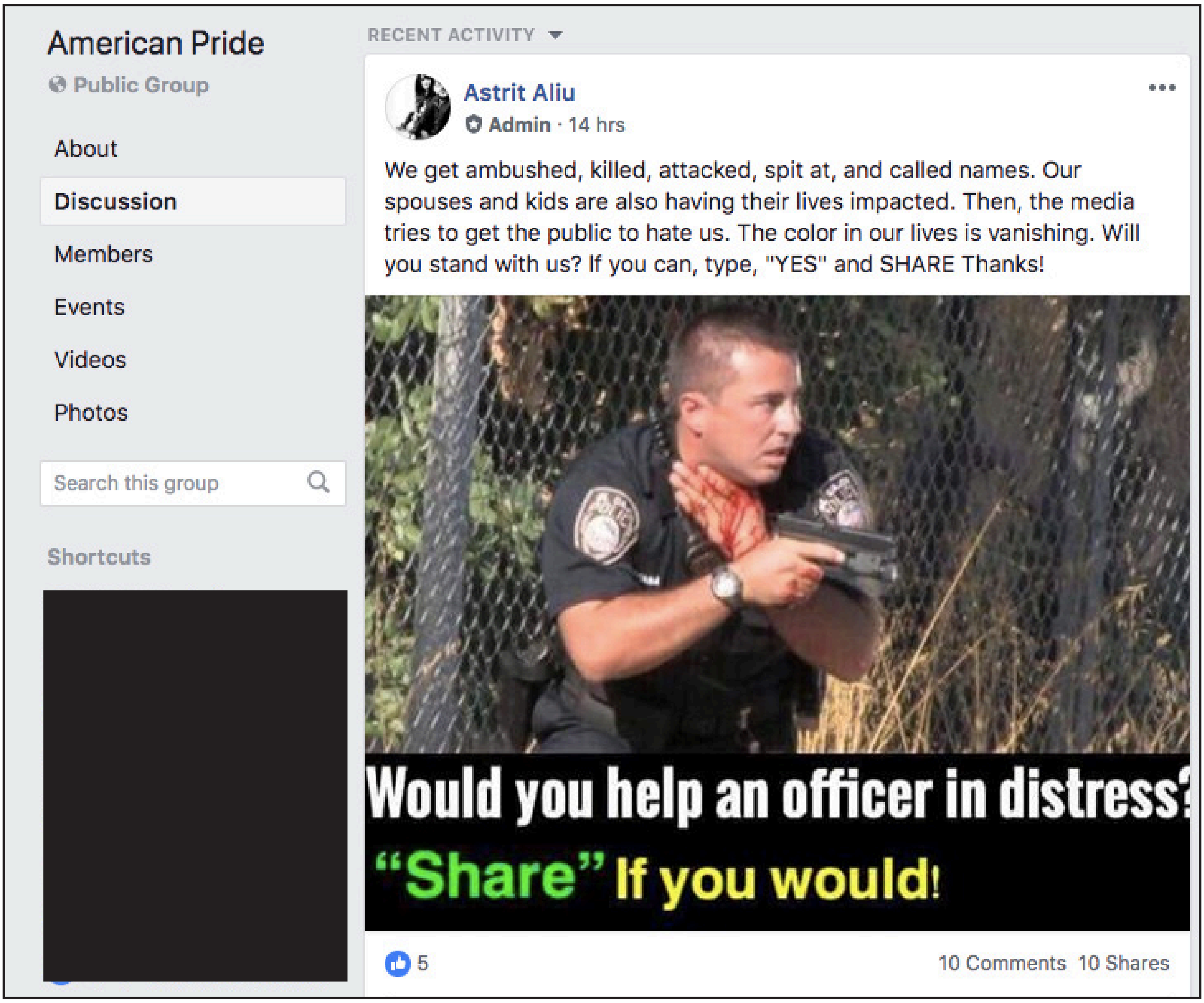


Astrit Aliu
Admin · August 8, 2018

i need some moderators, anyone interested???

2
1 Comment 1 Share

Figure 162: Here, Astrit Aliu, an admin from Kosovo, is recruiting a "useful idiot" to help reduce the workload in maintaining the Facebook group.



[redacted]

We get ambushed, killed, attacked, spit at, and called names. Our spouses and kids are also having their lives impacted. Then, the media tries to get the public to hate us. The color in our lives is vanishing. Will you stand with us? If you can, type, "YES" and SHARE Thanks!

Figure 163: The Kosovar admin Astrit Aliu posts a meme featuring an injured police officer with weapon drawn into the “American Pride” group. The comment is meant both to provoke outrage and to provide an outlet for that outrage: asking users to comment and share to show their support for police officers.

(text continued from page 130)

The admins for the group, who remain admins today, are based in Kosovo.

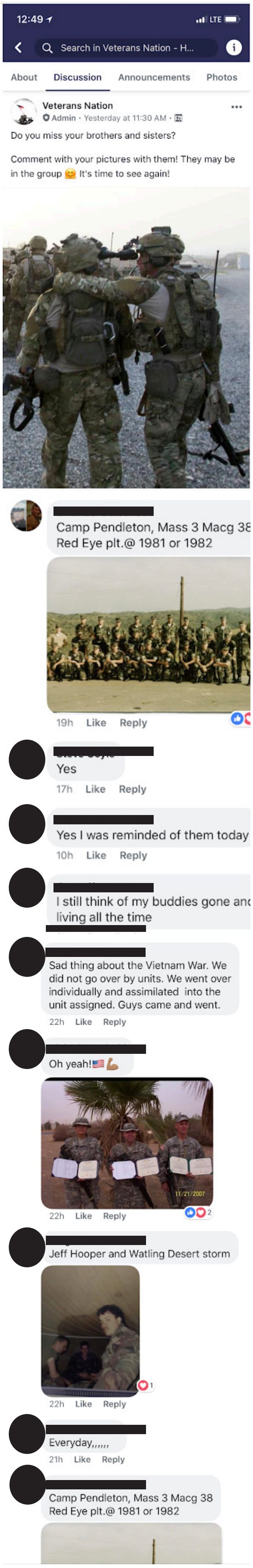
On August 8, 2018, one of the Kosovar admins, “Astrit Aliu,” started recruiting useful idiots — Americans who could help them manage the group and make it appear to be authentic (Figure 162).

On August 29, 2018, Astrit Aliu started soliciting photos of veterans in uniform under the guise of connecting old friends. Veterans started volunteering their photos and information about their service in droves (Figures 164-170). This was both a ploy for engagement, which would boost the post into people’s news feeds, and also to extract from veterans new photographs that could later be used as the basis of new content for the foreign admins.

Astrit Aliu frequently shared divisive content in the group, such as memes featuring bleeding servicemembers or police, along with comments scripted to provoke outrage (Figure 163). And with the outrageous content, the group’s membership swelled, attracting hundreds of MilVets and members of the law-enforcement community.

At some point in late 2018 or early 2019, both the “American Pride” and “Patriot Walk” pages were removed by Facebook — as Facebook recognized the problem of coordinated inauthentic activity originating in Kosovo — but the backup group remained.

(text continued on page 137)



12:49

Search in Veterans Nation - H...

About Discussion Announcements Photos

Veterans Nation
Admin · Yesterday at 11:30 AM

Do you miss your brothers and sisters?

Comment with your pictures with them! They may be in the group 🤗 It's time to see again!

[redacted]
Camp Pendleton, Mass 3 Macg 38
Red Eye plt.@ 1981 or 1982
19h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Yes
17h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Yes I was reminded of them today
10h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
I still think of my buddies gone and
living all the time

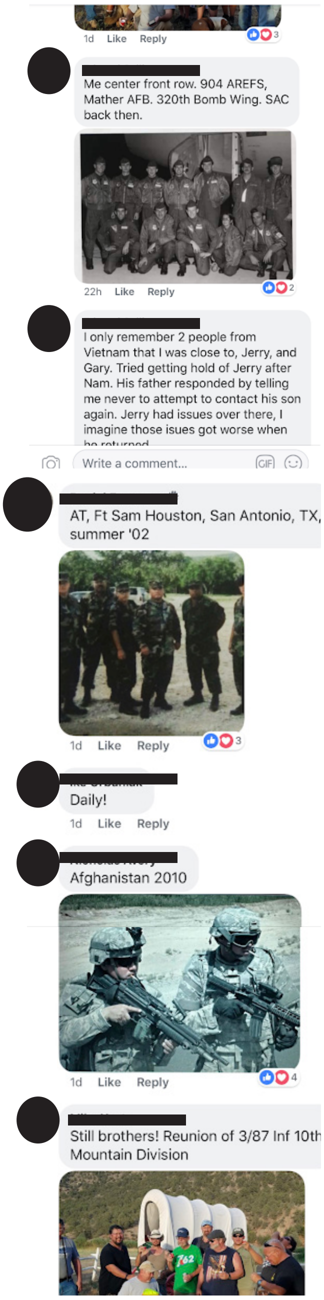
[redacted] [redacted]
Sad thing about the Vietnam War. We did not go over by units. We went over individually and assimilated into the unit assigned. Guys came and went.
22h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Oh yeah!🇺🇸💪
22h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Jeff Hooper and Watling Desert storm
22h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Everyday,,,,,,
21h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Camp Pendleton, Mass 3 Macg 38
Red Eye plt.@ 1981 or 1982



1d Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Me center front row. 904 AREFS, Mather AFB. 320th Bomb Wing. SAC back then.
22h Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
I only remember 2 people from Vietnam that I was close to, Jerry, and Gary. Tried getting hold of Jerry after Nam. His father responded by telling me never to attempt to contact his son again. Jerry had issues over there, I imagine those isues got worse when he returned

Write a comment...

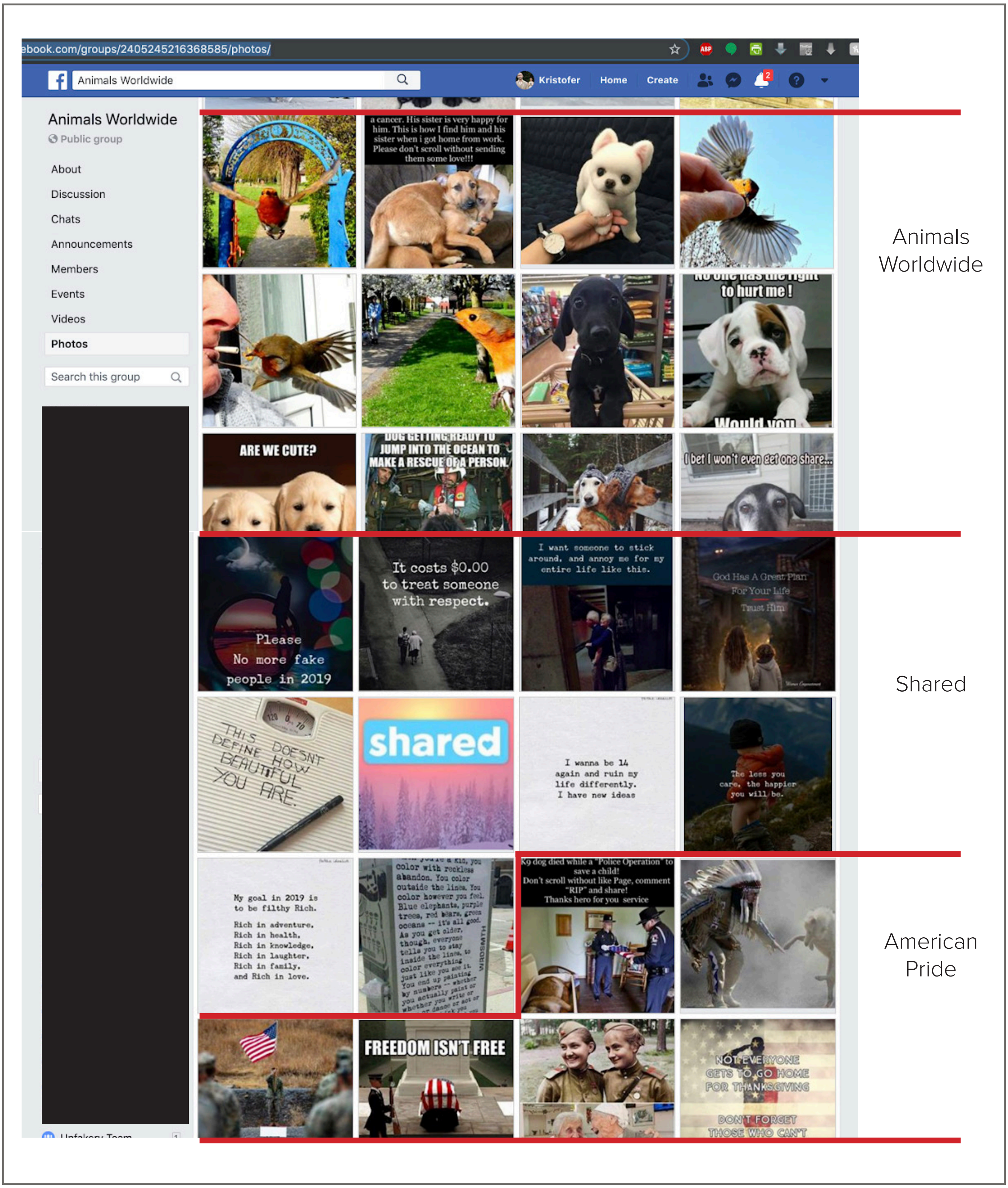
[redacted] [redacted]
AT, Ft Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX, summer '02
1d Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Daily!
1d Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Afghanistan 2010
1d Like Reply

[redacted] [redacted]
Still brothers! Reunion of 3/87 Inf 10th Mountain Division

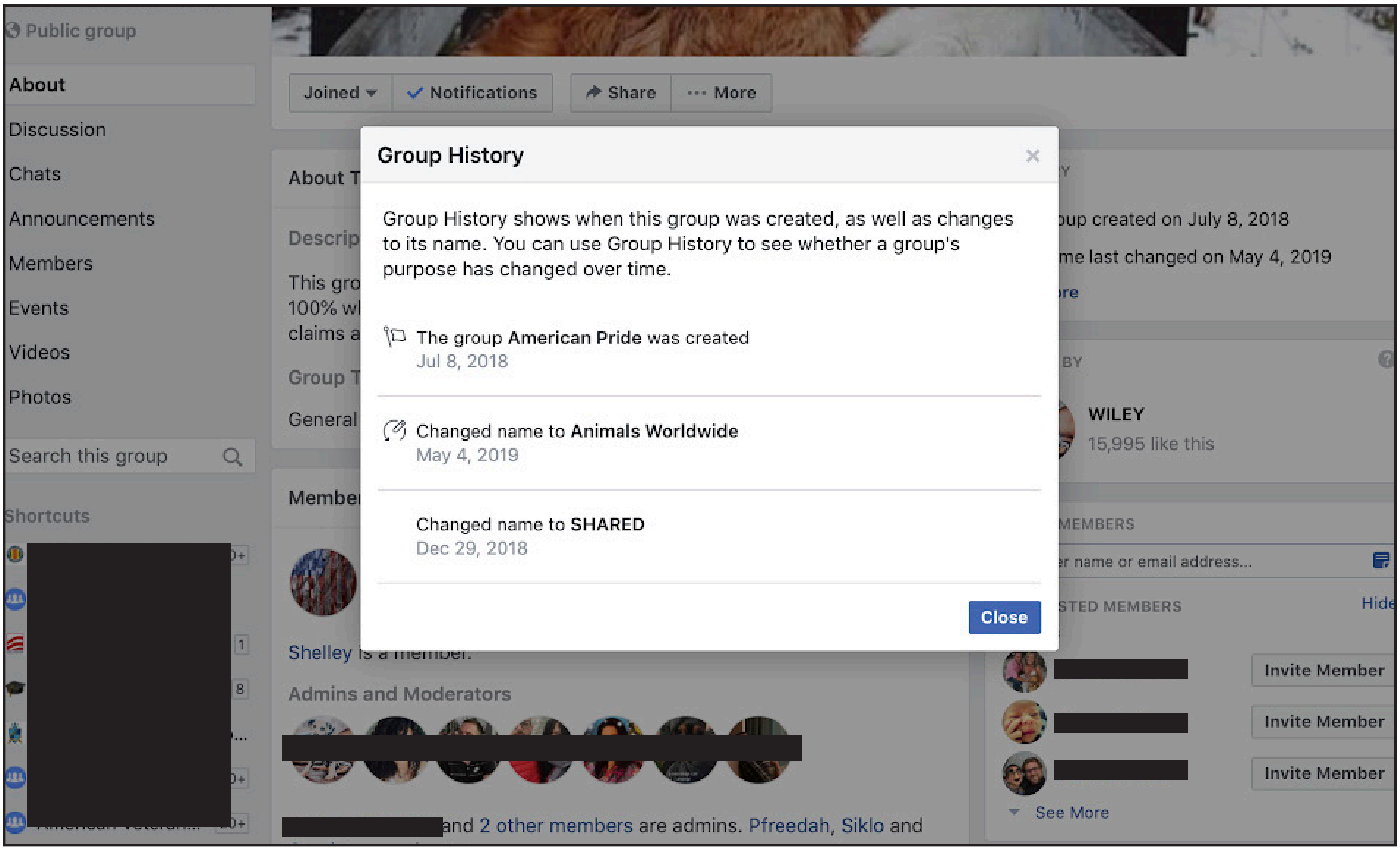
Figures 164-170: American veterans unknowingly share their military history and photos with foreign admins after being prompted to share this information by a foreign admin under the guise of a mission to connect long-lost battle buddies.



ebook.com/groups/2405245216368585/photos/
Animals Worldwide
Kristofer
Home
Create
Animals Worldwide
Public group
About
Discussion
Chats
Announcements
Members
Events
Videos
Photos
Search this group
a cancer. His sister is very happy for him. This is how i find him and his sister when i got home from work. Please don't scroll without sending them some love!!!
no one has the right to hurt me !
Would you
ARE WE CUTE?
DOG GETTING READY TO JUMP INTO THE OCEAN TO MAKE A RESCUE OF A PERSON.
I bet I won't even get one share...
Please No more fake people in 2019
It costs $0.00 to treat someone with respect.
I want someone to stick around, and annoy me for my entire life like this.
God Has A Great Plan For Your Life Trust Him
THIS DOESN'T DEFINE HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE.
shared
I wanna be 14 again and ruin my life differently. I have new ideas
The less you care, the happier you will be.
My goal in 2019 is to be filthy Rich. Rich in adventure. Rich in health. Rich in knowledge. Rich in laughter. Rich in family. and Rich in love.
color with reckless abandon. You color outside the lines. You color however you feel. Blue elephants, purple trees, red bears, green oceans -- it's all good. As you get older, though, everyone tells you to stay inside the lines, to color everything just like you see it. You end up painting by numbers -- whether you actually paint or
K9 dog died while a "Police Operation" to save a child! Don't scroll without like Page, comment "RIP" and share! Thanks hero for you service
FREEDOM ISN'T FREE
NOT EVERYONE GETS TO GO HOME FOR THANKSGIVING
DON'T FORGET THOSE WHO CAN'T
Unfakery Team
Animals Worldwide
Shared
American Pride

[redacted]

Figures 171 and 172



[redacted]

Group History

Group History shows when this group was created, as well as changes to its name. You can use Group History to see whether a group's purpose has changed over time.

The group **American Pride** was created
Jul 8, 2018

Changed name to **Animals Worldwide**
May 4, 2019

Changed name to **SHARED**
Dec 29, 2018

Close

up created on July 8, 2018
me last changed on May 4, 2019

WILEY
15,995 like this

MEMBERS
r name or email address...
STED MEMBERS

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Shelley is a member.

[redacted]

[redacted] and 2 other members are admins. Pfreedah, Siklo and

Figure 173: Facebook now provides "Group History," which displays information regarding the name changes of the group.

(text continued from page 134)

On December 29, 2018, the group was renamed SHARED and made a drastic shift from posting pictures of Americans in uniform to exclusively cheery, inspirational-poster-styled memes (Figures 171-173).

The group name changed again on May 4, 2019, to Animals Worldwide, which shares pictures of animals and related content to draw in followers. Despite the shift in content, the group description targeting disabled veterans remains the same and has since grown in membership to 15,991 Facebook users.

"Veterans Nation" and "Veterans Nation — Honoring All Who Served"

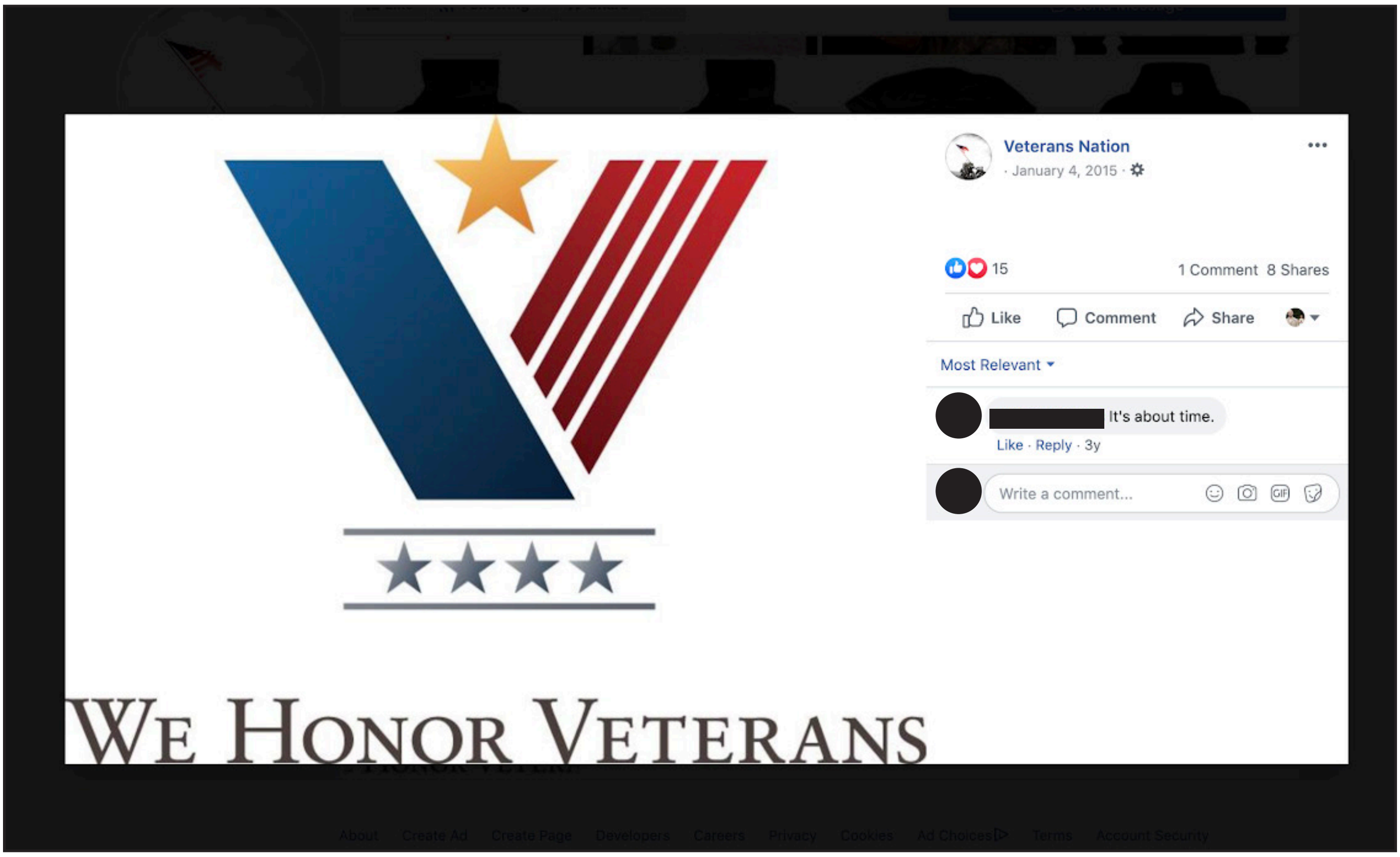
The page "Veterans Nation" was created on September 9, 2014, and currently has 206,442 likes.[209] The affiliated Veterans Nation — Honoring All Who Served closed group[210] was created on June 26, 2018, and has 11,893 members — all of whom had to request to join (including this investigator).

On January 4, 2015, the page admin posted a logo stolen from "We Honor Veterans" as the profile photo, which is currently the first photo visible on the page (Figure 174).

Admins for the Veterans Nation — Honoring All Who Served group included the "Veterans Nation" page, an admin going by the alias "Kim Johny" (this user account was deleted), and one remaining admin using the alias "Kelvin Henry," who based on other activity on Facebook appears to be located in Vietnam and dedicated to targeting American veterans. The Kelvin Henry account was created on November 22, 2014, using a stock photo of a blond woman. The account posts brief status updates in English with grammatical mistakes typical of a non-native English speaker. It references the Women's March in early 2017, then appears to adopt the identity of a male American veteran on June 25, 2018.

The "Veterans Nation" entity has a complete online ecosystem: a Facebook page and group, a website,[211] a Twitter account, and an Instagram account. The website is selling the same type of merchandise as the confirmed Russian websites that are described and

(text continued on page 141)

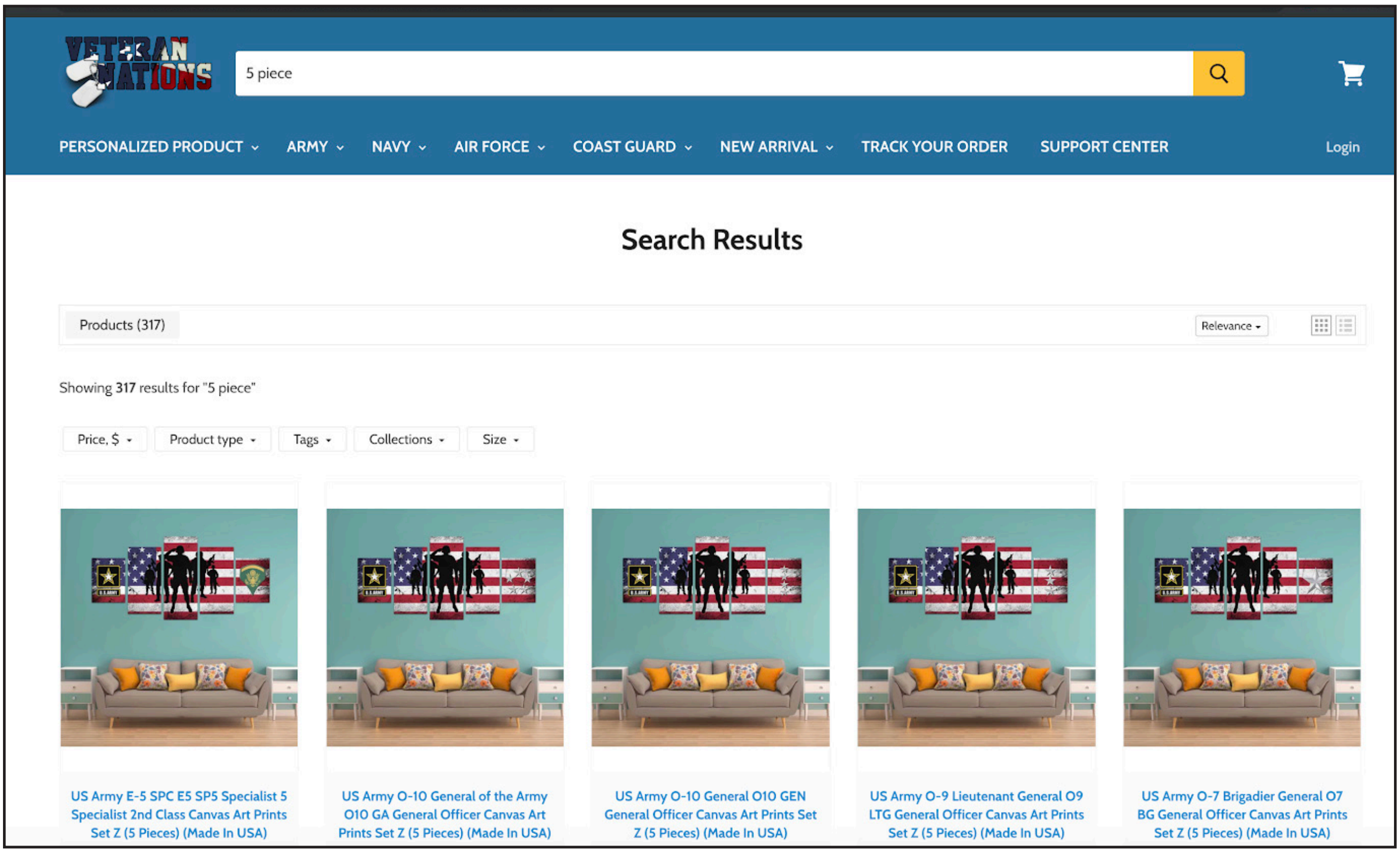


Veterans Nation
· January 4, 2015 ·

15 1 Comment 8 Shares

[redacted] It's about time.

Figure 174: The Facebook page "Veterans Nation" uploaded the logo of the legitimate organization "We Honor Veterans" as a profile photo in order to gain credibility among MilVets.



Search Results

Products (317)

Showing 317 results for "5 piece"

US Army E-5 SPC E5 SP5 Specialist 5 Specialist 2nd Class Canvas Art Prints Set Z (5 Pieces) (Made In USA)

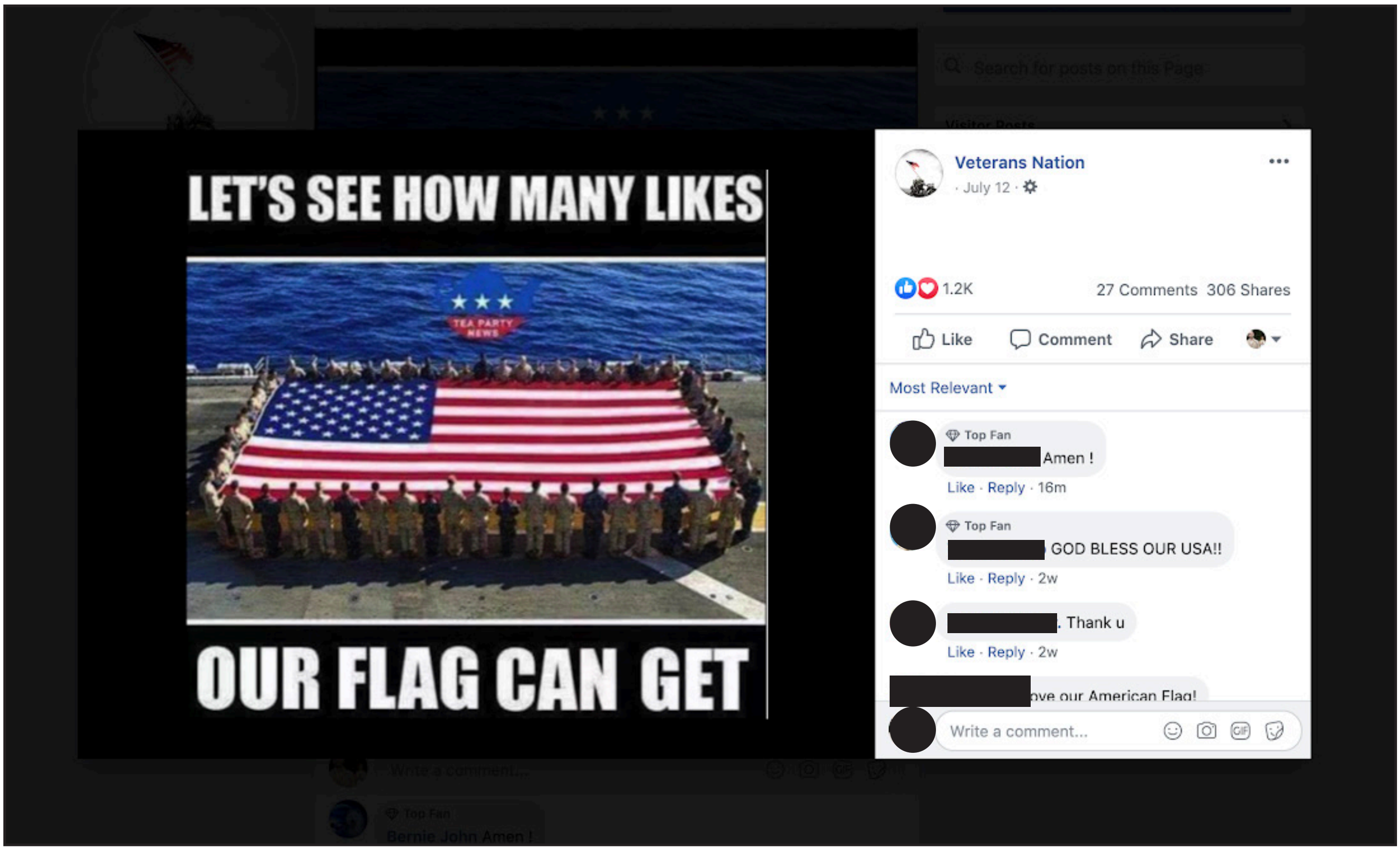
US Army O-10 General of the Army O10 GA General Officer Canvas Art Prints Set Z (5 Pieces) (Made In USA)

US Army O-10 General O10 GEN General Officer Canvas Art Prints Set Z (5 Pieces) (Made In USA)

US Army O-9 Lieutenant General O9 LTG General Officer Canvas Art Prints Set Z (5 Pieces) (Made In USA)

US Army O-7 Brigadier General O7 BG General Officer Canvas Art Prints Set Z (5 Pieces) (Made In USA)

Figure 175: The Facebook page "Veterans Nation" is affiliated with the website Veteran Nations [sic], *which sells merchandise similar to that which was sold by sites affiliated with the Russian IRA.*



Veterans Nation
· July 12 ·

1.2K 27 Comments 306 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

Top Fan
[redacted] Amen !
Like · Reply · 16m

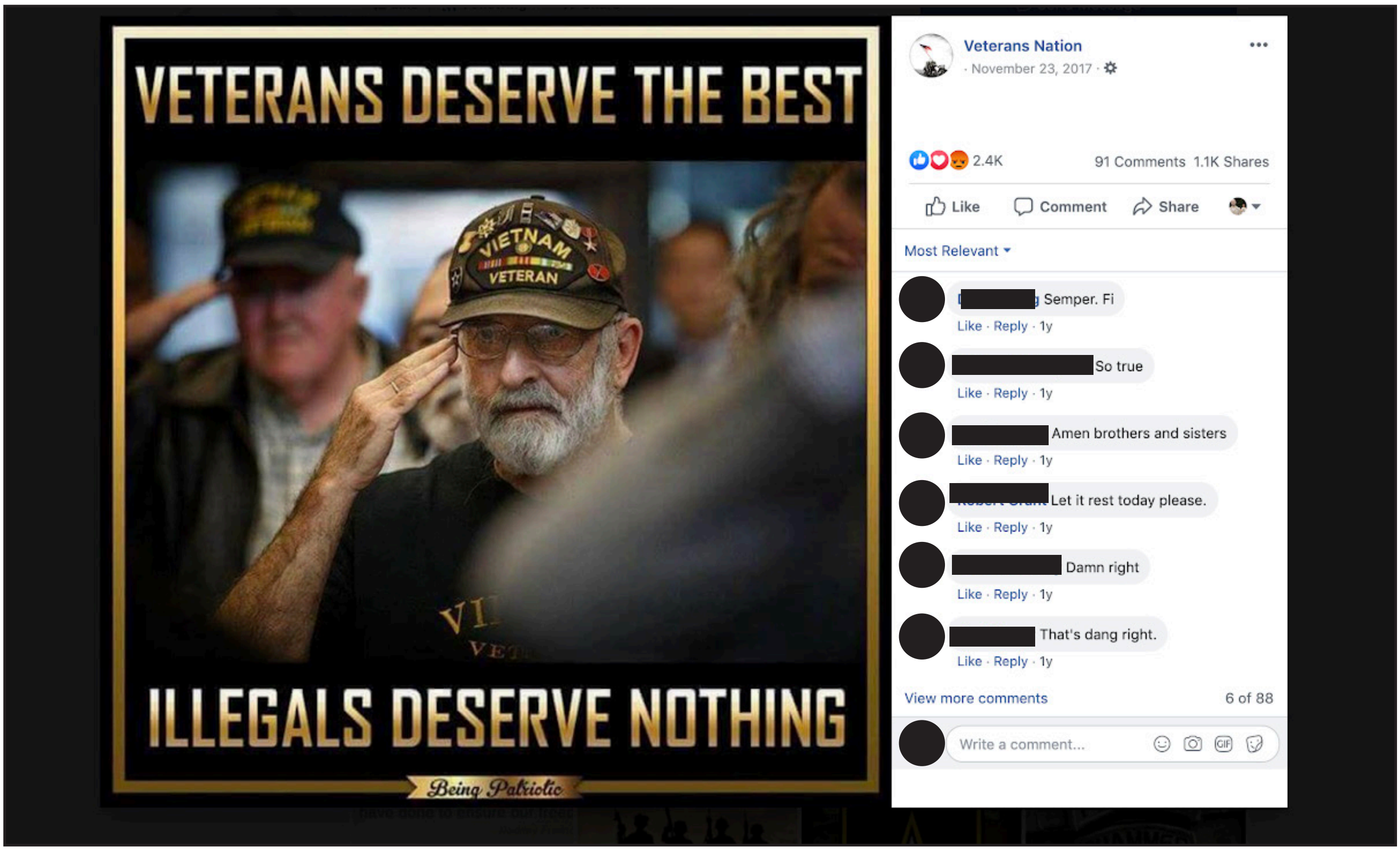
Top Fan
[redacted] GOD BLESS OUR USA!!
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted]. Thank u
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] ove our American Flag!

Write a comment...

Figure 176: The Facebook page "Tea Party News" was identified as a Russian IRA disinformation outlet, yet its content lives on in pages with foreign admins such as "Veterans Nation."



Veterans Nation
· November 23, 2017 ·

2.4K 91 Comments 1.1K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Semper. Fi
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] So true
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen brothers and sisters
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Let it rest today please.
Like · Reply · 1y

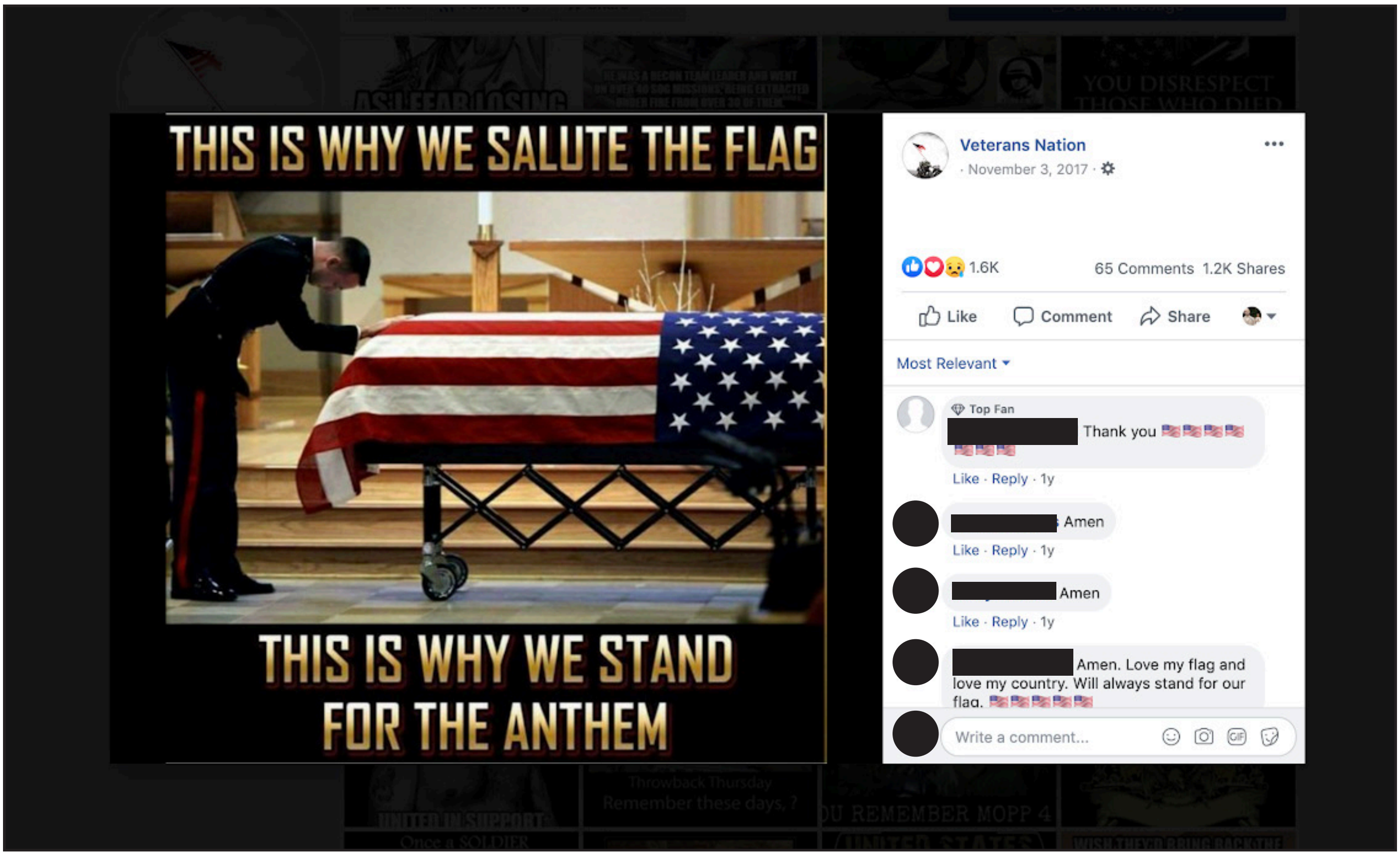
[redacted] Damn right
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] That's dang right.
Like · Reply · 1y

View more comments 6 of 88

Write a comment...

Figure 177: "Being Patriotic" was a brand created by the Russian IRA.


THIS IS WHY WE SALUTE THE FLAG
THIS IS WHY WE STAND FOR THE ANTHEM

Veterans Nation
· November 3, 2017 ·

1.6K 65 Comments 1.2K Shares

Most Relevant ▾

Top Fan
[redacted] Thank you 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 1y

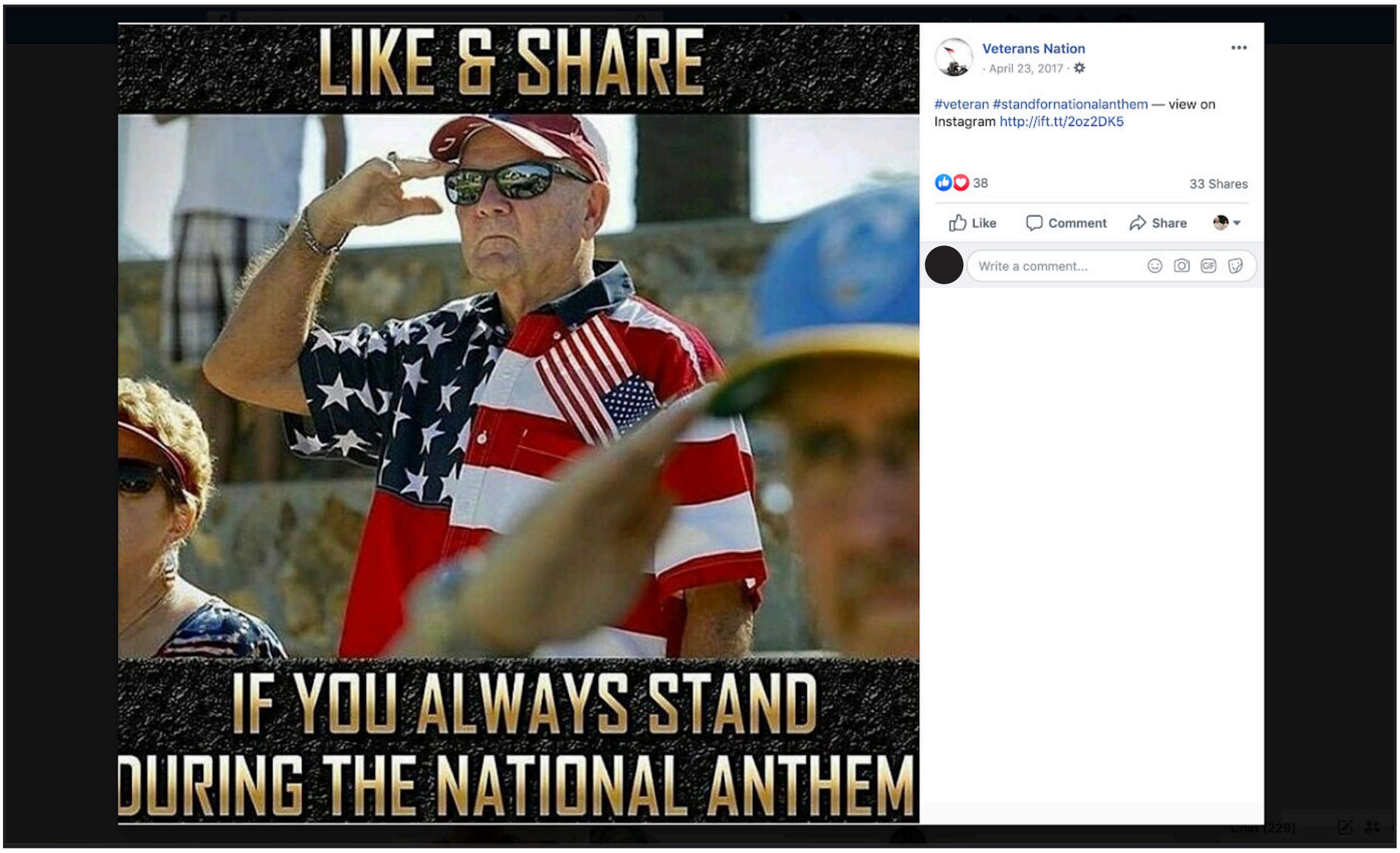
[redacted] Amen
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Amen. Love my flag and love my country. Will always stand for our flag. 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸

Write a comment...

Figure 178: This is a Russian IRA "Being Patriotic" meme that was cropped to remove the easily recognizable golden scroll and logo.



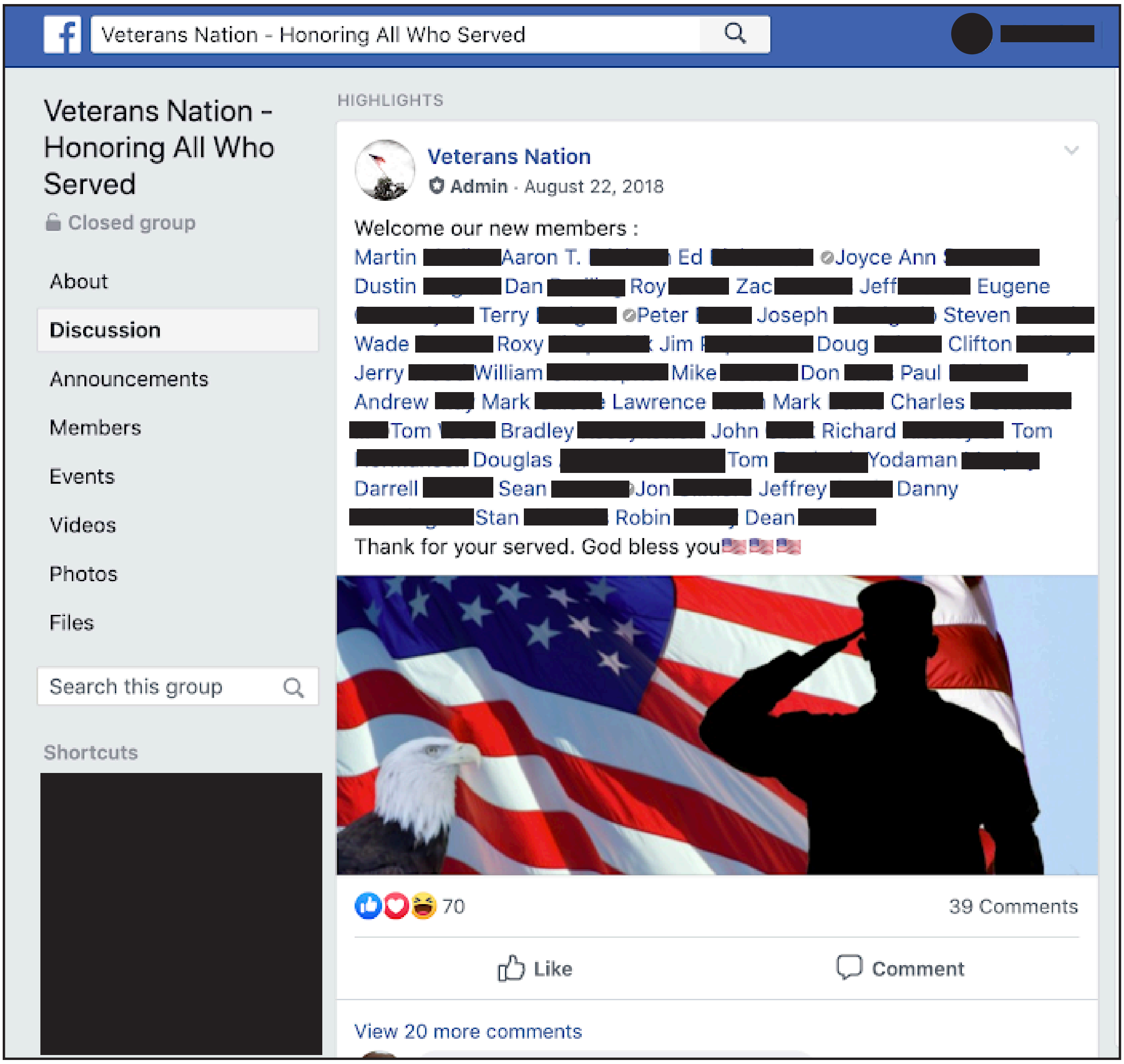
Veterans Nation
· April 23, 2017 ·

#veteran #standfornationalanthem — view on Instagram http://ift.tt/2oz2DK5

38 33 Shares

Write a comment...

Figure 179: Russian IRA content can often be identified by signature traits, such as the golden text in this "Being Patriotic" meme. This post also advertises the page admins' affiliated Instagram account, while using a link-shortener to mask the URL.



Veterans Nation - Honoring All Who Served

[redacted]

Veterans Nation - Honoring All Who Served

Closed group

[redacted]

HIGHLIGHTS

Veterans Nation
Admin · August 22, 2018

Welcome our new members :
Martin [redacted] Aaron T. [redacted] Ed [redacted] Joyce Ann [redacted]
Dustin [redacted] Dan [redacted] Roy [redacted] Zac [redacted] Jeff [redacted] Eugene
[redacted] Terry [redacted] Peter [redacted] Joseph [redacted] Steven [redacted]
Wade [redacted] Roxy [redacted] Jim [redacted] Doug [redacted] Clifton [redacted]
Jerry [redacted] William [redacted] Mike [redacted] Don [redacted] Paul [redacted]
Andrew [redacted] Mark [redacted] Lawrence [redacted] Mark [redacted] Charles [redacted]
[redacted] Tom [redacted] Bradley [redacted] John [redacted] Richard [redacted] Tom
[redacted] Douglas [redacted] Tom [redacted] Yodaman [redacted]
Darrell [redacted] Sean [redacted] Jon [redacted] Jeffrey [redacted] Danny
[redacted] Stan [redacted] Robin [redacted] Dean [redacted]
Thank for your served. God bless you🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸

Figure 180: August 22, 2018, admin tags and welcomes dozens of veterans to the group as a way of kicking off user engagement.

(text continued from page 137)

displayed on page 31 of the report “The Tactics & Tropes of the Internet Research Agency” by New Knowledge (Figure 175). It is unclear whether there is a nexus between the Veterans Nation entity and the IRA. However, New Knowledge warns that “merchandise perhaps provided the IRA with a source of revenue,” as well as offered a way to scrape personal and financial information from victims.[212]

Whether the purpose of “Veterans Nation” is only to sell merchandise is unknown — but the practical effect of the divisive content that it shares may be the same as the IRA. The Facebook page posts recycled, confirmed Russian IRA-generated memes from entities listed in the Mueller report such as “Tea Party News”[213,214] and “Being Patriotic” (Figures 176-179).[215,216,217]

One enhanced element of the “Veterans Nation” entity is its engagement with members within the group that it controls. At times it creates “welcome” posts, tagging dozens of new group members, which triggers lots of comments and reactions — taking advantage of Facebook’s algorithms and expanding the group’s reach (Figure 180).

CHAPTER 8: First-Known 2020-Election Interference — Macedonians Steal and Promote "Vets for Trump," Facebook Fails to Respond to American Admins' Pleas for Help

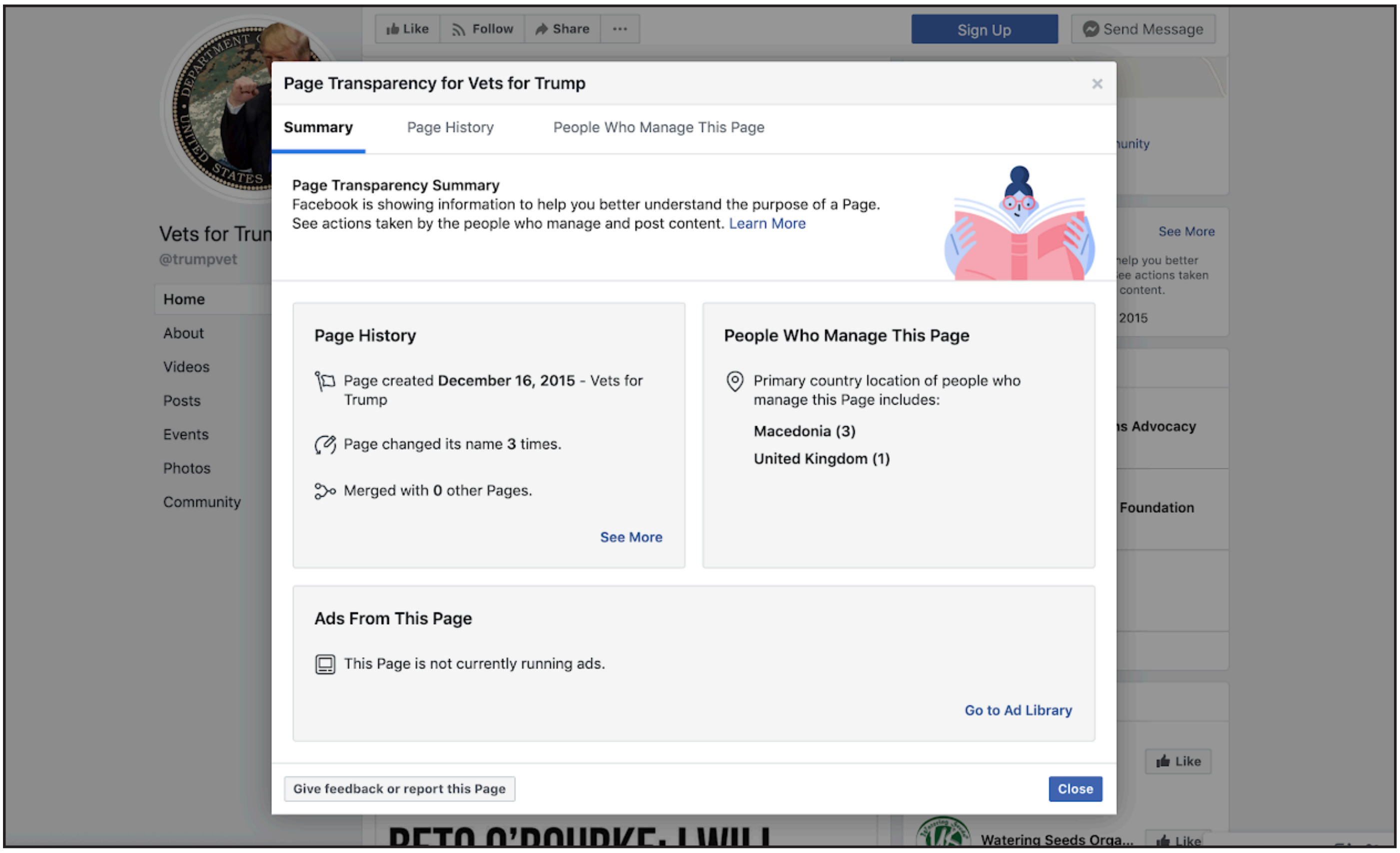
At the point a Facebook page reaches an audience of a certain size or when it begins to purchase political ads, the countries of origin of the page's admins are revealed in the "Page Transparency" tab. However, despite recent reforms by the company to make the Page Transparency tab more accessible, relatively few Facebook members use it to check on a page's point of origin or whether the political content they interact with is being provided by Americans. While the Page Transparency tab lists the history of a page's name changes, which may include clues of inauthentic behavior, as well as the admins' countries of origins, it does not include the history of the admins' countries of origins — the trail of which could also offer clues of inauthentic behavior. The lack of user-friendliness of the Page Transparency tab and ironically, its lack of total transparency, takes away from its usefulness and purpose as a tool for Americans to easily discover whether the content is posted by provocateurs with the intent to confuse, trick, and manipulate. This helps explain why the "Vets for Trump[218] Facebook page — which according to the tab had three admins in Macedonia and one admin in the United Kingdom but none in the US from at least April-August 2019 (Figure 181) — had a rapidly growing audience (from around 120,000 to 131,000 followers) while it was hijacked by foreign entities.

Followers of this page while it was under Macedonian/UK control includes at least one elected official[219] who was a Trump campaign surrogate (Figure 182),[220] in addition to an individual who was the director of Military & Veterans Outreach for the Republican National Committee (GOPVets).[221] If Facebook users who were involved in and so closely affiliated with the 2016 Trump campaign did not recognize that the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page was run by foreign admins — it's unlikely that the common Facebook user who is far less familiar with the Trump campaign and its affiliates would recognize this type of inauthentic behavior. In fact, while Macedonians controlled the page it experienced a notable spike in growth and engagement from its audience.

Macedonia is known to be a hotbed for fake-news websites and plagiarized misinformation that targets Americans with divisive political content.[222] Mirko Ceselkoski, a Macedonian self-proclaimed "internet professor," teaches young people how to create viral content, which he claims "helped Donald Trump win US elections."[223] An investigation by BuzzFeed News, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, and the news outlet Investigative Reporting Lab Macedonia revealed that the Macedonian fake-news industry was created by a Macedonian media attorney, Trajche Arsov, along with his brother Panche Arsov, who "worked closely with two high-profile American partners for at least six months during a period that overlapped with Election Day" in 2016.[224]

The BuzzFeed article notes that Panche Arsov goes by the nickname "Pane," while Trajche goes by "Tale." The email address listed under the contact information for the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page during the time it was under Macedonian control includes both Panche's last name and nickname: arsovpane10@gmail.com (Figure 183). We reached out to that email address, and the responses came from a Gmail account self-identifying the user as "Pane Arsov." This Gmail user responded to our inquiries, claiming to own the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page and to have purchased it from a previous owner, "Loliot Germans"[225] and the business "AD BREAK" in April 2019. We could not independently verify that the Gmail user is indeed the Pane Arsov

(text continued on page 145)



Page Transparency for Vets for Trump

Page Transparency Summary
Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. Learn More

Page History

Page created **December 16, 2015** - Vets for Trump

Page changed its name **3** times.

Merged with **0** other Pages.

People Who Manage This Page

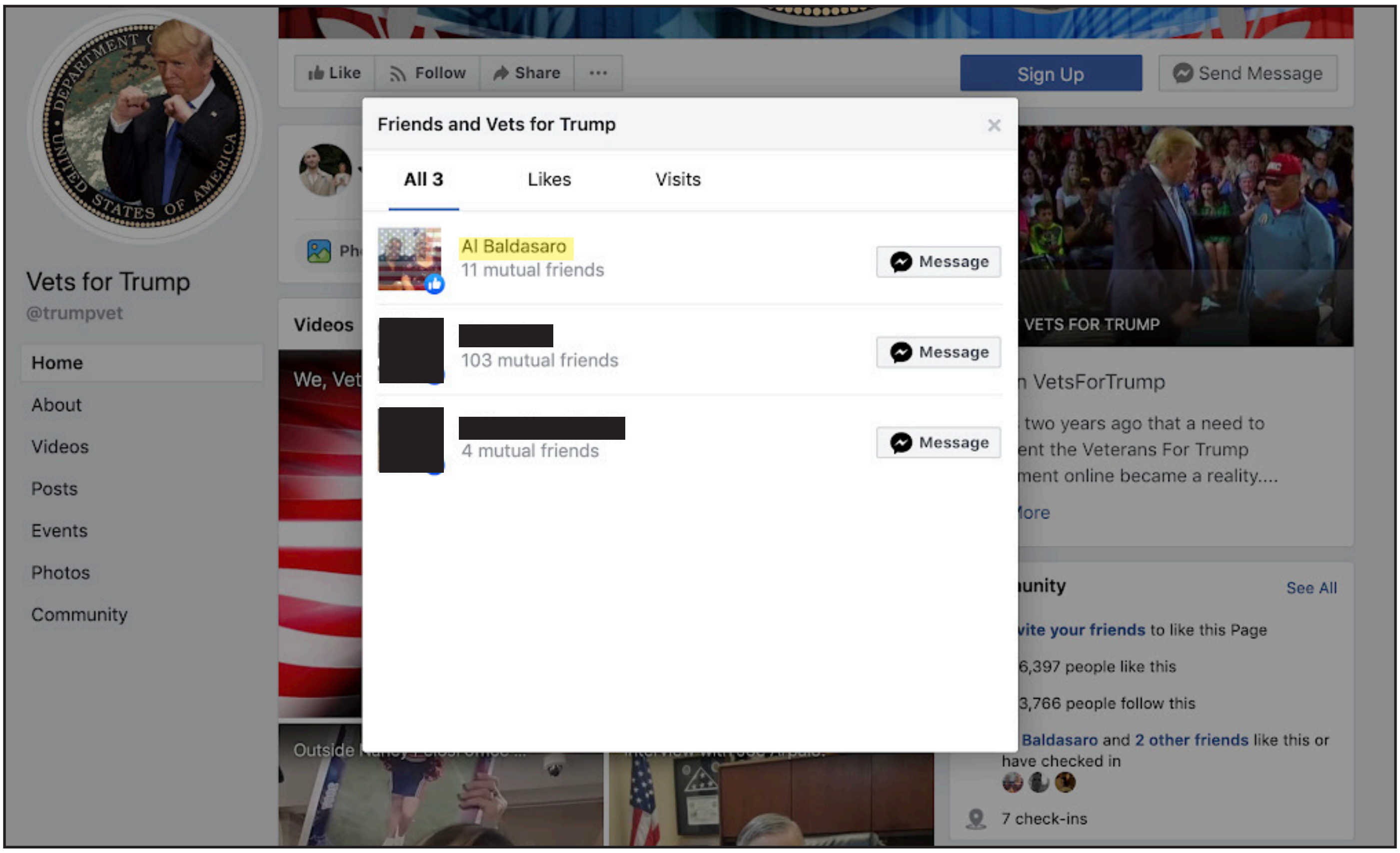
Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

Macedonia (3)
United Kingdom (1)

Ads From This Page

This Page is not currently running ads.

Figure 181: The Page Transparency tab of the “Vets for Trump” page listed only foreign admins from April through mid-August 2019.



Friends and Vets for Trump

Al Baldasaro
11 mutual friends

[redacted]
103 mutual friends

[redacted]
4 mutual friends

n VetsForTrump

two years ago that a need to ent the Veterans For Trump ment online became a reality.... lore

unity

vite your friends to like this Page

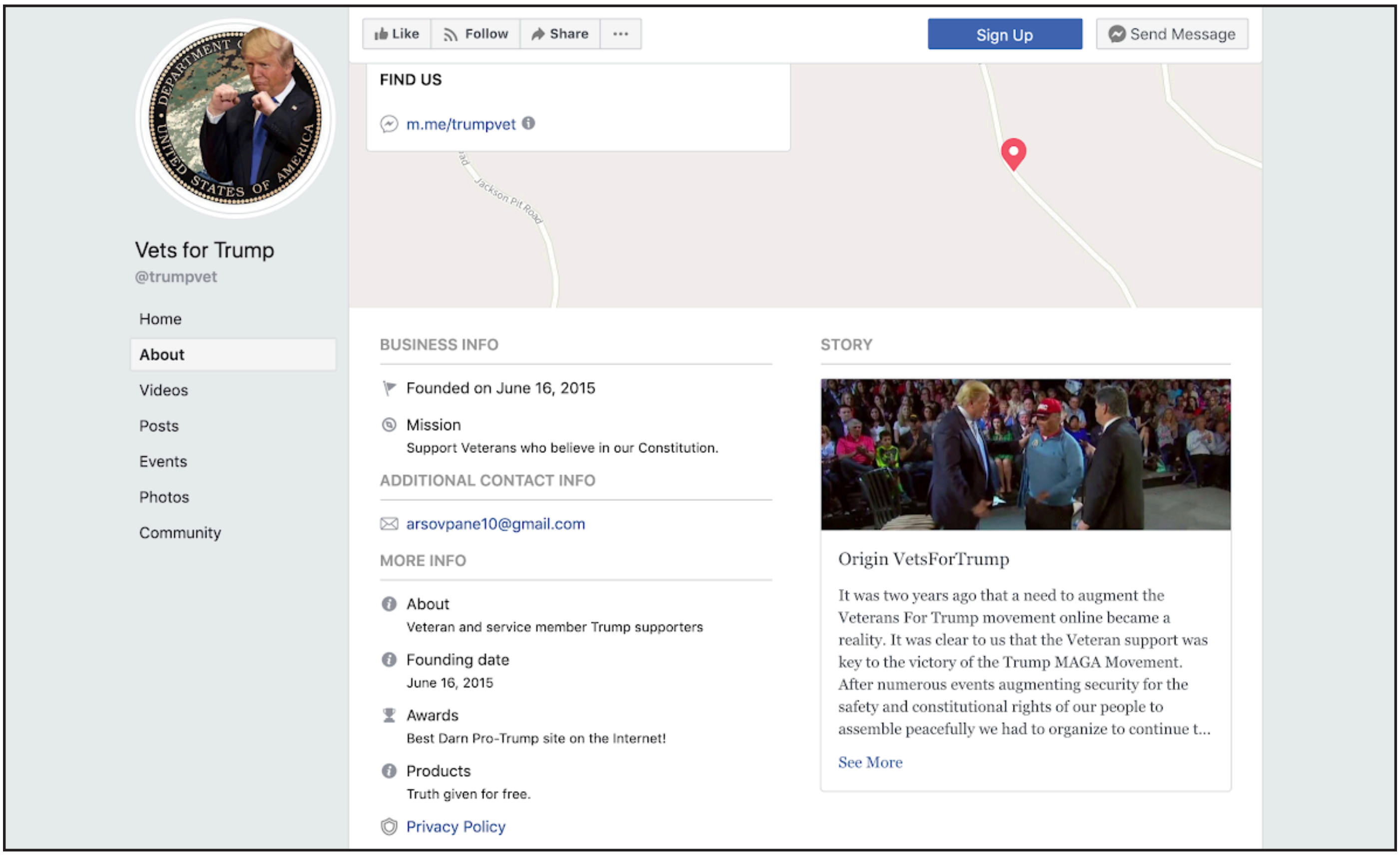
6,397 people like this

3,766 people follow this

Baldasaro and 2 other friends like this or have checked in

7 check-ins

Figure 182: “Vets for Trump” followers include Al Baldasaro, a legislator for the state of New Hampshire who served as a campaign surrogate for the Trump 2016 campaign, and an individual who was the founder of GOPVets. Both men are veterans. Mr. Baldasaro did not respond to requests for comment.



Vets for Trump
@trumpvet

FIND US

m.me/trumpvet

BUSINESS INFO

Founded on June 16, 2015

Mission
Support Veterans who believe in our Constitution.

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFO

arsovpane10@gmail.com

MORE INFO

About
Veteran and service member Trump supporters

Founding date
June 16, 2015

Awards
Best Darn Pro-Trump site on the Internet!

Products
Truth given for free.

Privacy Policy

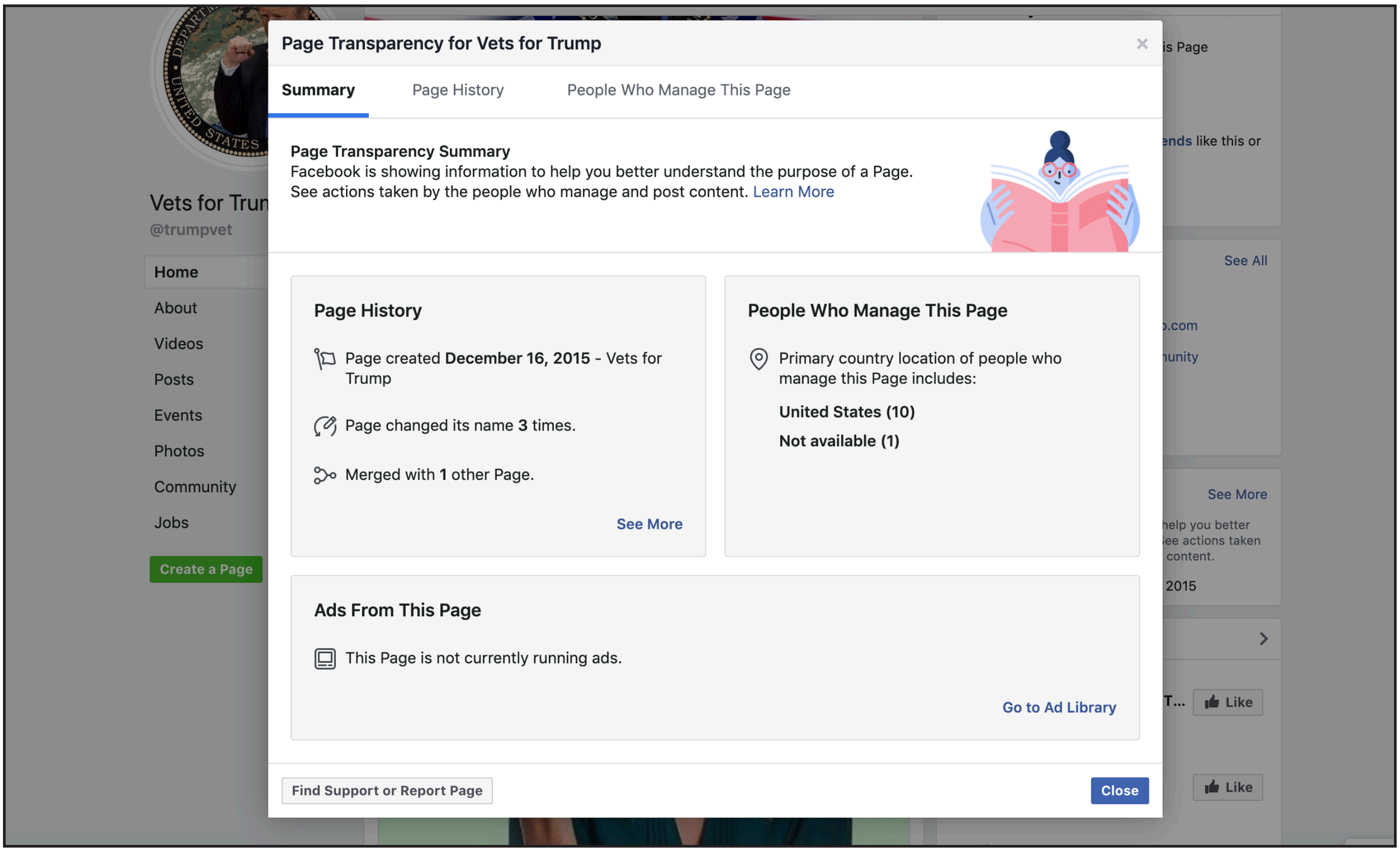
STORY

Origin VetsForTrump

It was two years ago that a need to augment the Veterans For Trump movement online became a reality. It was clear to us that the Veteran support was key to the victory of the Trump MAGA Movement. After numerous events augmenting security for the safety and constitutional rights of our people to assemble peacefully we had to organize to continue t...

See More

Figure 183: "Vets for Trump" Facebook page listed arsovpane10@gmail.com as the sole contact until mid-August 2019.



Page Transparency for Vets for Trump

Summary | Page History | People Who Manage This Page

Page Transparency Summary
Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. Learn More

Page History

Page created **December 16, 2015** - Vets for Trump

Page changed its name **3** times.

Merged with **1** other Page.

See More

People Who Manage This Page

Primary country location of people who manage this Page includes:

United States (10)

Not available (1)

Ads From This Page

This Page is not currently running ads.

Go to Ad Library

Find Support or Report Page

Close

Figure 184: The Page Transparency tab, as of August 29, 2019, lists 10 admins residing in the US and one listed as "Not available." It is unclear why an admin would be listed as "Not available," or whether foreign admins have discovered a way to hide their true locations from Facebook.

(text continued from page 142)

who was identified in the BuzzFeed investigations, though we find the circumstantial evidence convincing.

The Arsovs employed both American and British writers to help produce political content, which could explain the UK-based admin for the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page.[226] The BuzzFeed investigation also noted that Anna Bogacheva, who had traveled to the US to gather intelligence — and was one of the 13 Russian nationals indicted by Mueller — also traveled to Macedonia just before the rise of its fake-news industry. BuzzFeed reports that Bogacheva's entry into Macedonia was not recorded — just her departure through Greece — which has raised suspicions. BuzzFeed was careful to note, however, that "reporters found no connections between Bogacheva and the Macedonian sites."[227]

The "Vets for Trump" Facebook page has been coordinating with and closely mirroring the similarly named "Veterans for Donald Trump" Facebook page[228] while under American control, with the exception of the brief period between April and mid-August 2019, when Macedonians seized control. The Page Transparency tab for "Veterans for Donald Trump" lists 15 admins in the US and none abroad. Both of these pages share the same profile photo, though the "Veterans for Donald Trump" page posted the photo in December 2016[229] while the "Vets for Trump" page posted it in June 2018.[230] Both of these pages have been promoting the website veteransfordonaldtrump.com in their respective background photos, including while "Vets for Trump" was under Macedonian control. This Facebook page was posting a politically divisive doctored image purporting to show an NFL player stomping on a burning American flag, and was "registered by a man named Vladimir Lemets in 2015," according to a POLITIFACT article about "Vets for Trump."[231]

The veteransfordonaldtrump.com "About" page lists Joshua Macias as the Director of Veterans for Donald Trump.[232] The bio on Mr. Macias's website says that he is the founder of the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page, as well as "Chairman of the Veterans for Trump Coalition."[233] Mr. Macias's bio includes hyperlinks to both the "Vets for Trump" and the "Veterans for Donald Trump" Facebook pages.[234] Mr. Macias did not respond to several requests for an interview by VVA's investigator.

Mr. Lemets is listed as a co-founder and the Chief Technology Officer in the "About" section of the veteransfordonaldtrump.com website. A self-described "Russian-born American Nationalist,"[235] Mr. Lemets is a US Army veteran with native fluency in Russian and Ukranian. During an interview with VVA, Mr. Lemets confirmed his and Mr. Macias's control, past and present, of these pages — as well as a Facebook page-admin dispute with a woman with the username "Sanja Arsov," who claims to be the wife of the person who "owned" the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page from April-August 2019.

It is this investigator's opinion that Mr. Lemets was honest and candid when VVA interviewed him. Mr. Lemets volunteered to share documentation that supports his claim of foreign theft of the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page, as well as his lengthy battle with Facebook to resume American control of the political page.

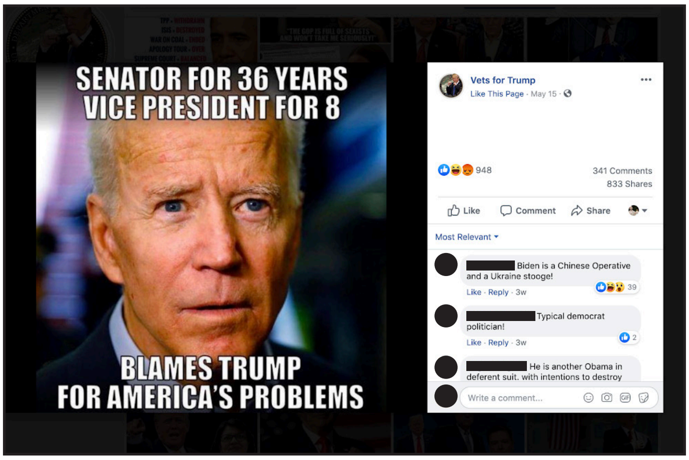
The "Vets for Trump" and "Veterans for Donald Trump" pages have shared exactly the same content at the same time (or within a minute of one another), which normally indicates a common admin and supports Mr. Lemets' claims of ownership. The last content that was posted on both pages at nearly the same time on the same date (before a period of unaffiliated content was posted while under Macedonian control) was on April 3, 2019, with a meme featuring General Michael Flynn and Jussie Smollett along with the hashtag "#IStandWithGenFlynn."[236,237]

It was around this time, according to Mr. Lemets, that Mr. Macias was tricked by a company called "AD BREAK" into relinquishing ownership of the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page, as well as several other related pages.

As we were in the final stages of preparing this report, we noticed that identical content was again being posted on both pages as of August 22, 2019, with cell-phone video of President Trump signing an Executive Order at the AMVETS National Convention.

(text continued on page 149)

Attacks Against Politicians by Macedonians: Joe Biden



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 15

948 — 341 Comments — 833 Shares

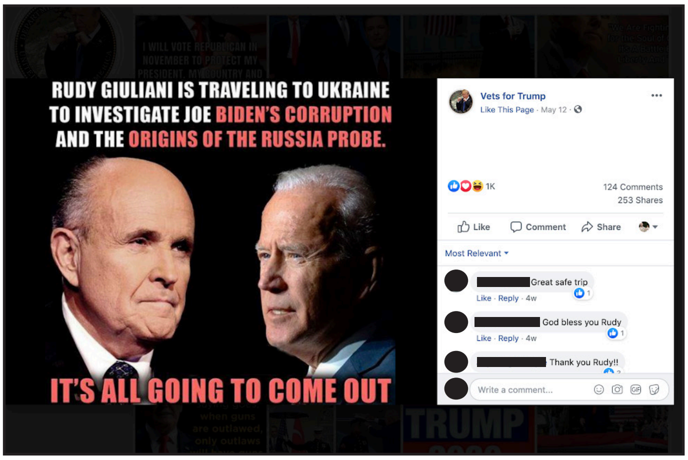
Most Relevant

[redacted] Biden is a Chinese Operative and a Ukraine stooge!
Like · Reply · 3w — 39

[redacted] Typical democrat politician!
Like · Reply · 3w — 2

[redacted] He is another Obama in deferent suit. with intentions to destroy

Figure 185


RUDY GIULIANI IS TRAVELING TO UKRAINE
TO INVESTIGATE JOE BIDEN'S CORRUPTION
AND THE ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIA PROBE.
IT'S ALL GOING TO COME OUT
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 12

1K — 124 Comments — 253 Shares

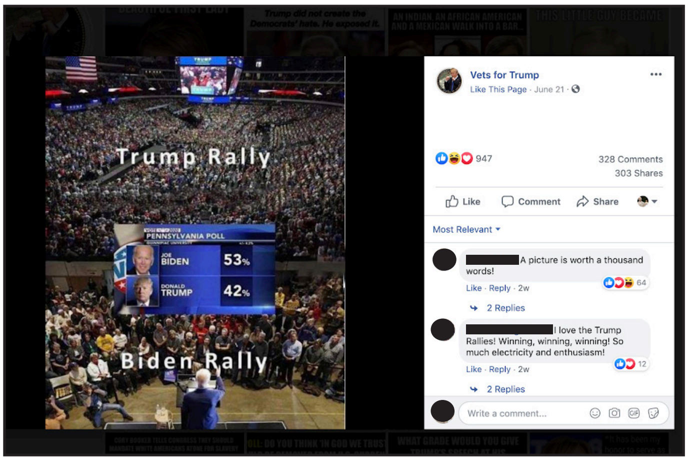
Most Relevant

[redacted] Great safe trip
Like · Reply · 4w — 1

[redacted] God bless you Rudy
Like · Reply · 4w — 1

[redacted] Thank you Rudy!!

Figure 186



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 21

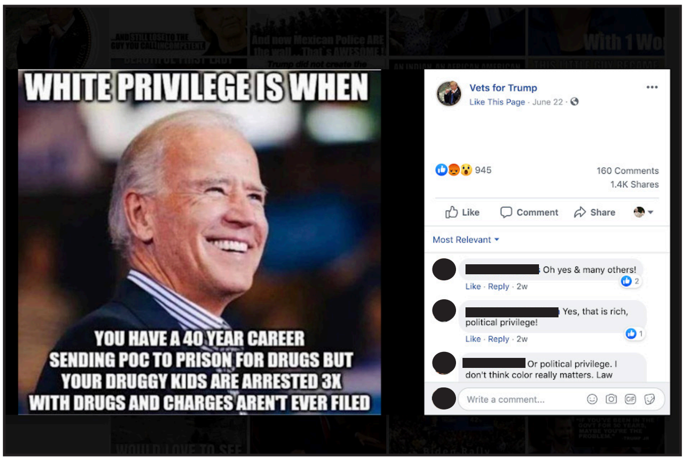
947 — 328 Comments — 303 Shares

Most Relevant

[redacted] A picture is worth a thousand words!
Like · Reply · 2w — 64
2 Replies

[redacted] I love the Trump Rallies! Winning, winning, winning! So much electricity and enthusiasm!
Like · Reply · 2w — 12
2 Replies

Figure 187


WHITE PRIVILEGE IS WHEN
YOU HAVE A 40 YEAR CAREER
SENDING POC TO PRISON FOR DRUGS BUT
YOUR DRUGGY KIDS ARE ARRESTED 3X
WITH DRUGS AND CHARGES AREN'T EVER FILED
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 22

945 — 160 Comments — 1.4K Shares

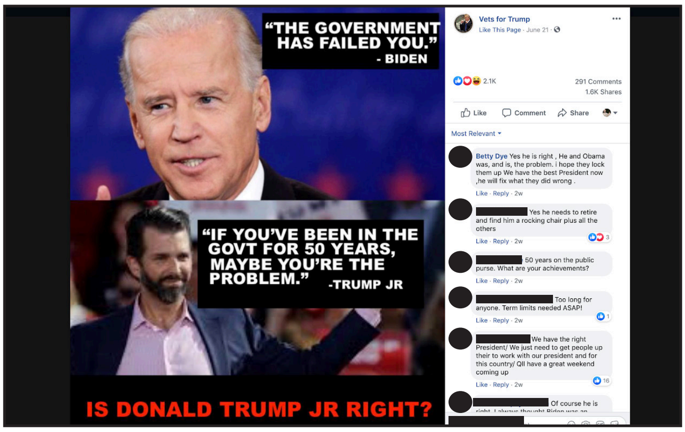
Most Relevant

[redacted] Oh yes & many others!
Like · Reply · 2w — 2

[redacted] Yes, that is rich, political privilege!
Like · Reply · 2w — 1

[redacted] Or political privilege. I don't think color really matters. Law

Figure 188


"THE GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED YOU." - BIDEN
"IF YOU'VE BEEN IN THE GOVT FOR 50 YEARS, MAYBE YOU'RE THE PROBLEM." -TRUMP JR
IS DONALD TRUMP JR RIGHT?
Like
Comment
Share

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 21

2.1K — 291 Comments — 1.6K Shares

Most Relevant

Betty Dye Yes he is right , He and Obama was, and is, the problem. i hope they lock them up We have the best President now ,he will fix what they did wrong .
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Yes he needs to retire and find him a rocking chair plus all the others
Like · Reply · 2w — 3

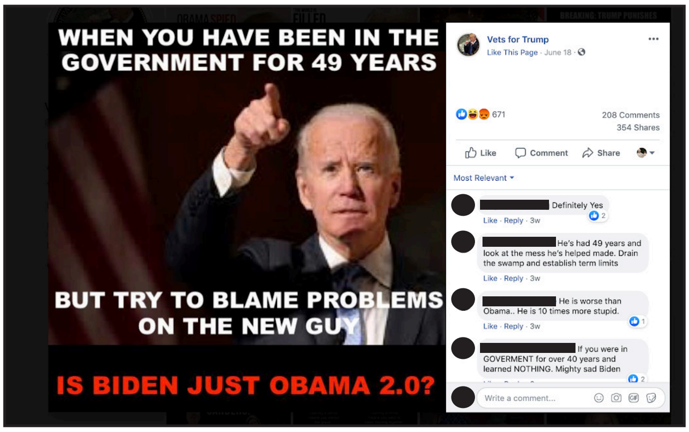
[redacted] 50 years on the public purse. What are your achievements?
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Too long for anyone. Term limits needed ASAP!
Like · Reply · 2w — 1

[redacted] We have the right President/ We just need to get people up their to work with our president and for this country/ QII have a great weekend coming up
Like · Reply · 2w — 16

[redacted] Of course he is

Figure 189


WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE GOVERNMENT FOR 49 YEARS
BUT TRY TO BLAME PROBLEMS ON THE NEW GUY
IS BIDEN JUST OBAMA 2.0?
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 18

671 — 208 Comments — 354 Shares

Most Relevant

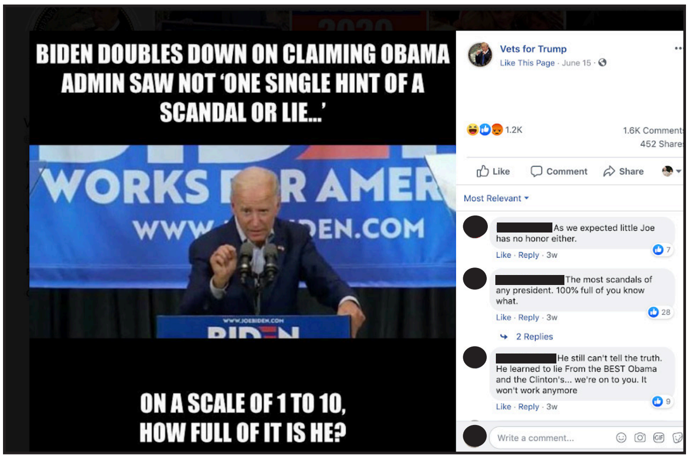
[redacted] Definitely Yes
Like · Reply · 3w — 2

[redacted] He's had 49 years and look at the mess he's helped made. Drain the swamp and establish term limits
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted] He is worse than Obama.. He is 10 times more stupid.
Like · Reply · 3w — 1

[redacted] If you were in GOVERMENT for over 40 years and learned NOTHING. Mighty sad Biden
2

Figure 190


BIDEN DOUBLES DOWN ON CLAIMING OBAMA ADMIN SAW NOT 'ONE SINGLE HINT OF A SCANDAL OR LIE...'
WORKS FOR AMER
WWW.JOEBIDEN.COM
ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10, HOW FULL OF IT IS HE?
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 15

1.2K · 1.6K Comments · 452 Shares

Most Relevant

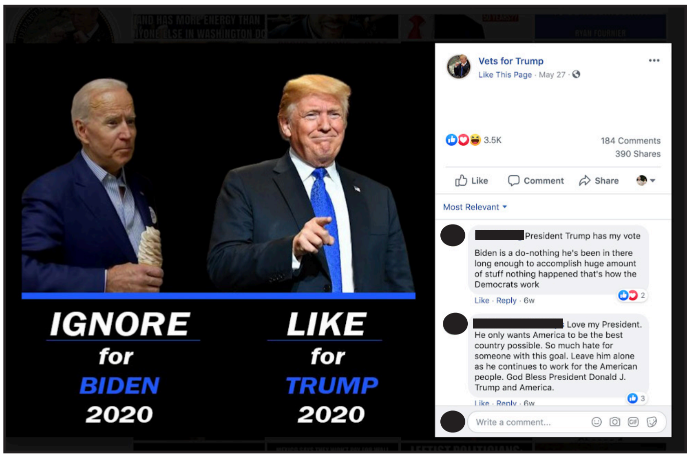
[redacted] As we expected little Joe has no honor either.
Like · Reply · 3w · 7

[redacted] The most scandals of any president. 100% full of you know what.
Like · Reply · 3w · 28

2 Replies

[redacted] He still can't tell the truth. He learned to lie From the BEST Obama and the Clinton's... we're on to you. It won't work anymore
Like · Reply · 3w · 9

Figure 191



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 27

3.5K · 184 Comments · 390 Shares

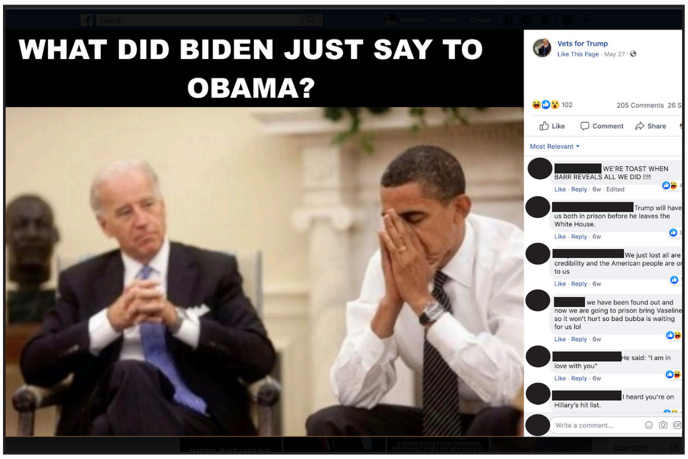
Most Relevant

[redacted] President Trump has my vote

Biden is a do-nothing he's been in there long enough to accomplish huge amount of stuff nothing happened that's how the Democrats work
Like · Reply · 6w · 2

[redacted] Love my President. He only wants America to be the best country possible. So much hate for someone with this goal. Leave him alone as he continues to work for the American people. God Bless President Donald J. Trump and America.
Like · Reply · 6w · 3

Figure 192



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 27

102 · 205 Comments 26 S

Most Relevant

[redacted] WE'RE TOAST WHEN BARR REVEALS ALL WE DID !!!!
Like · Reply · 6w · Edited

[redacted] Trump will have us both in prison before he leaves the White House.
Like · Reply · 6w

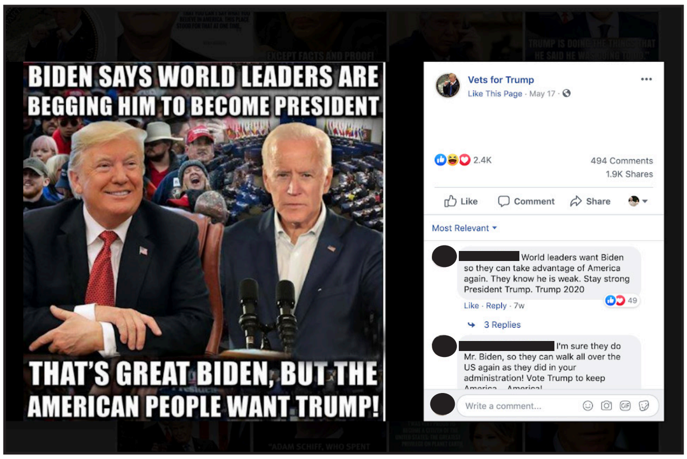
[redacted] We just lost all are credibility and the American people are o to us
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] we have been found out and now we are going to prison bring Vaseline so it won't hurt so bad bubba is waiting for us lol
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] He said: "I am in love with you"
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] I heard you're on Hillary's hit list.

Figure 193


BIDEN SAYS WORLD LEADERS ARE BEGGING HIM TO BECOME PRESIDENT
THAT'S GREAT BIDEN, BUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT TRUMP!
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 17

2.4K · 494 Comments · 1.9K Shares

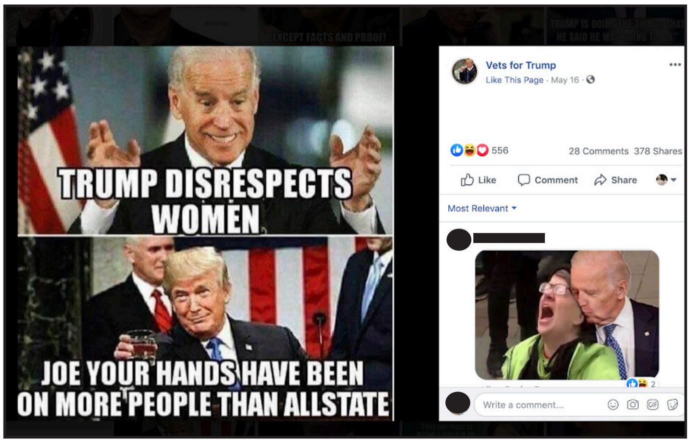
Most Relevant

[redacted] World leaders want Biden so they can take advantage of America again. They know he is weak. Stay strong President Trump. Trump 2020
Like · Reply · 7w · 49

3 Replies

[redacted] I'm sure they do Mr. Biden, so they can walk all over the US again as they did in your administration! Vote Trump to keep America [illegible] America!

Figure 194



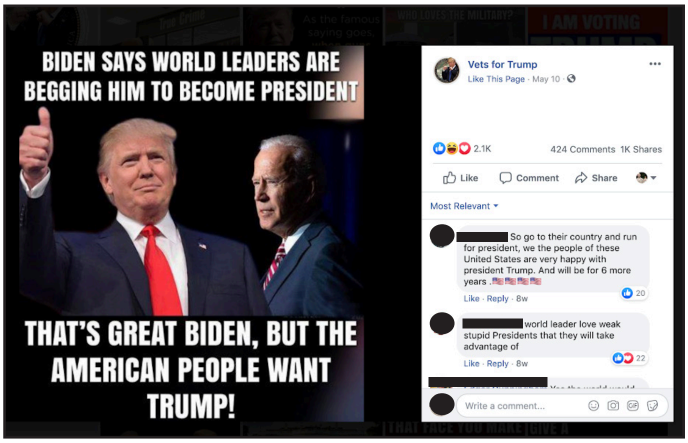
Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 16

556 · 28 Comments 378 Shares

Most Relevant

[redacted]
2

Figure 195


BIDEN SAYS WORLD LEADERS ARE BEGGING HIM TO BECOME PRESIDENT
THAT'S GREAT BIDEN, BUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT TRUMP!
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 10

2.1K · 424 Comments 1K Shares

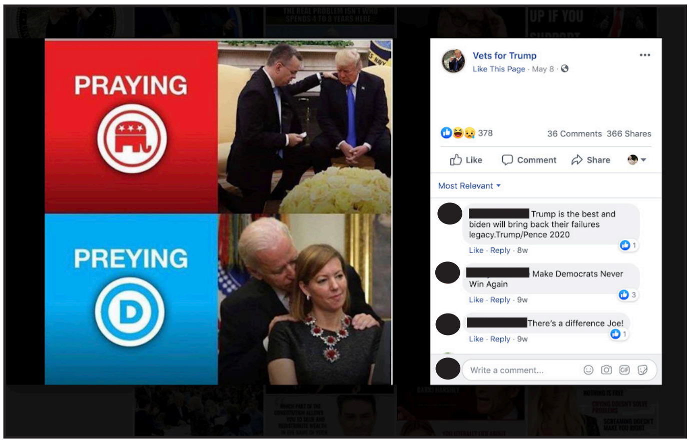
Most Relevant

[redacted] So go to their country and run for president, we the people of these United States are very happy with president Trump. And will be for 6 more years .🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸
Like · Reply · 8w · 20

[redacted] world leader love weak stupid Presidents that they will take advantage of
Like · Reply · 8w · 22

[redacted] Yes the world would

Figure 196



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 8

378 · 36 Comments 366 Shares

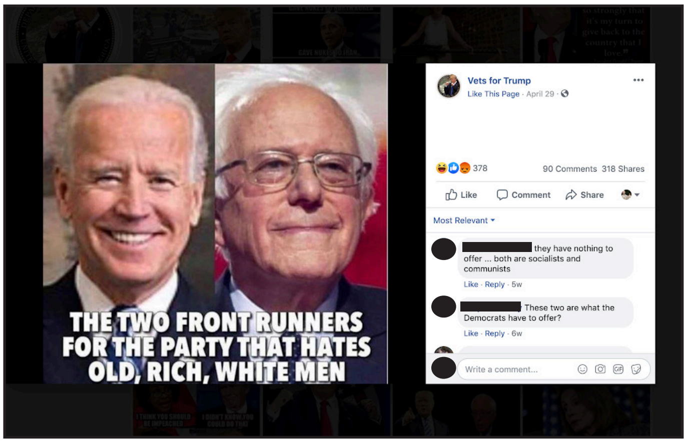
Most Relevant

[redacted] Trump is the best and biden will bring back their failures legacy.Trump/Pence 2020
Like · Reply · 8w · 1

[redacted] Make Democrats Never Win Again
Like · Reply · 9w · 3

[redacted] There's a difference Joe!
Like · Reply · 9w · 1

Figure 197


THE TWO FRONT RUNNERS FOR THE PARTY THAT HATES OLD, RICH, WHITE MEN
Like
Comment
Share
Write a comment...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 29

378 · 90 Comments 318 Shares

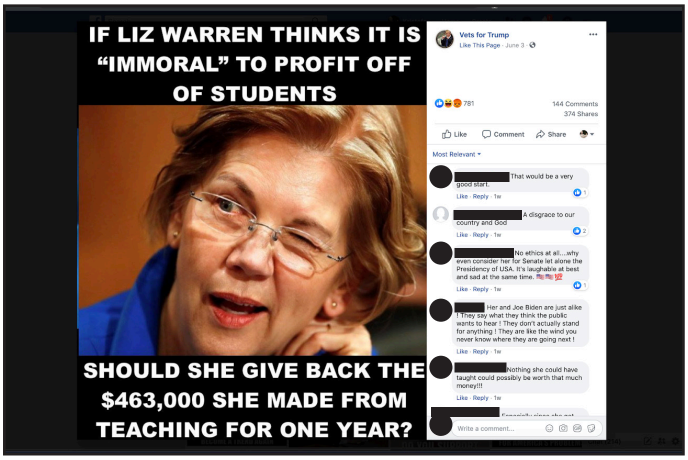
Most Relevant

[redacted] they have nothing to offer ... both are socialists and communists
Like · Reply · 5w

[redacted] These two are what the Democrats have to offer?
Like · Reply · 6w

Figure 198: Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders being attacked.

Attacks Against Politicians by Macedonians: Elizabeth Warren


IF LIZ WARREN THINKS IT IS "IMMORAL" TO PROFIT OFF OF STUDENTS
SHOULD SHE GIVE BACK THE $463,000 SHE MADE FROM TEACHING FOR ONE YEAR?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 3

781 · 144 Comments · 374 Shares

Most Relevant

[redacted] That would be a very good start.
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] A disgrace to our country and God
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] No ethics at all....why even consider her for Senate let alone the Presidency of USA. It's laughable at best and sad at the same time. 🇺🇸🇺🇸💯
Like · Reply · 1w

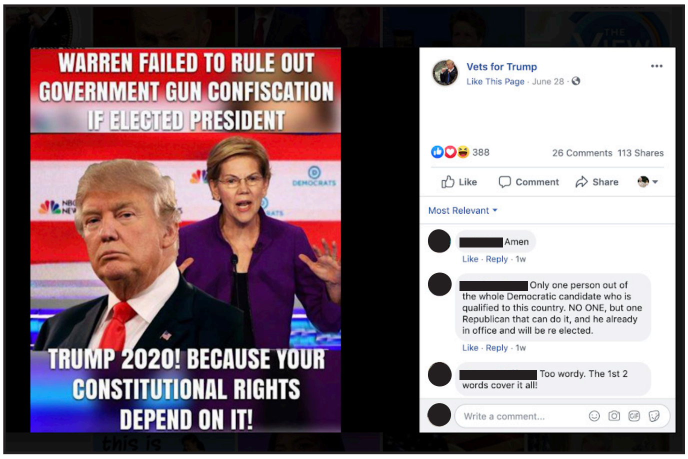
[redacted] Her and Joe Biden are just alike ! They say what they think the public wants to hear ! They don't actually stand for anything ! They are like the wind you never know where they are going next !
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Nothing she could have taught could possibly be worth that much money!!!
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Especially since she got

Write a comment...

Figure 199


WARREN FAILED TO RULE OUT GOVERNMENT GUN CONFISCATION IF ELECTED PRESIDENT
TRUMP 2020! BECAUSE YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS DEPEND ON IT!

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 28

388 · 26 Comments · 113 Shares

Most Relevant

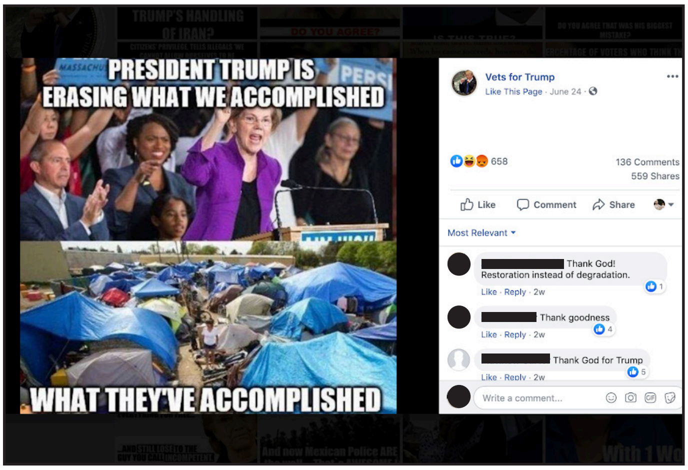
[redacted] Amen
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Only one person out of the whole Democratic candidate who is qualified to this country. NO ONE, but one Republican that can do it, and he already in office and will be re elected.
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] Too wordy. The 1st 2 words cover it all!

Write a comment...

Figure 200


PRESIDENT TRUMP IS ERASING WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED
WHAT THEY'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 24

658 · 136 Comments · 559 Shares

Most Relevant

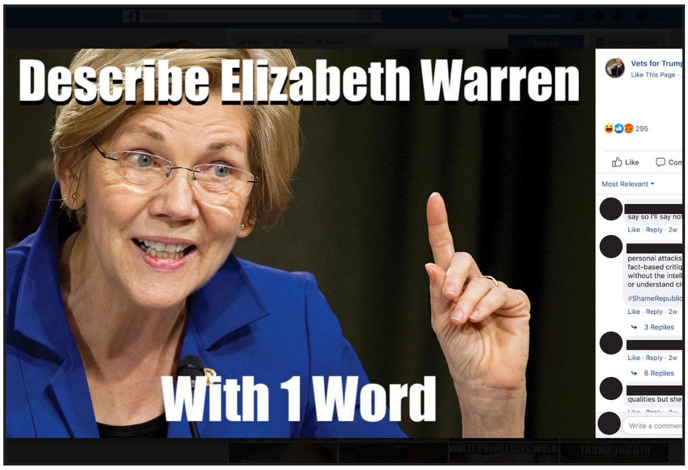
[redacted] Thank God! Restoration instead of degradation.
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Thank goodness
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Thank God for Trump
Like · Reply · 2w

Write a comment...

Figure 201



Vets for Trump
Like This Page

295

Most Relevant

[redacted] say so I'll say not
Like · Reply · 2w

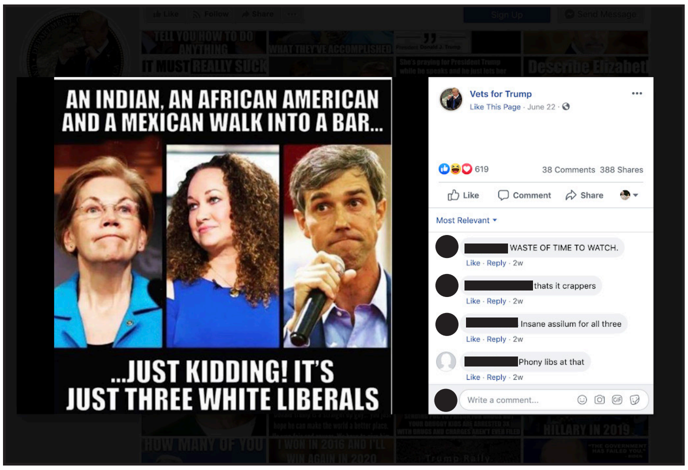
[redacted] personal attacks fact-based critiq without the intell or understand ci
#ShameRepublic
Like · Reply · 2w
3 Replies

[redacted]
Like · Reply · 2w
6 Replies

[redacted] qualities but she

Write a commen

Figure 202


AN INDIAN, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND A MEXICAN WALK INTO A BAR...
...JUST KIDDING! IT'S JUST THREE WHITE LIBERALS

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 22

619 · 38 Comments · 388 Shares

Most Relevant

[redacted] WASTE OF TIME TO WATCH.
Like · Reply · 2w

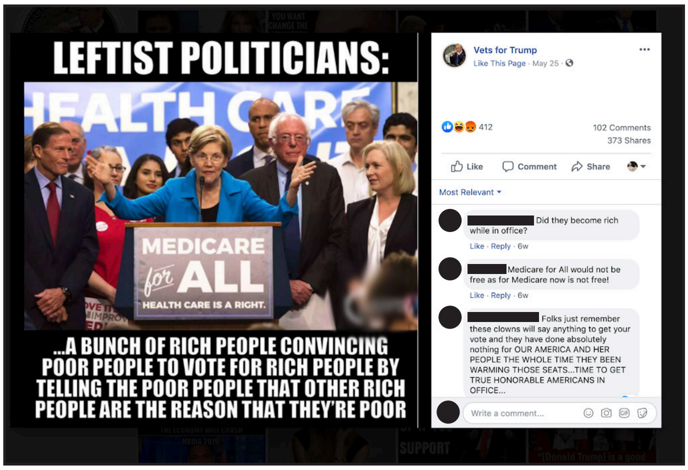
[redacted] thats it crappers
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Insane assilum for all three
Like · Reply · 2w

[redacted] Phony libs at that
Like · Reply · 2w

Write a comment...

Figure 203


LEFTIST POLITICIANS: HEALTH CARE
MEDICARE for ALL
HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT.
...A BUNCH OF RICH PEOPLE CONVINCING POOR PEOPLE TO VOTE FOR RICH PEOPLE BY TELLING THE POOR PEOPLE THAT OTHER RICH PEOPLE ARE THE REASON THAT THEY'RE POOR

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 25

412 · 102 Comments · 373 Shares

Most Relevant

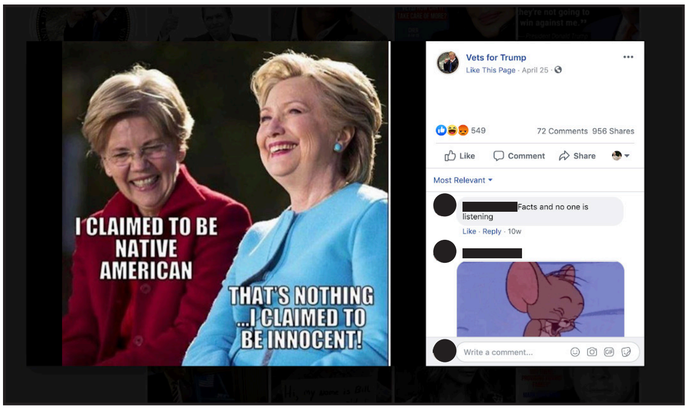
[redacted] Did they become rich while in office?
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] Medicare for All would not be free as for Medicare now is not free!
Like · Reply · 6w

[redacted] Folks just remember these clowns will say anything to get your vote and they have done absolutely nothing for OUR AMERICA AND HER PEOPLE THE WHOLE TIME THEY BEEN WARMING THOSE SEATS...TIME TO GET TRUE HONORABLE AMERICANS IN OFFICE...

Write a comment...

Figure 204


I CLAIMED TO BE NATIVE AMERICAN
THAT'S NOTHING ...I CLAIMED TO BE INNOCENT!

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 25

549 · 72 Comments · 956 Shares

Most Relevant

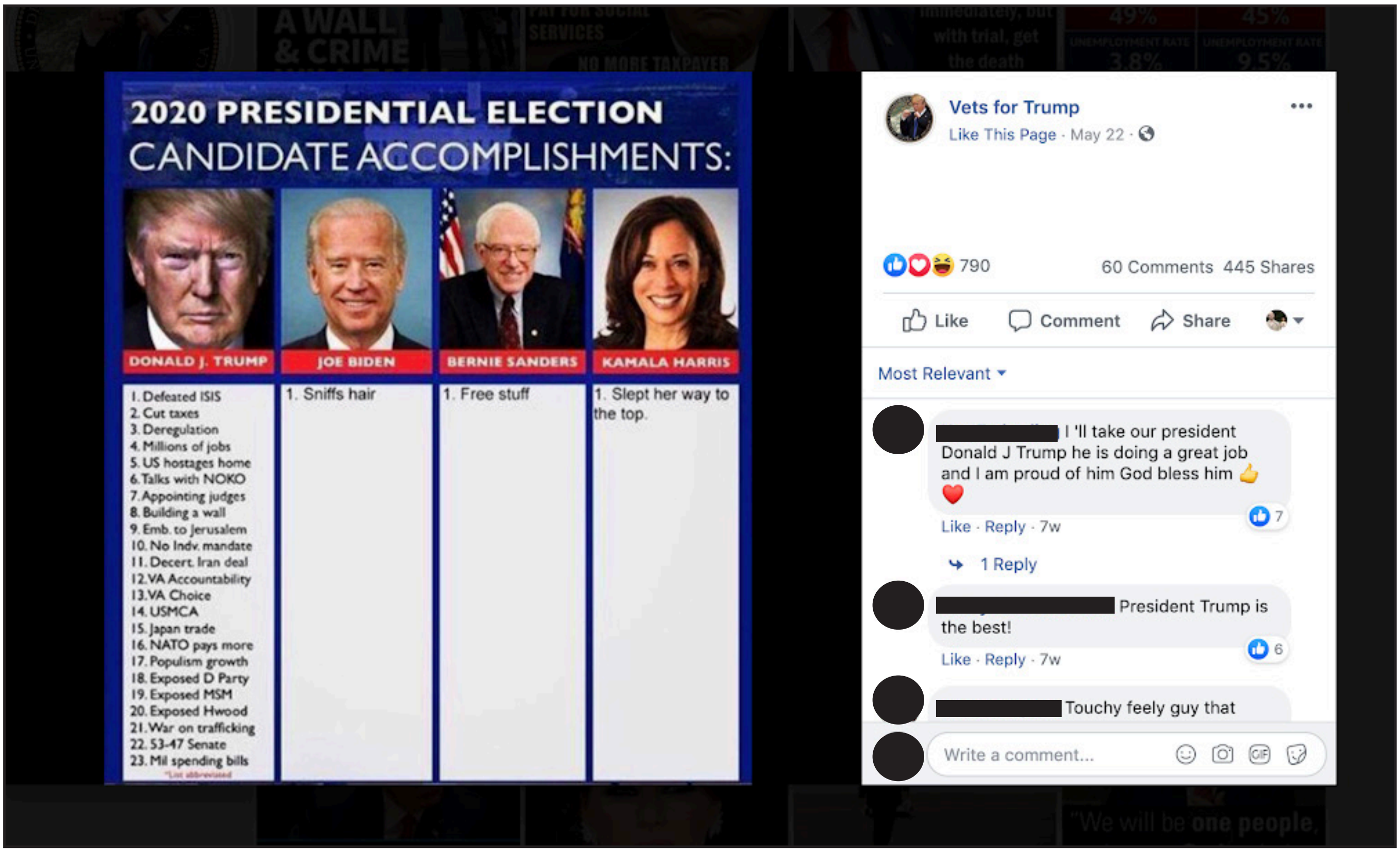
[redacted] Facts and no one is listening
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted]

Write a comment...

Figure 205

Attack Against Politicians by Macedonians: Kamala Harris



2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
CANDIDATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

DONALD J. TRUMP	JOE BIDEN	BERNIE SANDERS	KAMALA HARRIS
1. Defeated ISIS 2. Cut taxes 3. Deregulation 4. Millions of jobs 5. US hostages home 6. Talks with NOKO 7. Appointing judges 8. Building a wall 9. Emb. to Jerusalem 10. No Indv. mandate 11. Decert. Iran deal 12. VA Accountability 13. VA Choice 14. USMCA 15. Japan trade 16. NATO pays more 17. Populism growth 18. Exposed D Party 19. Exposed MSM 20. Exposed Hwood 21. War on trafficking 22. 53-47 Senate 23. Mil spending bills *List abbreviated	1. Sniffs hair	1. Free stuff	1. Slept her way to the top.

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 22 ·

790 60 Comments 445 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] [redacted] I 'll take our president Donald J Trump he is doing a great job and I am proud of him God bless him 👍 ❤️
Like · Reply · 7w 7
1 Reply

[redacted] [redacted] President Trump is the best!
Like · Reply · 7w 6

[redacted] [redacted] Touchy feely guy that

[redacted] Write a comment...

Figure 206: Biden, Sanders, Harris — including a sexist trope that is accusing Sen. Harris of having "slept her way to the top."

(text continued from page 145)

The video was posted to the "Veterans for Donald Trump" Facebook page at 1:36 AM,[238] while it was posted to the "Vets for Trump" Facebook page one minute later.[239] As of August 29, 2019, the "Vets for Trump" Page Transparency tab now lists 10 admins in the US, and one as "Not available" (Figure 184). This is consistent with Mr. Macias and Mr. Lemets resuming admin privileges of the page.

In a 2018 meeting with Facebook, representatives of its Threat Intel Team told VVA that page admins cannot spoof their country of origin using a static virtual private network (VPN), but the team declined to explain how it would be possible for Facebook to detect and prevent location spoofing. If spoofing is indeed prevented on Facebook, it is unclear why an admin's location would be listed as "Not available."

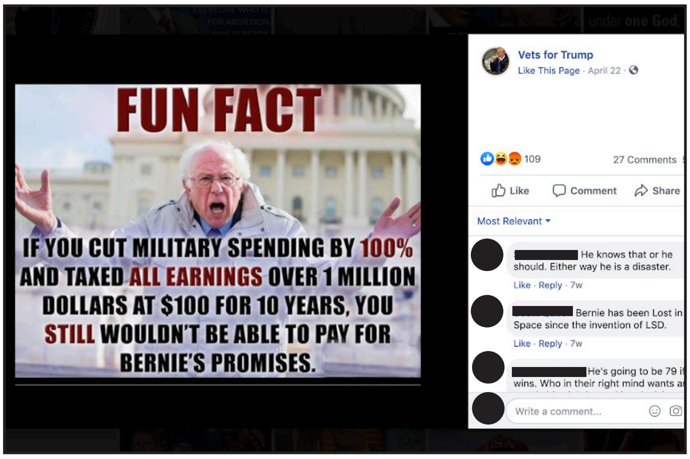
The "Vets for Trump" page, while under the control of only foreign admins, had been engaged in election interference: attacking Democratic presidential candidates, including Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, Beto O'Rourke, Cory Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand, and Kamala Harris — though this is consistent with the otherwise First-Amendment-protected American-born political activity on this page (Figures 185-216). Because these attacks were made as organic content (without being boosted as paid ads), and despite Mr. Lemets' lengthy fight with foreign entities to regain control of his purely political page, this election interference apparently has raised no red flags at Facebook.

According to evidence provided by Mr. Lemets, all of the content posted to the page while "Vets for Trump" was under foreign control came from a user with the name "Boško Gero" from Ohrid, Macedonia.[240]

Mr. Lemets also shared screenshots with VVA showing that while the Macedonian users were pretending to be "Vets for Trump," they were taking "donations" via PayPal to support their supposed work backing President Trump's 2020 campaign (Figures 217 and 218).[241]

(text continued on page 155)

Attacks Against Politicians by Macedonians: Bernie Sanders


FUN FACT
IF YOU CUT MILITARY SPENDING BY 100% AND TAXED ALL EARNINGS OVER 1 MILLION DOLLARS AT $100 FOR 10 YEARS, YOU STILL WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PAY FOR BERNIE'S PROMISES.

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 22 ·

109 27 Comments

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

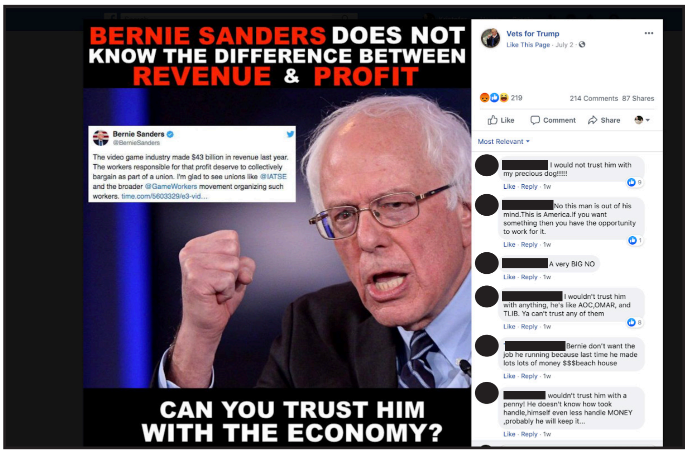
[redacted] He knows that or he should. Either way he is a disaster.
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] Bernie has been Lost in Space since the invention of LSD.
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] He's going to be 79 i wins. Who in their right mind wants a

Write a comment...

Figure 207


BERNIE SANDERS DOES NOT KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REVENUE & PROFIT
CAN YOU TRUST HIM WITH THE ECONOMY?

Bernie Sanders
@BernieSanders

The video game industry made $43 billion in revenue last year. The workers responsible for that profit deserve to collectively bargain as part of a union. I'm glad to see unions like @IATSE and the broader @GameWorkers movement organizing such workers. time.com/5603329/e3-vid...

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 2 ·

219 214 Comments 87 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] I would not trust him with my precious dog!!!!!
Like · Reply · 1w 9

[redacted] No this man is out of his mind.This is America.If you want something then you have the opportunity to work for it.
Like · Reply · 1w 1

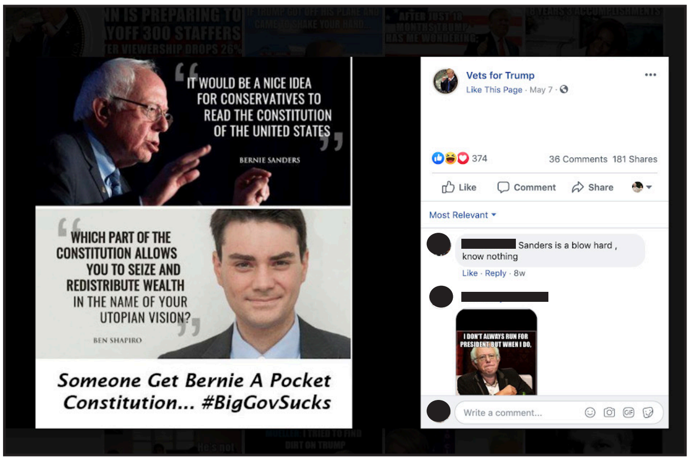
[redacted] A very BIG NO
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] I wouldn't trust him with anything, he's like AOC,OMAR, and TLIB. Ya can't trust any of them
Like · Reply · 1w 8

[redacted] Bernie don't want the job he running because last time he made lots lots of money $$$beach house
Like · Reply · 1w

[redacted] wouldn't trust him with a penny! He doesn't know how took handle,himself even less handle MONEY ,probably he will keep it...
Like · Reply · 1w

Figure 208


"IT WOULD BE A NICE IDEA FOR CONSERVATIVES TO READ THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES"
BERNIE SANDERS
"WHICH PART OF THE CONSTITUTION ALLOWS YOU TO SEIZE AND REDISTRIBUTE WEALTH IN THE NAME OF YOUR UTOPIAN VISION?"
BEN SHAPIRO
Someone Get Bernie A Pocket Constitution... #BigGovSucks
I DON'T ALWAYS RUN FOR PRESIDENT, BUT WHEN I DO,

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 7 ·

374 36 Comments 181 Shares

Like Comment Share

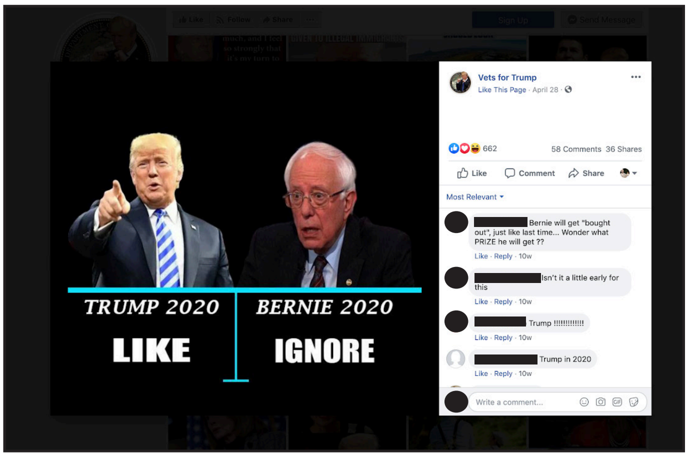
Most Relevant

[redacted] Sanders is a blow hard , know nothing
Like · Reply · 8w

[redacted]

Write a comment...

Figure 209



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 28 ·

662 58 Comments 36 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Bernie will get "bought out", just like last time... Wonder what PRIZE he will get ??
Like · Reply · 10w

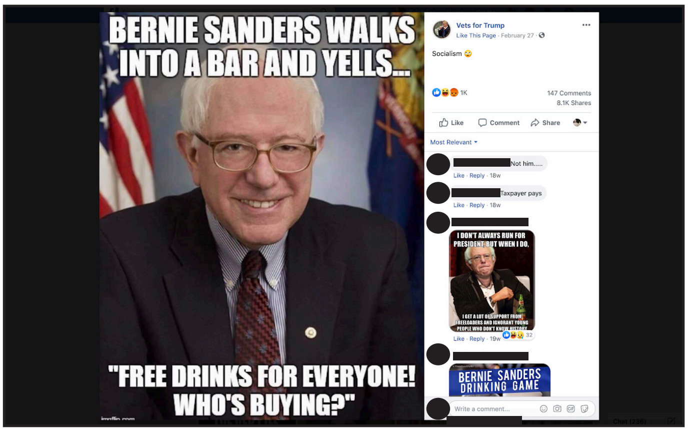
[redacted] Isn't it a little early for this
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] Trump !!!!!!!!!!!!!
Like · Reply · 10w

[redacted] Trump in 2020
Like · Reply · 10w

Write a comment...

Figure 210


BERNIE SANDERS WALKS INTO A BAR AND YELLS...
"FREE DRINKS FOR EVERYONE! WHO'S BUYING?"
I DON'T ALWAYS RUN FOR PRESIDENT, BUT WHEN I DO,
I GET A LOT OF SUPPORT FROM FREELOADERS AND IGNORANT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HISTORY
BERNIE SANDERS DRINKING GAME

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · February 27 ·

Socialism 🙄

1K 147 Comments 8.1K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Not him.....
Like · Reply · 18w

[redacted] Taxpayer pays
Like · Reply · 18w

[redacted]
Like · Reply · 19w 32

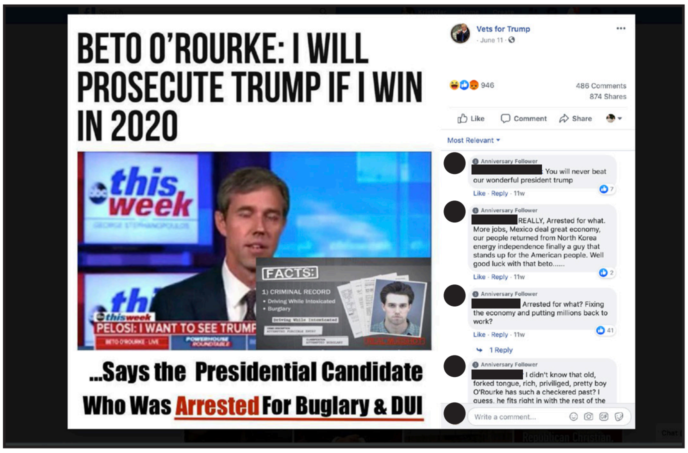
[redacted]

Write a comment...

[redacted]

Figure 211

Attacks Against Politicians by Macedonians: Beto O'Rourke


BETO O'ROURKE: I WILL PROSECUTE TRUMP IF I WIN IN 2020
this week
FACTS:
1) CRIMINAL RECORD
• Driving While Intoxicated
• Burglary
PELOSI: I WANT TO SEE TRUMP
...Says the Presidential Candidate Who Was Arrested For Buglary & DUI

Vets for Trump
· June 11 ·

946 · 486 Comments · 874 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

Anniversary Follower
[redacted] You will never beat our wonderful president trump
Like · Reply · 11w · 7

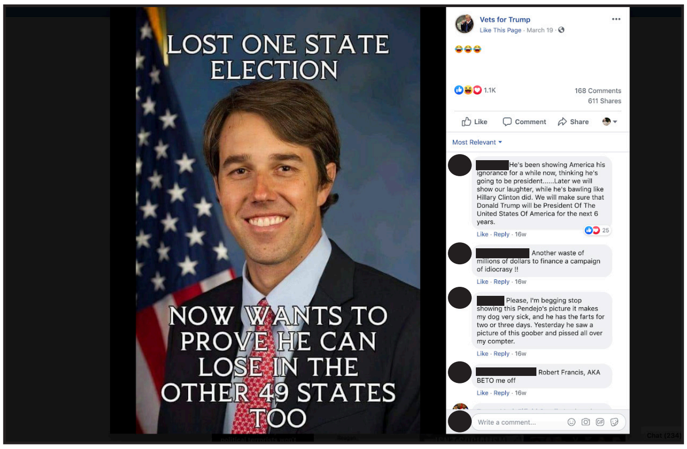
Anniversary Follower
[redacted] REALLY, Arrested for what. More jobs, Mexico deal great economy, our people returned from North Korea energy independence finally a guy that stands up for the American people. Well good luck with that beto......
Like · Reply · 11w · 2

Anniversary Follower
[redacted] Arrested for what? Fixing the economy and putting millions back to work?
Like · Reply · 11w · 41
1 Reply

Anniversary Follower
[redacted] I didn't know that old, forked tongue, rich, priviliged, pretty boy O'Rourke has such a checkered past? I guess, he fits right in with the rest of the

Write a comment...

Figure 212



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · March 19 ·
😂😂😂

1.1K · 168 Comments · 611 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] He's been showing America his ignorance for a while now, thinking he's going to be president......Later we will show our laughter, while he's bawling like Hillary Clinton did. We will make sure that Donald Trump will be President Of The United States Of America for the next 6 years.
Like · Reply · 16w · 25

[redacted] Another waste of millions of dollars to finance a campaign of idiocrasy !!
Like · Reply · 16w

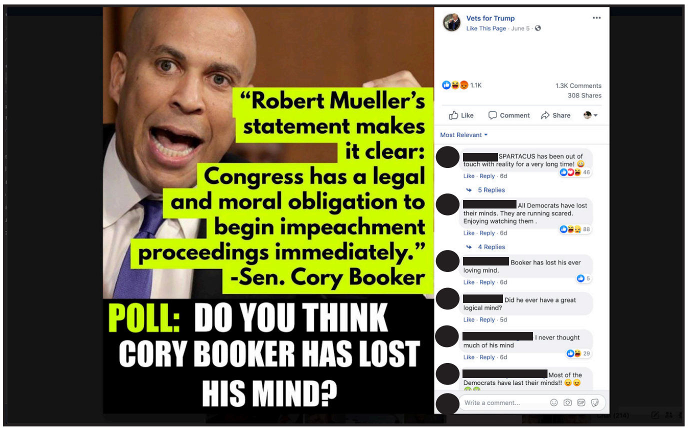
[redacted] Please, I'm begging stop showing this Pendejo's picture it makes my dog very sick, and he has the farts for two or three days. Yesterday he saw a picture of this goober and pissed all over my compter.
Like · Reply · 16w

[redacted] Robert Francis, AKA BETO me off
Like · Reply · 16w

Write a comment...

Figure 213

Attacks Against Politicians by Macedonians: Cory Booker


"Robert Mueller's statement makes it clear: Congress has a legal and moral obligation to begin impeachment proceedings immediately."
-Sen. Cory Booker
POLL: DO YOU THINK CORY BOOKER HAS LOST HIS MIND?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 5 ·

1.1K · 1.3K Comments · 308 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] SPARTACUS has been out of touch with reality for a very long time! 😂
Like · Reply · 6d · 46
5 Replies

[redacted] All Democrats have lost their minds. They are running scared. Enjoying watching them .
Like · Reply · 6d · 88
4 Replies

[redacted] Booker has lost his ever loving mind.
Like · Reply · 6d · 5

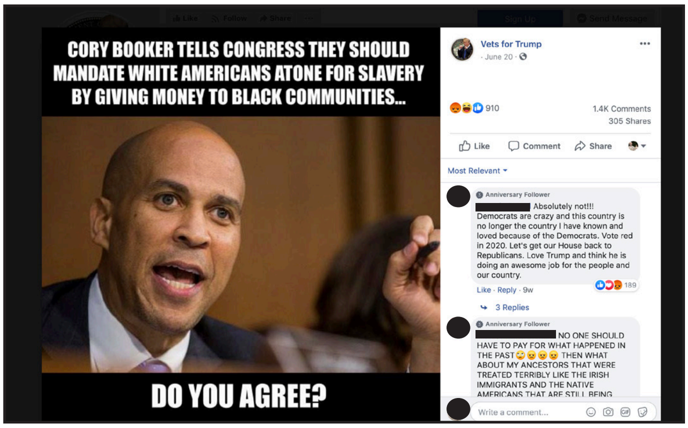
[redacted] Did he ever have a great logical mind?
Like · Reply · 5d

[redacted] I never thought much of his mind
Like · Reply · 6d · 29

[redacted] Most of the Democrats have last their minds!! 😦😦

Write a comment...

Figure 214


CORY BOOKER TELLS CONGRESS THEY SHOULD MANDATE WHITE AMERICANS ATONE FOR SLAVERY BY GIVING MONEY TO BLACK COMMUNITIES...
DO YOU AGREE?

Vets for Trump
· June 20 ·

910 · 1.4K Comments · 305 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

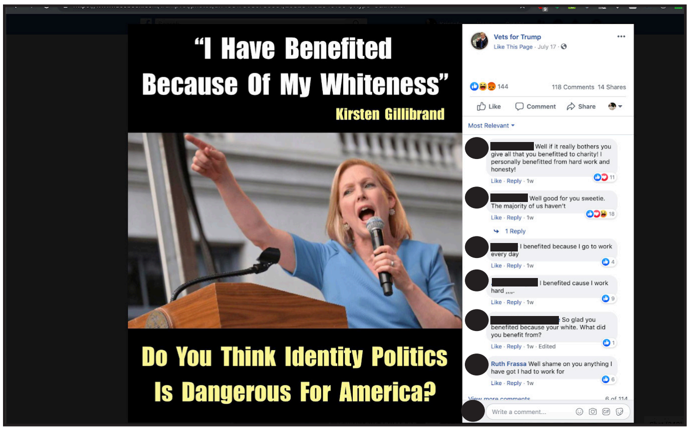
Anniversary Follower
[redacted] Absolutely not!!! Democrats are crazy and this country is no longer the country I have known and loved because of the Democrats. Vote red in 2020. Let's get our House back to Republicans. Love Trump and think he is doing an awesome job for the people and our country.
Like · Reply · 9w · 189
3 Replies

Anniversary Follower
[redacted] NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST🙄😦😦😦 THEN WHAT ABOUT MY ANCESTORS THAT WERE TREATED TERRIBLY LIKE THE IRISH IMMIGRANTS AND THE NATIVE AMERICANS THAT ARE STILL BEING

Write a comment...

Figure 215

Attack Against Politicians by Macedonians: Kirsten Gillibrand


"I Have Benefited Because Of My Whiteness"
Kirsten Gillibrand
Do You Think Identity Politics Is Dangerous For America?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 17 ·

144 · 118 Comments 14 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Well if it really bothers you give all that you benefitted to charity! I personally benefitted from hard work and honesty!
Like · Reply · 1w · 11

[redacted] Well good for you sweetie. The majority of us haven't
Like · Reply · 1w · 18
1 Reply

[redacted] I benefited because I go to work every day
Like · Reply · 1w · 4

[redacted] I benefited cause I work hard ,,,,.
Like · Reply · 1w · 9

[redacted] So glad you benefited because your white. What did you benefit from?
Like · Reply · 1w · Edited · 1

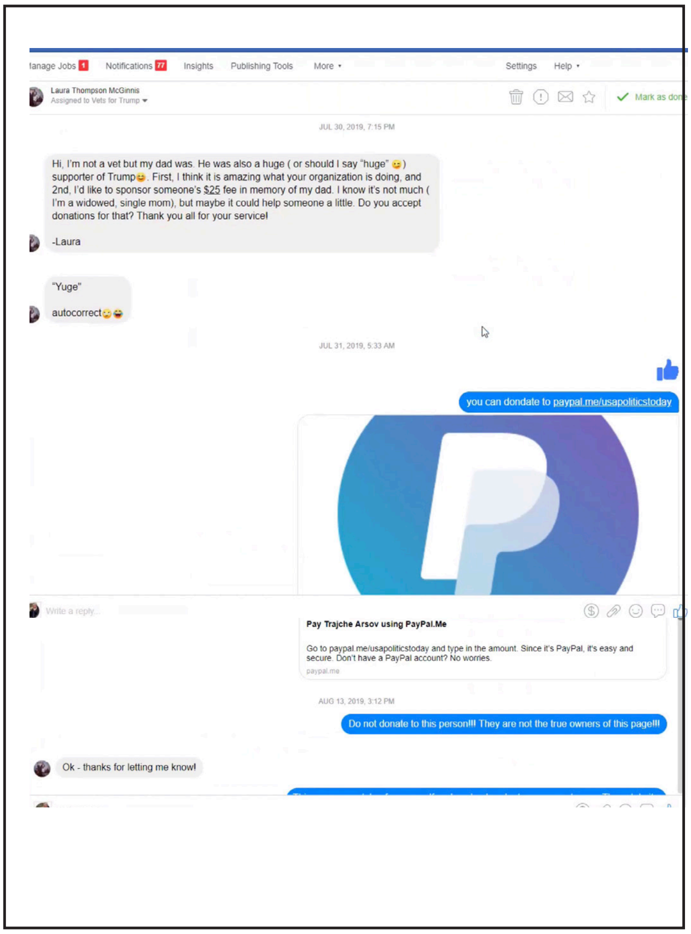
Ruth Frassa Well shame on you anything I have got I had to work for
Like · Reply · 1w · 6

View more comments · 6 of 114

Write a comment...

Figure 216

Arsov/usapoliticstoday



Laura Thompson McGinnis
Assigned to Vets for Trump ▾

JUL 30, 2019, 7:15 PM

Hi, I'm not a vet but my dad was. He was also a huge (or should I say "huge" 😉) supporter of Trump😄. First, I think it is amazing what your organization is doing, and 2nd, I'd like to sponsor someone's $25 fee in memory of my dad. I know it's not much (I'm a widowed, single mom), but maybe it could help someone a little. Do you accept donations for that? Thank you all for your service!

-Laura

"Yuge"

autocorrect🙄😂

JUL 31, 2019, 5:33 AM

you can dondate to paypal.me/usapoliticstoday

Pay Trajche Arsov using PayPal.Me

Go to paypal.me/usapoliticstoday and type in the amount. Since it's PayPal, it's easy and secure. Don't have a PayPal account? No worries.

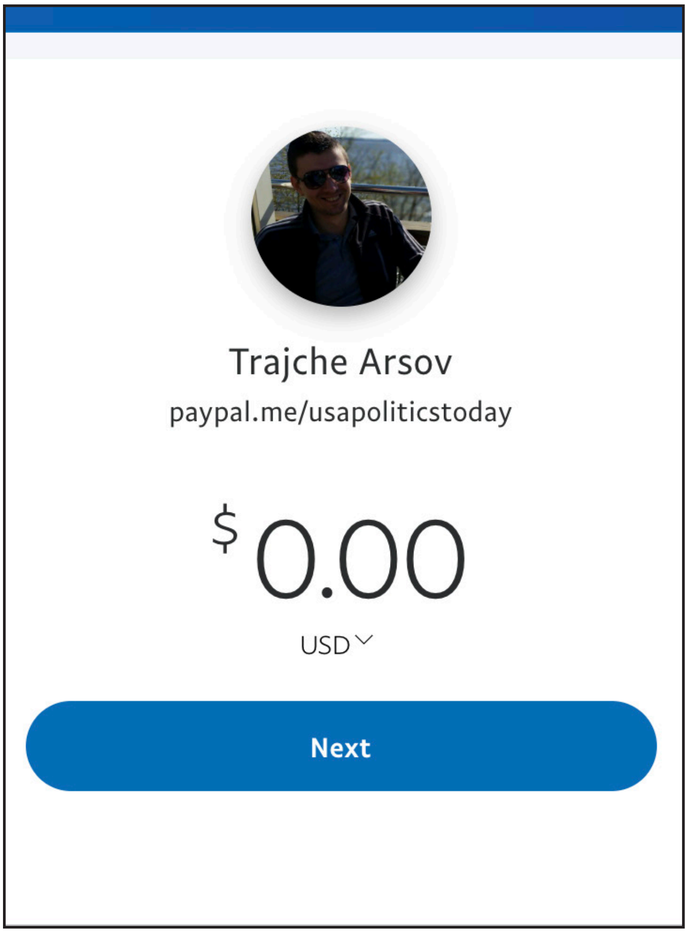
paypal.me

AUG 13, 2019, 3:12 PM

Do not donate to this person!!! They are not the true owners of this page!!!

Ok - thanks for letting me know!

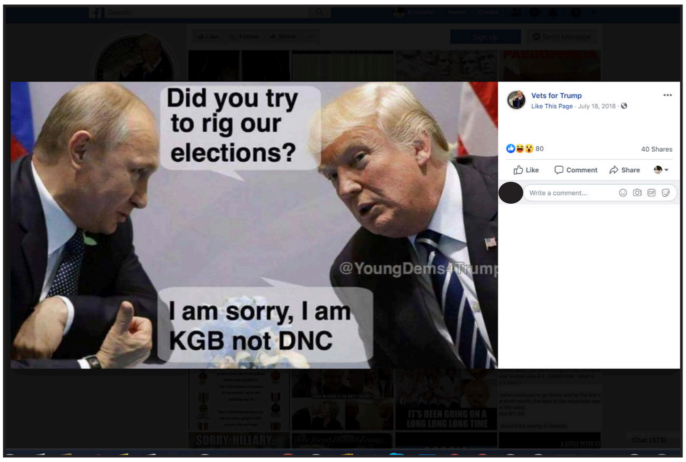
Figure 217


Trajche Arsov

paypal.me/usapoliticstoday

Figure 218

Macedonian Pro-Putin/Pro-Assange/Anti-Comey/Anti-FBI Propaganda


Did you try to rig our elections?
I am sorry, I am KGB not DNC
@YoungDems4Trump

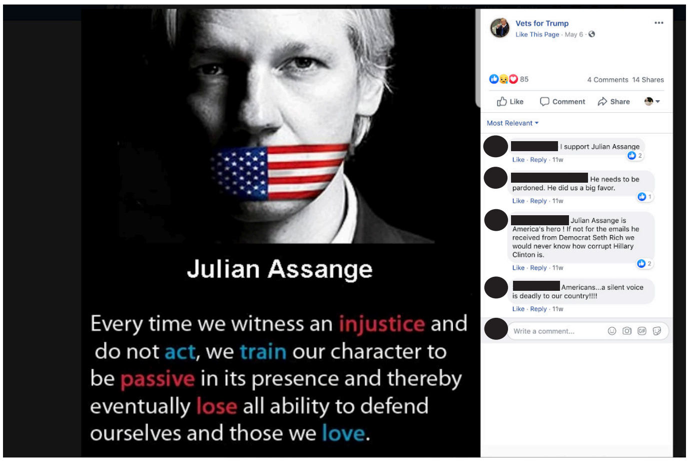
Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 18, 2018

80 · 40 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Write a comment...

Figure 219


Julian Assange
Every time we witness an injustice and do not act, we train our character to be passive in its presence and thereby eventually lose all ability to defend ourselves and those we love.

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 6

85 · 4 Comments 14 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] I support Julian Assange
Like · Reply · 11w · 2

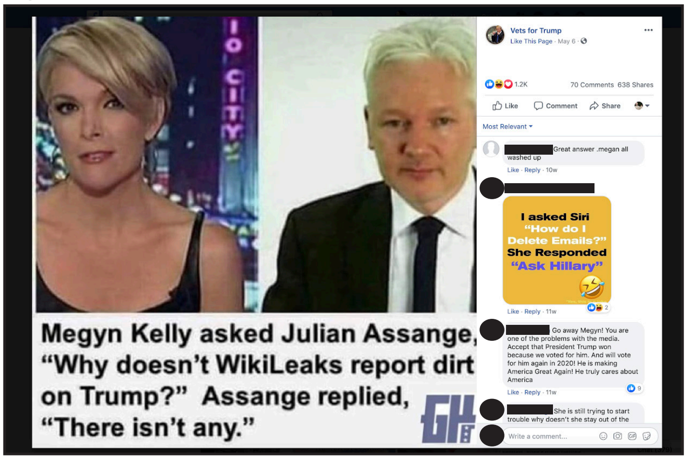
[redacted] He needs to be pardoned. He did us a big favor.
Like · Reply · 11w · 1

[redacted] Julian Assange is America's hero ! If not for the emails he received from Democrat Seth Rich we would never know how corrupt Hillary Clinton is.
Like · Reply · 11w · 2

[redacted] Americans...a silent voice is deadly to our country!!!!
Like · Reply · 11w

Write a comment...

Figure 220


Megyn Kelly asked Julian Assange, "Why doesn't WikiLeaks report dirt on Trump?" Assange replied, "There isn't any."
I asked Siri "How do I Delete Emails?" She Responded "Ask Hillary"

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 6

1.2K · 70 Comments 638 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Great answer .megan all washed up
Like · Reply · 10w

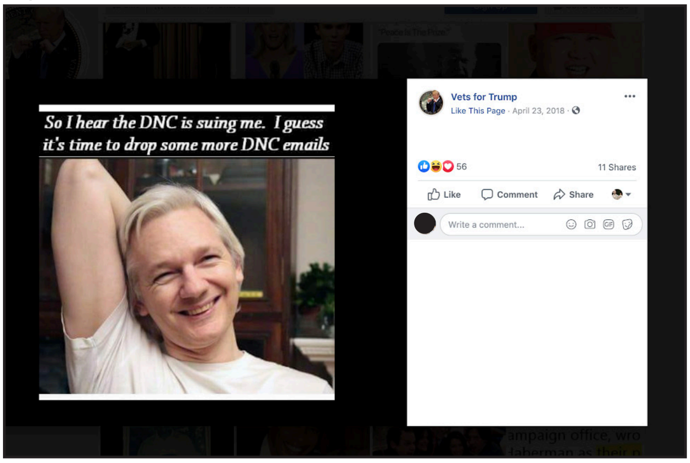
[redacted]
Like · Reply · 11w · 2

[redacted] Go away Megyn! You are one of the problems with the media. Accept that President Trump won because we voted for him. And will vote for him again in 2020! He is making America Great Again! He truly cares about America
Like · Reply · 11w · 9

[redacted] She is still trying to start trouble why doesn't she stay out of the

Write a comment...

Figure 221


So I hear the DNC is suing me. I guess it's time to drop some more DNC emails

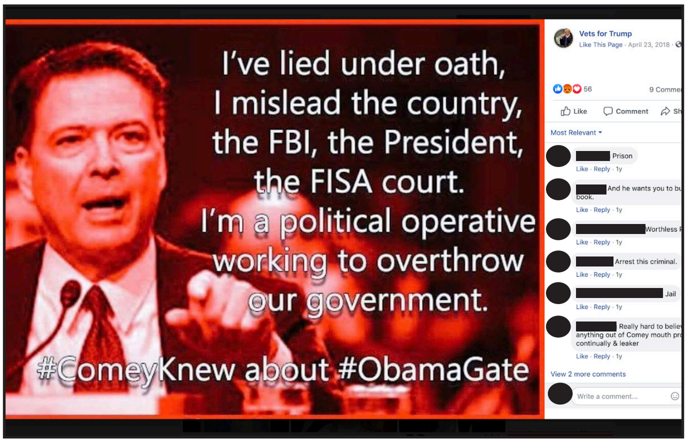
Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 23, 2018

56 · 11 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Write a comment...

Figure 222


I've lied under oath, I mislead the country, the FBI, the President, the FISA court. I'm a political operative working to overthrow our government.
#ComeyKnew about #ObamaGate

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 23, 2018

56 · 9 Comme

Like · Comment · Sh

Most Relevant

[redacted] Prison
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] And he wants you to bu book.
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Worthless P
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Arrest this criminal.
Like · Reply · 1y

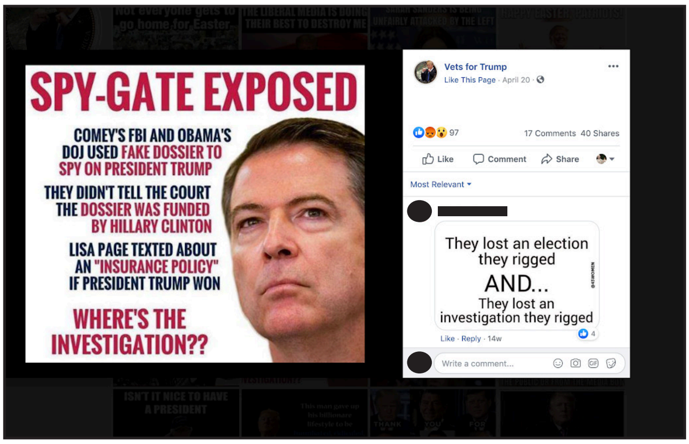
[redacted] Jail
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Really hard to belie anything out of Comey mouth pr continually & leaker
Like · Reply · 1y

View 2 more comments

Write a comment...

Figure 223


SPY-GATE EXPOSED
COMEY'S FBI AND OBAMA'S DOJ USED FAKE DOSSIER TO SPY ON PRESIDENT TRUMP
THEY DIDN'T TELL THE COURT THE DOSSIER WAS FUNDED BY HILLARY CLINTON
LISA PAGE TEXTED ABOUT AN "INSURANCE POLICY" IF PRESIDENT TRUMP WON
WHERE'S THE INVESTIGATION??
They lost an election they rigged AND... They lost an investigation they rigged

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 20

97 · 17 Comments 40 Shares

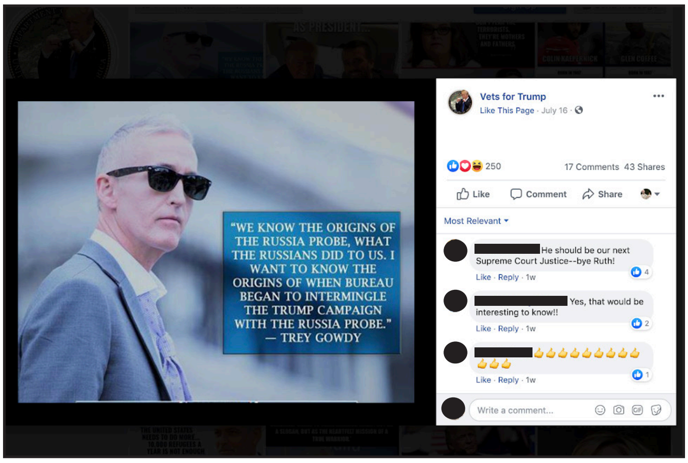
Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

[redacted]
Like · Reply · 14w · 4

Write a comment...

Figure 224


"WE KNOW THE ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIA PROBE, WHAT THE RUSSIANS DID TO US. I WANT TO KNOW THE ORIGINS OF WHEN BUREAU BEGAN TO INTERMINGLE THE TRUMP CAMPAIGN WITH THE RUSSIA PROBE." — TREY GOWDY

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 16

250 · 17 Comments 43 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

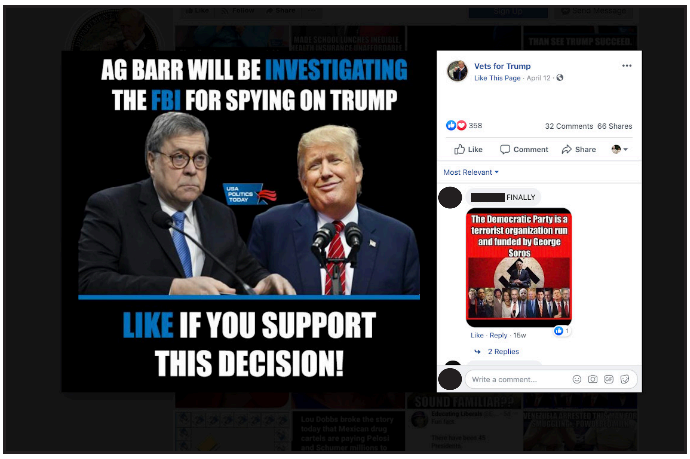
[redacted] He should be our next Supreme Court Justice--bye Ruth!
Like · Reply · 1w · 4

[redacted] Yes, that would be interesting to know!!
Like · Reply · 1w · 2

[redacted] 👍👍👍👍👍👍👍👍👍👍👍👍
Like · Reply · 1w · 1

Write a comment...

Figure 225


AG BARR WILL BE INVESTIGATING THE FBI FOR SPYING ON TRUMP
LIKE IF YOU SUPPORT THIS DECISION!
The Democratic Party is a terrorist organization run and funded by George Soros

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 12

358 · 32 Comments 66 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most Relevant

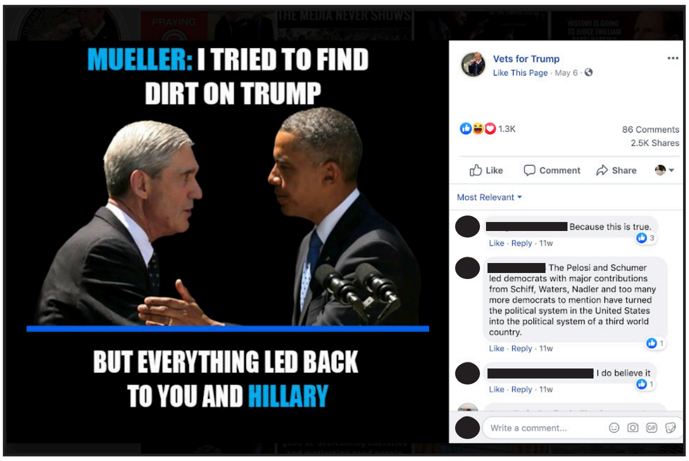
[redacted] FINALLY
Like · Reply · 15w · 1

2 Replies

Write a comment...

Figure 226

Anti-Obama/Anti-Clinton


MUELLER: I TRIED TO FIND DIRT ON TRUMP
BUT EVERYTHING LED BACK TO YOU AND HILLARY

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 6

1.3K 86 Comments 2.5K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

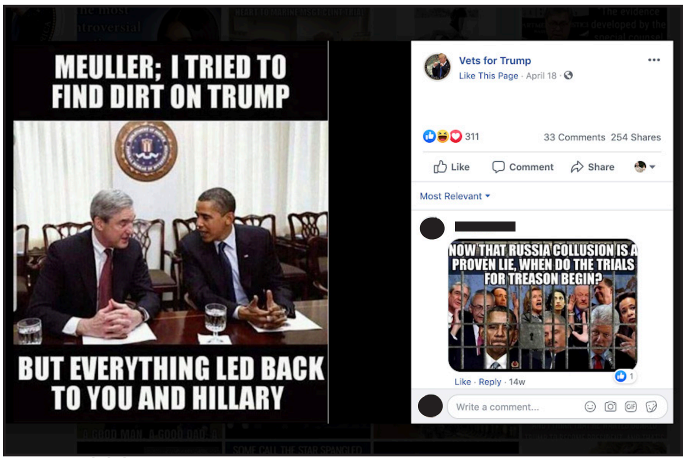
[redacted] Because this is true. 3
Like · Reply · 11w

[redacted] The Pelosi and Schumer led democrats with major contributions from Schiff, Waters, Nadler and too many more democrats to mention have turned the political system in the United States into the political system of a third world country. 1
Like · Reply · 11w

[redacted] I do believe it 1
Like · Reply · 11w

Write a comment...

Figure 227


MEULLER; I TRIED TO FIND DIRT ON TRUMP
BUT EVERYTHING LED BACK TO YOU AND HILLARY
NOW THAT RUSSIA COLLUSION IS A PROVEN LIE, WHEN DO THE TRIALS FOR TREASON BEGIN?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 18

311 33 Comments 254 Shares

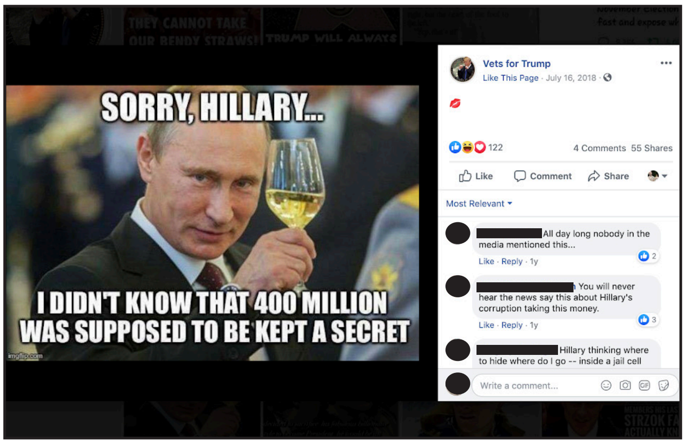
Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted]
1
Like · Reply · 14w

Write a comment...

Figure 228


SORRY, HILLARY...
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT 400 MILLION WAS SUPPOSED TO BE KEPT A SECRET
imgflip.com

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 16, 2018

122 4 Comments 55 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

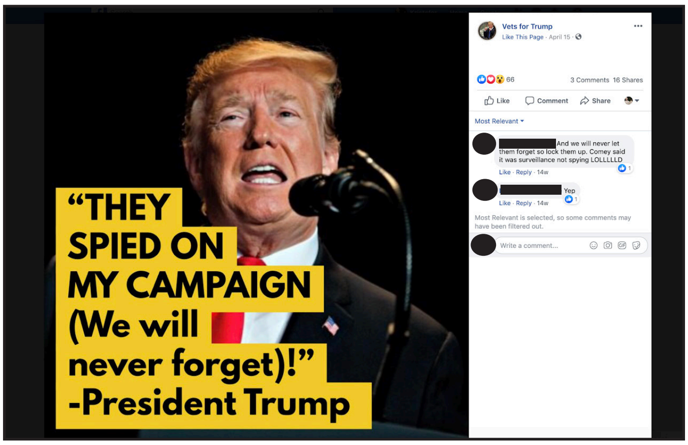
[redacted] All day long nobody in the media mentioned this... 2
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] You will never hear the news say this about Hillary's corruption taking this money. 3
Like · Reply · 1y

[redacted] Hillary thinking where to hide where do I go -- inside a jail cell

Write a comment...

Figure 229


"THEY SPIED ON MY CAMPAIGN (We will never forget)!" -President Trump

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 15

66 3 Comments 16 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] And we will never let them forget so lock them up. Comey said it was surveillance not spying LOLLLLLD 1
Like · Reply · 14w

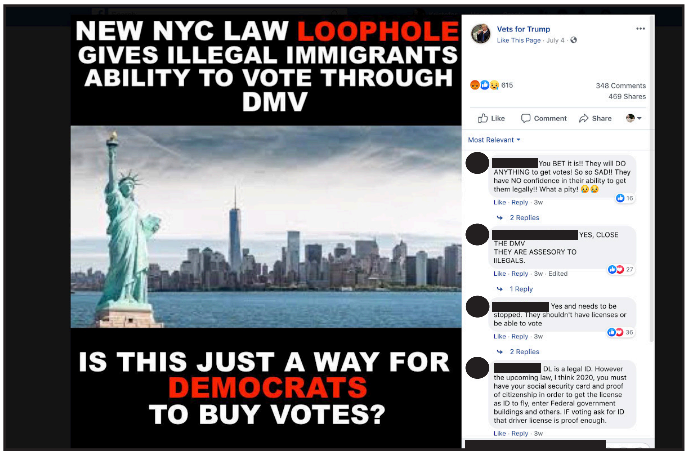
[redacted] Yep 1
Like · Reply · 14w

Most Relevant is selected, so some comments may have been filtered out.

Write a comment...

Figure 230

Election Disinformation


NEW NYC LAW LOOPHOLE GIVES ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ABILITY TO VOTE THROUGH DMV
IS THIS JUST A WAY FOR DEMOCRATS TO BUY VOTES?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 4

615 348 Comments 469 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] You BET it is!! They will DO ANYTHING to get votes! So so SAD!! They have NO confidence in their ability to get them legally!! What a pity! 😥😥 16
Like · Reply · 3w

2 Replies

[redacted] YES, CLOSE
THE DMV
THEY ARE ASSESORY TO
IILEGALS. 27
Like · Reply · 3w · Edited

1 Reply

[redacted] Yes and needs to be stopped. They shouldn't have licenses or be able to vote 36
Like · Reply · 3w

2 Replies

[redacted] DL is a legal ID. However the upcoming law, I think 2020, you must have your social security card and proof of citizenship in order to get the license as ID to fly, enter Federal government buildings and others. IF voting ask for ID that driver license is proof enough.
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted]

Figure 231: The page has also engaged in spreading misinformation about voting.

(text continued from page 149)

The PayPal account that the page's hijackers used for the contributions of "Vets for Trump" supporters was actually the account for "USA Politics Today," an infamous Macedonian fake-news site owned by Trajche Arsov (Figures 217 and 218).[242]

Macedonians remain in control of Mr. Macias' Facebook page "Veterans for Trump Coalition," where they continue to post content similar to that which they posted on the "Vets for Trump" page.

Pro-Putin/Pro-Assange/ Anti-Comey/Anti-FBI

The foreign-controlled "Vets for Trump" Facebook page also posts content that is supportive of Russian President Vladimir Putin and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (Figures 219-222) and hostile to law enforcement, especially former FBI Director James Comey and the FBI in general (Figures 223-226).

Maligning Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton and Spreading Election Disinformation

Both President Barack Obama and Secretary Hillary Clinton are also targets and frequently attacked by the foreign admins with baseless conspiracy theories (Figures 227-230). In addition, voting procedures and our election process are often maligned (Figure 231).

Fomenting Hate Against Democrats of Color and Tying Them to 2020 Candidates

The Vets for Trump page frequently attacks members of Congress who are minorities, using racist "dog whistles" (or subtly coded language), Islamophobic tropes, and dehumanizing language to incite division among the MilVets community (232-247).

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

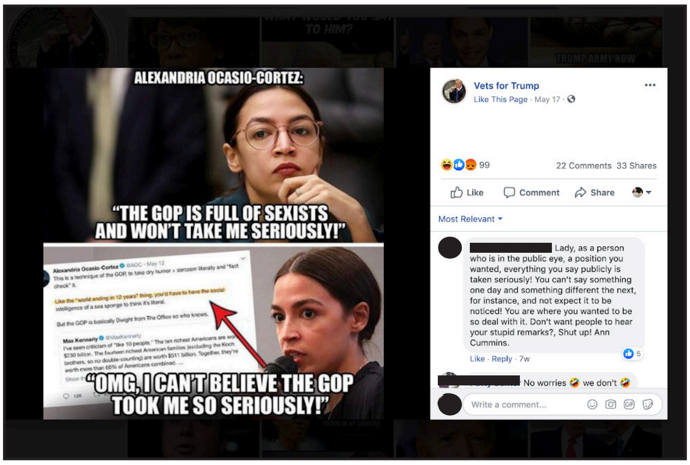
Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) is the most frequent target of derisive memes,[243,244,245,246,247] many related to the subjects of immigration[248,249] and socialism.[250] After fueling hatred for Ocasio-Cortez, the Macedonians' posts linked her to democratic 2020 presidential candidates[251] and pitted her against Rep. Dan Crenshaw, a Navy veteran.[252]

Ilhan Omar

Rep. Ilhan Omar is often targeted,[253] particularly for being a Muslim immigrant,[254] and the page brands her as antisemitic[255] and invokes the 9/11 terror attacks.[256] Omar, along with fellow Democrat freshman Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortex are often targeted as a group.[257]

Rashida Tlaib

Posts also link Rep. Tlaib to Senator Bernie Sanders[258] and call for her resignation.[259]


ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ:
"THE GOP IS FULL OF SEXISTS AND WON'T TAKE ME SERIOUSLY!"
"OMG, I CAN'T BELIEVE THE GOP TOOK ME SO SERIOUSLY!"

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 17

99 22 Comments 33 Shares

Like Comment Share

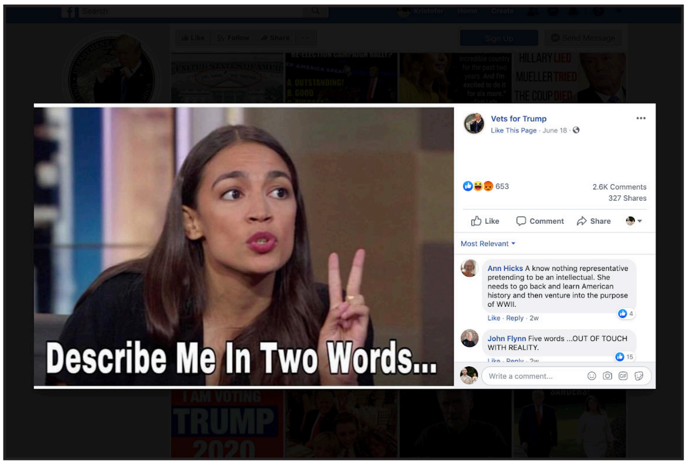
Most Relevant

[redacted] Lady, as a person who is in the public eye, a position you wanted, everything you say publicly is taken seriously! You can't say something one day and something different the next, for instance, and not expect it to be noticed! You are where you wanted to be so deal with it. Don't want people to hear your stupid remarks?, Shut up! Ann Cummins.
Like · Reply · 7w 5

[redacted] No worries 🤣 we don't 🤣

Write a comment...

Figure 232



Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 18

653 2.6K Comments 327 Shares

Like Comment Share

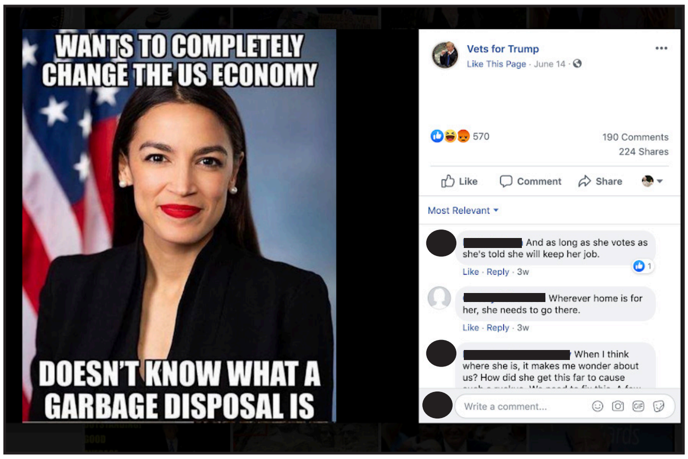
Most Relevant

Ann Hicks A know nothing representative pretending to be an intellectual. She needs to go back and learn American history and then venture into the purpose of WWII.
Like · Reply · 2w 4

John Flynn Five words ...OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY.
Like · Reply · 2w 15

Write a comment...

Figure 233


WANTS TO COMPLETELY CHANGE THE US ECONOMY
DOESN'T KNOW WHAT A GARBAGE DISPOSAL IS

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 14

570 190 Comments 224 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

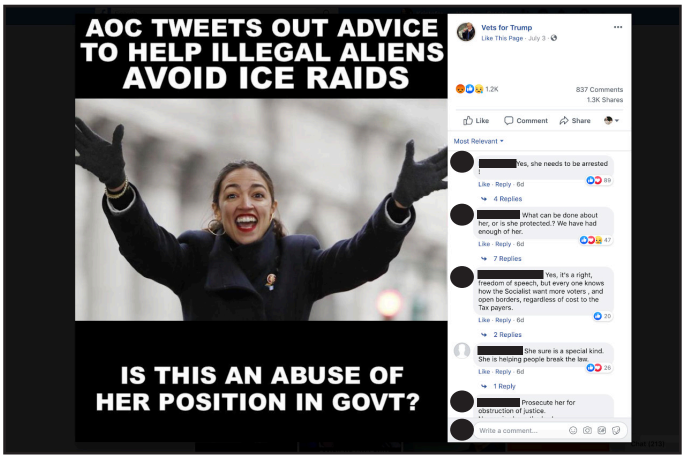
[redacted] And as long as she votes as she's told she will keep her job.
Like · Reply · 3w 1

[redacted] Wherever home is for her, she needs to go there.
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted] When I think where she is, it makes me wonder about us? How did she get this far to cause

Write a comment...

Figure 234


AOC TWEETS OUT ADVICE TO HELP ILLEGAL ALIENS AVOID ICE RAIDS
IS THIS AN ABUSE OF HER POSITION IN GOVT?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 3

1.2K 837 Comments 1.3K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Yes, she needs to be arrested !
Like · Reply · 6d 89
4 Replies

[redacted] What can be done about her, or is she protected.? We have had enough of her.
Like · Reply · 6d 47
7 Replies

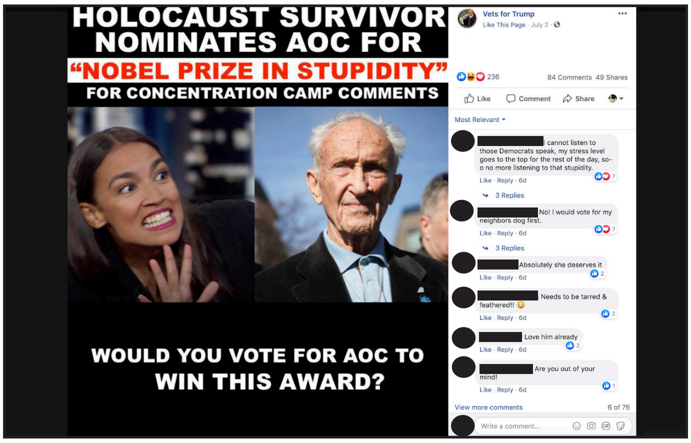
[redacted] Yes, it's a right, freedom of speech, but every one knows how the Socialist want more voters , and open borders, regardless of cost to the Tax payers.
Like · Reply · 6d 20
2 Replies

[redacted] She sure is a special kind. She is helping people break the law.
Like · Reply · 6d 26
1 Reply

[redacted] Prosecute her for obstruction of justice.

Write a comment...

Figure 235


HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR NOMINATES AOC FOR "NOBEL PRIZE IN STUPIDITY" FOR CONCENTRATION CAMP COMMENTS
WOULD YOU VOTE FOR AOC TO WIN THIS AWARD?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 2

236 84 Comments 49 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] i cannot listen to those Democrats speak, my stress level goes to the top for the rest of the day, so-o no more listening to that stupidity.
Like · Reply · 6d 7
3 Replies

[redacted] No! I would vote for my neighbors dog first.
Like · Reply · 6d 7
3 Replies

[redacted] Absolutely she deserves it
Like · Reply · 6d 2

[redacted] Needs to be tarred & feathered!! 😳
Like · Reply · 6d 2

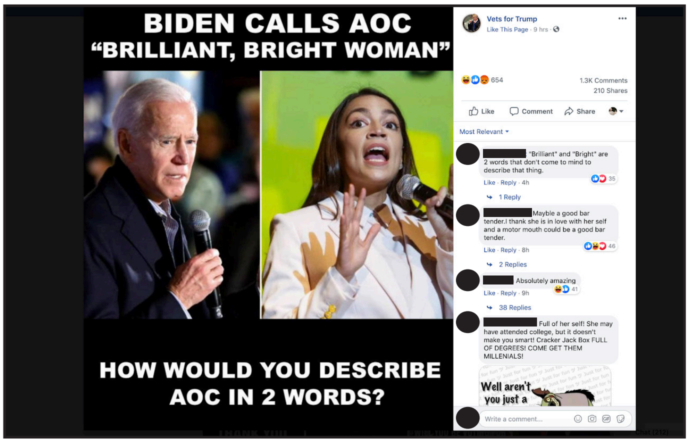
[redacted] Love him already
Like · Reply · 6d 2

[redacted] Are you out of your mind!
Like · Reply · 6d 1

View more comments 6 of 75

Write a comment...

Figure 236


BIDEN CALLS AOC "BRILLIANT, BRIGHT WOMAN"
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AOC IN 2 WORDS?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · 9 hrs

654 1.3K Comments 210 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] "Brilliant" and "Bright" are 2 words that don't come to mind to describe that thing.
Like · Reply · 4h 35
1 Reply

[redacted] Mayble a good bar tender.I thank she is in love with her self and a motor mouth could be a good bar tender.
Like · Reply · 8h 46
2 Replies

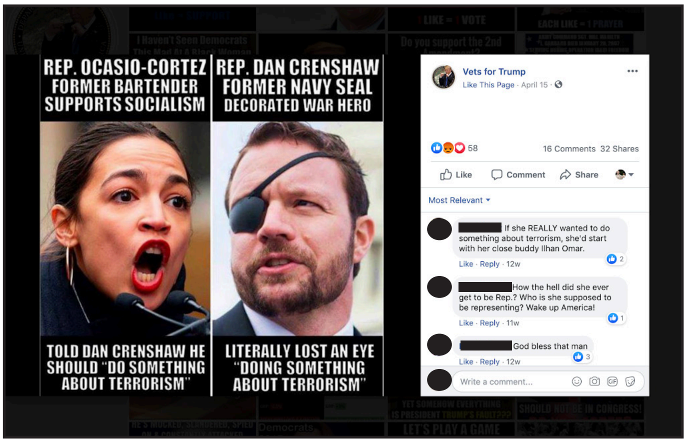
[redacted] Absolutely amazing
Like · Reply · 9h 41
38 Replies

[redacted] Full of her self! She may have attended college, but it doesn't make you smart! Cracker Jack Box FULL OF DEGREES! COME GET THEM MILLENIALS!

Well aren't you just a

Write a comment...

Figure 237


REP. OCASIO-CORTEZ FORMER BARTENDER SUPPORTS SOCIALISM
REP. DAN CRENSHAW FORMER NAVY SEAL DECORATED WAR HERO
TOLD DAN CRENSHAW HE SHOULD "DO SOMETHING ABOUT TERRORISM"
LITERALLY LOST AN EYE "DOING SOMETHING ABOUT TERRORISM"

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 15

58 16 Comments 32 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

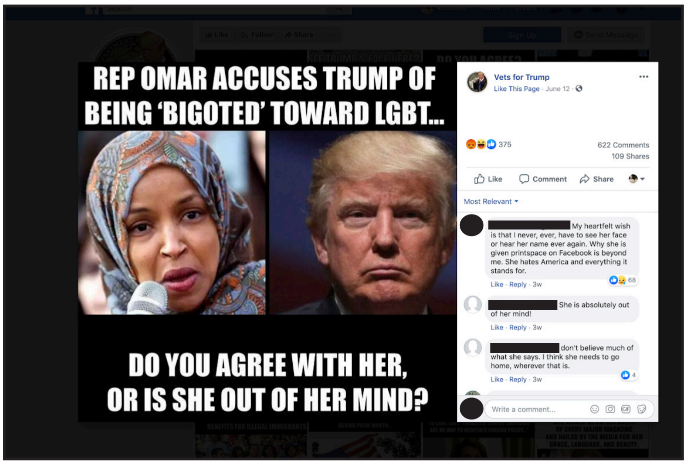
[redacted] If she REALLY wanted to do something about terrorism, she'd start with her close buddy Ilhan Omar.
Like · Reply · 12w 2

[redacted] How the hell did she ever get to be Rep.? Who is she supposed to be representing? Wake up America!
Like · Reply · 11w 1

[redacted] God bless that man
Like · Reply · 12w 3

Write a comment...

Figure 238


REP OMAR ACCUSES TRUMP OF BEING 'BIGOTED' TOWARD LGBT...
DO YOU AGREE WITH HER, OR IS SHE OUT OF HER MIND?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 12

375 622 Comments 109 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

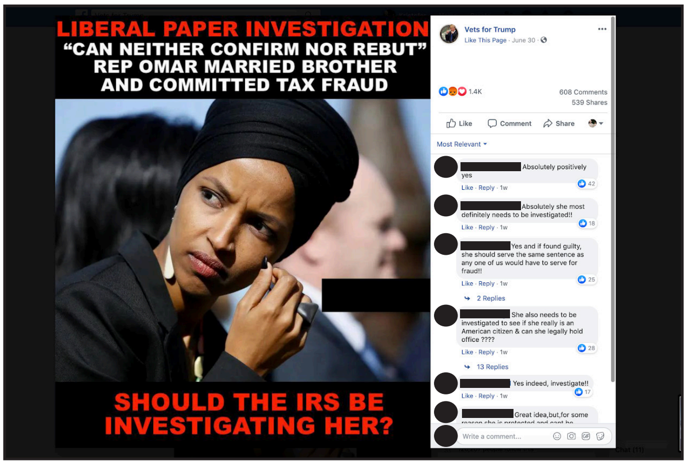
[redacted] My heartfelt wish is that I never, ever, have to see her face or hear her name ever again. Why she is given printspace on Facebook is beyond me. She hates America and everything it stands for.
Like · Reply · 3w 68

[redacted] She is absolutely out of her mind!
Like · Reply · 3w

[redacted] don't believe much of what she says. I think she needs to go home, wherever that is.
Like · Reply · 3w 4

Write a comment...

Figure 239


LIBERAL PAPER INVESTIGATION
"CAN NEITHER CONFIRM NOR REBUT"
REP OMAR MARRIED BROTHER
AND COMMITTED TAX FRAUD
SHOULD THE IRS BE INVESTIGATING HER?

[redacted]

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 30

1.4K 608 Comments 539 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Absolutely positively yes
Like · Reply · 1w 42

[redacted] Absolutely she most definitely needs to be investigated!!
Like · Reply · 1w 18

[redacted] Yes and if found guilty, she should serve the same sentence as any one of us would have to serve for fraud!!
Like · Reply · 1w 25
2 Replies

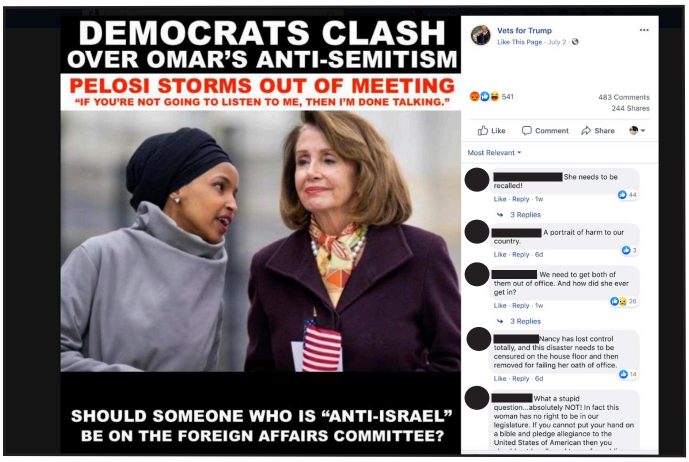
[redacted] She also needs to be investigated to see if she really is an American citizen & can she legally hold office ????
Like · Reply · 1w 28
13 Replies

[redacted] Yes indeed, investigate!!
Like · Reply · 1w 17

[redacted] Great idea,but,for some reason she is protected and cant be

Write a comment...

Figure 240


DEMOCRATS CLASH OVER OMAR'S ANTI-SEMITISM
PELOSI STORMS OUT OF MEETING
"IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO ME, THEN I'M DONE TALKING."
SHOULD SOMEONE WHO IS "ANTI-ISRAEL" BE ON THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · July 2

541 483 Comments 244 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] She needs to be recalled!
Like · Reply · 1w 44
3 Replies

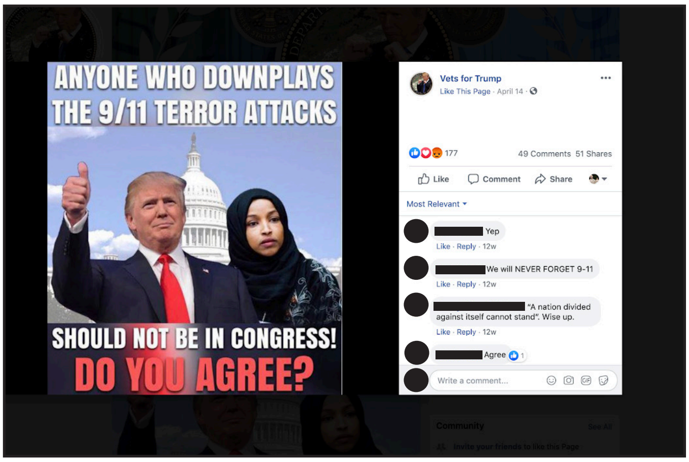
[redacted] A portrait of harm to our country.
Like · Reply · 6d 3

[redacted] We need to get both of them out of office. And how did she ever get in?
Like · Reply · 1w 26
3 Replies

[redacted] Nancy has lost control totally, and this disaster needs to be censured on the house floor and then removed for failing her oath of office.
Like · Reply · 6d 14

[redacted] What a stupid question...absolutely NOT! In fact this woman has no right to be in our legislature. If you cannot put your hand on a bible and pledge allegiance to the United States of American then you

Figure 241


ANYONE WHO DOWNPLAYS THE 9/11 TERROR ATTACKS
SHOULD NOT BE IN CONGRESS!
DO YOU AGREE?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · April 14

177 49 Comments 51 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Yep
Like · Reply · 12w

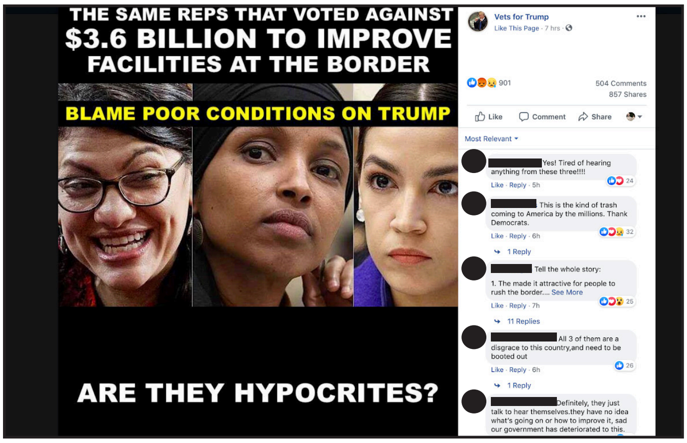
[redacted] We will NEVER FORGET 9-11
Like · Reply · 12w

[redacted] "A nation divided against itself cannot stand". Wise up.
Like · Reply · 12w

[redacted] Agree 1

Write a comment...

Figure 242


THE SAME REPS THAT VOTED AGAINST
$3.6 BILLION TO IMPROVE FACILITIES AT THE BORDER
BLAME POOR CONDITIONS ON TRUMP
ARE THEY HYPOCRITES?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · 7 hrs

901 504 Comments 857 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Yes! Tired of hearing anything from these three!!!!
Like · Reply · 5h 24

[redacted] This is the kind of trash coming to America by the millions. Thank Democrats.
Like · Reply · 6h 32
1 Reply

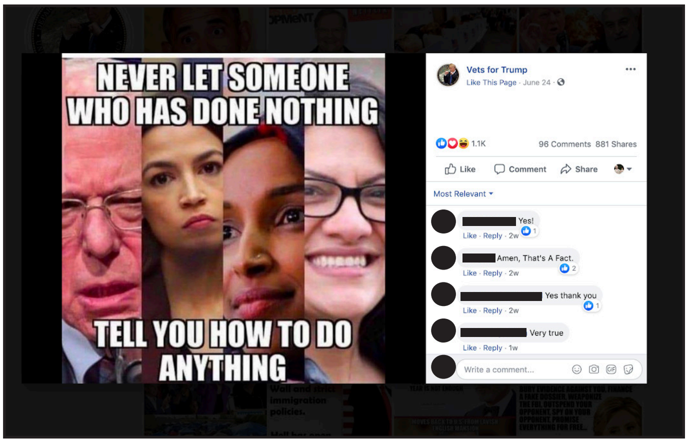
[redacted] Tell the whole story:

1. The made it attractive for people to rush the border.... See More
Like · Reply · 7h 25
11 Replies

[redacted] All 3 of them are a disgrace to this country,and need to be booted out
Like · Reply · 6h 26
1 Reply

[redacted] Definitely, they just talk to hear themselves.they have no idea what's going on or how to improve it, sad our government has deteriorated to this.

Figure 243


NEVER LET SOMEONE WHO HAS DONE NOTHING
TELL YOU HOW TO DO ANYTHING

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · June 24

1.1K 96 Comments 881 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] Yes!
Like · Reply · 2w 1

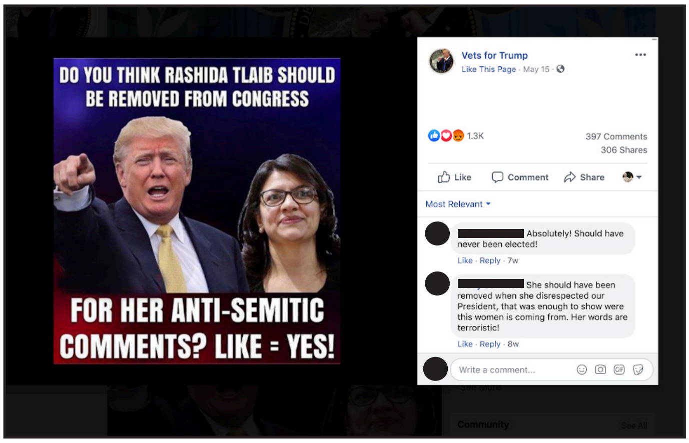
[redacted] Amen, That's A Fact.
Like · Reply · 2w 2

[redacted] Yes thank you
Like · Reply · 2w 1

[redacted] Very true
Like · Reply · 1w

Write a comment...

Figure 244


DO YOU THINK RASHIDA TLAIB SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM CONGRESS
FOR HER ANTI-SEMITIC COMMENTS? LIKE = YES!

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · May 15

1.3K 397 Comments 306 Shares

Like Comment Share

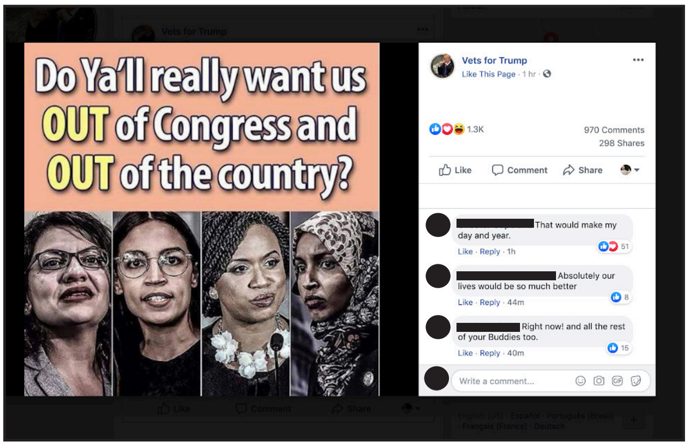
Most Relevant

[redacted] Absolutely! Should have never been elected!
Like · Reply · 7w

[redacted] She should have been removed when she disrespected our President, that was enough to show were this women is coming from. Her words are terroristic!
Like · Reply · 8w

Write a comment...

Figure 245


Do Ya'll really want us OUT of Congress and OUT of the country?

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · 1 hr

1.3K 970 Comments 298 Shares

Like Comment Share

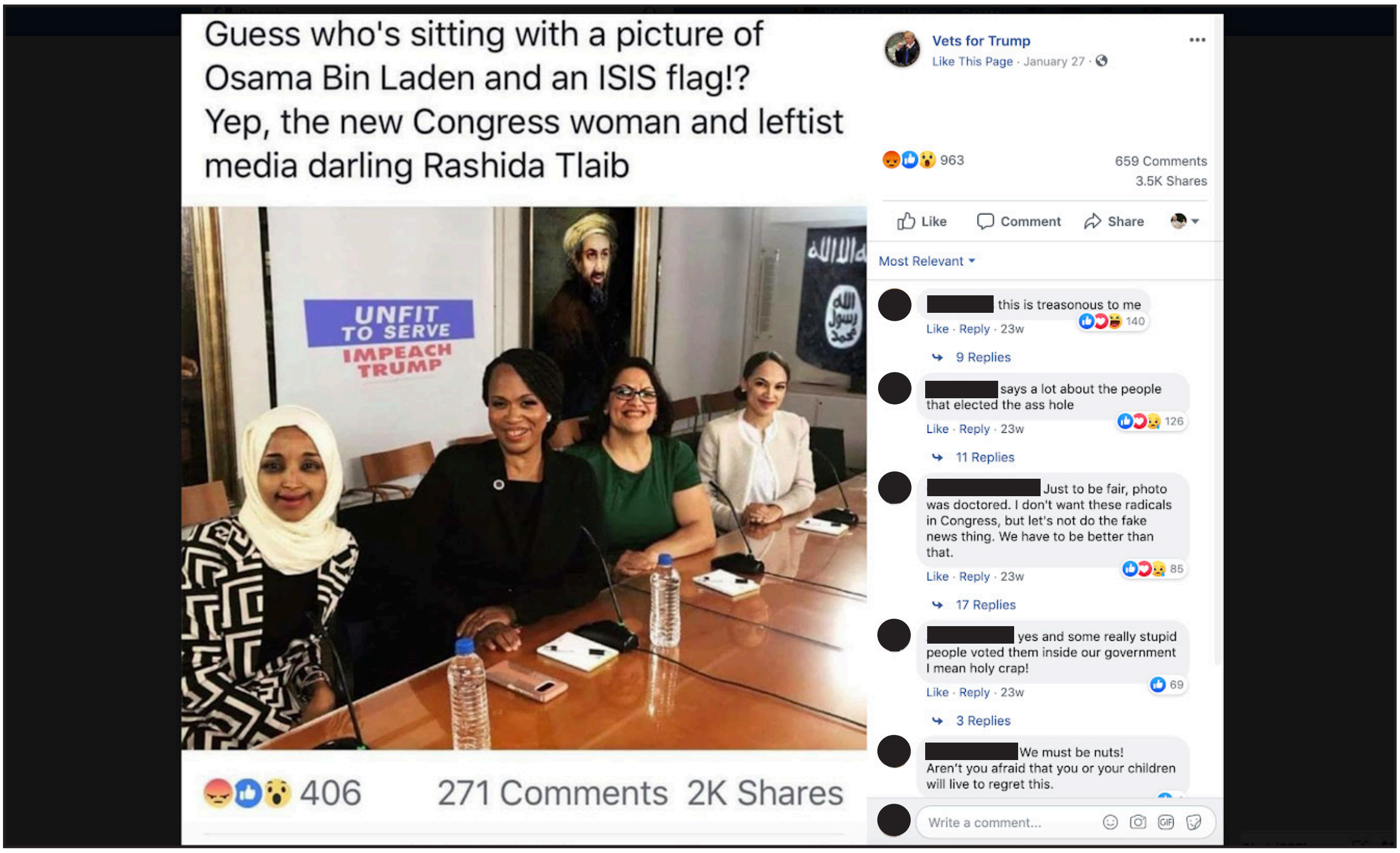
[redacted] That would make my day and year.
Like · Reply · 1h 51

[redacted] Absolutely our lives would be so much better
Like · Reply · 44m 8

[redacted] Right now! and all the rest of your Buddies too.
Like · Reply · 40m 15

Write a comment...

Figure 246



Guess who's sitting with a picture of Osama Bin Laden and an ISIS flag!? Yep, the new Congress woman and leftist media darling Rashida Tlaib

406 271 Comments 2K Shares

Vets for Trump
Like This Page · January 27 ·

963 659 Comments
3.5K Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

[redacted] this is treasonous to me
Like · Reply · 23w 140
9 Replies

[redacted] says a lot about the people that elected the ass hole
Like · Reply · 23w 126
11 Replies

[redacted] Just to be fair, photo was doctored. I don't want these radicals in Congress, but let's not do the fake news thing. We have to be better than that.
Like · Reply · 23w 85
17 Replies

[redacted] yes and some really stupid people voted them inside our government I mean holy crap!
Like · Reply · 23w 69
3 Replies

[redacted] We must be nuts! Aren't you afraid that you or your children will live to regret this.

Write a comment...

Figure 247: While this meme was posted by Americans, we chose to include it in this report as an example of disinformation that has been allowed on Facebook. As you can see above, four out of the five top comments were made by people who believed the deception depicted in the doctored photo — that members of Congress posed in front of a painting of Osama Bin Laden and an ISIS flag. Also note that Rep. Omar's face has been photoshopped to darken her teeth and the skin around her eyes as a way of exaggerating racist tropes. The meme itself received over 3.5K shares and hundreds more reactions and comments. Futhermore, the top comments on the meme received hundreds of reactions of their own. Despite countless Americans being exposed to and interacting with this disinformation, it has not been taken down by Facebook.

CHAPTER 9: Russian Hackers Make Terroristic Threats Against Military Families While Claiming to Be ISIS

As our servicemembers and their families have adopted social media into their lives, our foreign adversaries are finding new ways to disrupt our military. On February 10, 2015, five military wives received alarming messages from Facebook accounts purporting to be part of the "Cyber Caliphate," a supposed offshoot of ISIS.[260] These terroristic threats, which were designed to be reported on and cause a sense of panic in the military community, were not from jihadists — but from the same Russian IRA that interfered with the 2016 election.

The IRA's targets were not chosen at random: They were five women with prominent voices in the community, whom the hackers knew had public platforms from which they could amplify news about the threatening messages. The IRA's plan worked, with the women writing firsthand accounts of the messages,[261] taking to print media,[262] and doing on-camera interviews for popular stations such as FOX News.[263]

This "false flag" operation exposed millions of Americans to the narrative that ISIS was tracking down and hunting military families and caused a wave of panic.

This coordinated series of terroristic threats followed the hacking of Central Command's Twitter account; the hack was used to post threatening messages to military families.[264] All five women who received the IRA messages had been quoted in a CNN story on the hack,[265] expressing their concerns about the safety of military families.[266]

These events coincided with a massive hacking campaign that was attributed to APT 28, also known as Fancy Bear — the Russian hacker group at the IRA — as detailed by the digital-security-firm Secureworks in a threat-analysis report published in June 2016.[267] Digital signatures from this Russian entity overlap so often with the Cyber Caliphate that they have been deemed to be one and the same.[268] Secureworks' Counter Threat Unit researchers have found that APT 28 was responsible for a spear-phishing (sending emails from an ostensibly trusted source to solicit confidential information) campaign that targeted more than 1,800 Gmail accounts, a plurality of which were then current or former US military personnel.[269] This report found that military spouses who wrote about the military and military families made up nearly a quarter of the journalists who were targeted by APT 28 during the spear-phishing campaign.

CHAPTER 10: Suspicious Accounts Purporting to Work for Reputable MilVet-Focused Organizations

Foreign entities' imitation accounts that target MilVets are not limited to creating fraudulent accounts and pages made to look like they represent MilVet organizations but also to look like the individual MilVets who work for and represent these organizations. By claiming employment or affiliation with MilVet organizations, these fake accounts are able to gain the trust of the broader MilVet community and connect directly with influential MilVet advocates who do in fact represent and work with these organizations.

Microsoft's career-focused social-media network for professionals, LinkedIn, has been used by Chinese spies to gain access to our law-enforcement and intelligence communities, and to recruit Americans who have access to government and commercial secrets.[270] LinkedIn served as a gateway for China to recruit an Army veteran and ex-CIA officer, Kevin Mallory, by exploiting his debt and career trouble.[271] There has been some correlation between those targeted on LinkedIn and victims of the 2015 OPM data breach, which compromised the personal information of 22 million Americans who sought security clearances.

Considering all the data garnered — such as the private information China obtained via the OPM data breach, the career information that individuals post to LinkedIn, and the more personal life-updates that people post to Facebook and Twitter — foreign intelligence services have endless opportunities to spot, assess, develop, recruit, and handle potential spies.[272]

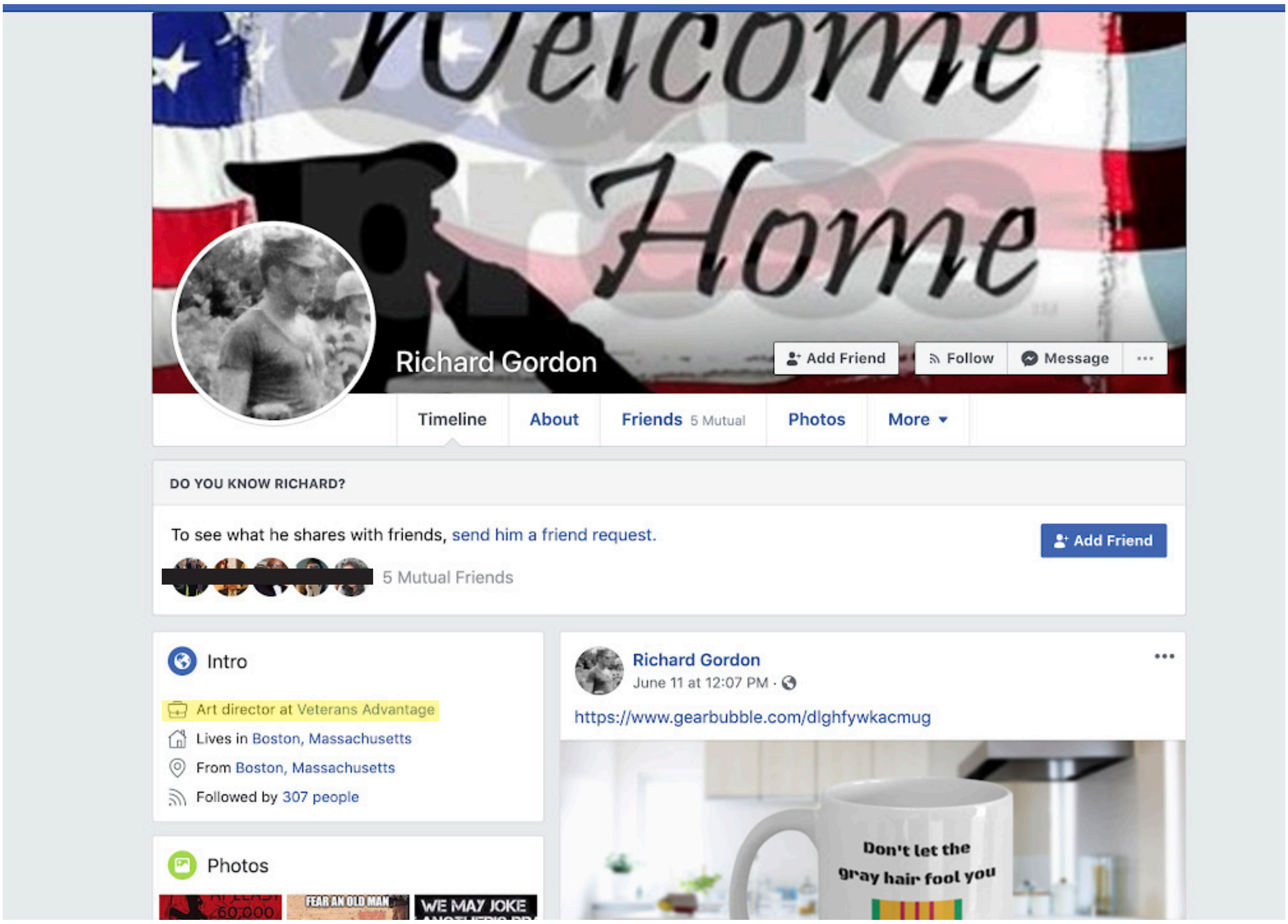
Fake Veterans Advantage Employee: "Richard Gordon"

An entity using the alias "Richard Gordon" on Facebook has targeted and infiltrated the community of veteran advocates. The profile uses a blurry photograph of a Vietnam-era veteran as a profile photo. The biography claims Richard Gordon holds the position of art director at Veterans Advantage, a popular veteran-owned business (Figure 248).[273] Scott Higgins, the CEO of Veterans Advantage, states he doesn't know of and never employed a Richard Gordon.

The Richard Gordon profile appears to have been created on or around March 17, 2017, using two generic veteran-themed images to establish its profile and background photos. From the date of creation through October 6, 2017, the account itself was dormant, though it was tagged by other accounts in posts related to Putin, Hillary Clinton, and Trump with scores of other veteran-focused accounts. On October 7, 2017, the Richard Gordon account became active, posting daily, with links to veteran-related merchandise and memes, including many known to have been generated by the Russian IRA.

The Richard Gordon account's friend list rapidly grew and now has over 2,200 connections. Almost all these Facebook friends appear to be veterans — with most of them being white, male, and of the Vietnam generation. While a few of these accounts look to be inauthentic, the vast majority are real veterans. At least five of the account's friends are prominent veteran advocates, including VVA's own executive director.

The account appears to be coordinating with at least two other inauthentic accounts — one that is veteran-focused, and one that is entirely focused on Freemasons. All three of these accounts are admins for the 2,300-plus-member Facebook group called "Veterans pride shop," which was created on November 16, 2016.[274]



Richard Gordon

Add Friend | Follow | Message | ···

Timeline | About | Friends 5 Mutual | Photos | More ▾

DO YOU KNOW RICHARD?

To see what he shares with friends, send him a friend request.

Add Friend

[redacted] 5 Mutual Friends

Intro

Art director at Veterans Advantage

Lives in Boston, Massachusetts

From Boston, Massachusetts

Followed by 307 people

Photos

Richard Gordon

June 11 at 12:07 PM ·

https://www.gearbubble.com/dlghfywkacmug

Figure 248: "Richard Gordon" Facebook profile, which claims to be of the art director at Veterans Advantage and is connected with at least five well-known MilVet advocates.

The purpose of this account and its network is unclear. We do not know where the money obtained from sales of merchandise goes to — or whether the intent of the Russian propaganda that the account posts is to boost sales or whether it's to sow division, as it was for the propaganda's original sources. Whatever the mission is of the person behind the Richard Gordon account, it provides an example of how easily an inauthentic account can infiltrate the veterans community and continue to spread Russian-generated, politically divisive content.

The Richard Gordon profile shared an image that prominently features a VVA flag waving[275] alongside over a dozen Russian-developed propaganda memes with at least three different Russian-created MilVet-focused accounts and pages.[276,277,278,279,280,281,282,283,284,285,286,287,288]

CONCLUSION

What you see in this report is a mere fraction of the thousands of pieces of evidence documenting inauthentic and predatory activity that we have collected over the past two years. We could not possibly cover all that we have found in a single document, but we want to briefly go over some of our findings that we haven't highlighted in this report.

- We have discovered a bot network of Facebook accounts originating from the Republic of Georgia that were at times activated by posts that tagged the official Facebook pages of Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton. Within five seconds of a user posting news about either politician, these bots would swarm the post, quickly leaving comments with links to websites with sensationalized political news. While these bots appear to have gone dormant, they remain online and may reactivate to sow confusion and discord in our democracy in the future. One of the earliest among a series of websites promoted by these bot accounts was linked to a Twitter account that had its location listed as Russia.
- We have been tracking a Twitter bot network that is targeting servicemembers, veterans, and veterans advocates. Some of the bots in the network are using VSO logos as their profile photos and others are primarily commercially oriented. They retweet official federal government accounts, veterans organizations, and political organizations, like the National Rifle Association, in order to blend in with the veterans community and promote evergreen content (content that is always relevant) that is appealing to the target audience. These twitter bots are promoting websites connected to overseas and domestic IP addresses, as well as cloud-hosting services (some of which are known malware-distribution points). This malware includes "command and control" scripts, which makes the personal devices of unsuspecting internet users part of the infrastructure of the bot network itself. Malware associated with these networks also includes ransomware, which can lock down people's computers — and allow hackers to extort them. It also includes spyware such as persistent cookies, which can be used to both monitor a victim's online activity and to scrape passwords by recording keystrokes. Elements of this network also appear to be hosted on servers that, based on the associated URLs, are affiliated with websites reported to contain child pornography, though it would not be appropriate for us to investigate that further.
- We have found networks of Facebook pages that have left automated comments on one another's posts as a way of artificially boosting engagement metrics and to build audiences.
- We have found social-media presences that purport to be dating services exclusive to American servicemembers and veterans but are operated from Ukraine.
- As recently as 2018 we found Facebook pages openly advertising nude photographs of servicemembers.
- Several nationally recognized veterans organizations have reported to us that their email sign-up websites have been targeted by swarms of inauthentic submissions, and/or they have had their websites attacked. This includes an instance of a hacking group taking over a veterans organization's website while claiming to be part of a jihadist group.
- Since publicly disclosing this investigation, I — the investigator and author of this report — have received targeted phishing emails with hyperlinks that route through IP addresses located in Russia and China.

Vietnam Veterans of America will continue this investigation for as long as we have to, but we hope that law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and congressional investigators will take the lead from here.

Servicemembers, veterans, and our families are being targeted both by foreign criminals and our nation's adversaries as a direct result of our service and sacrifice. We have had our identities stolen and our organizations imitated so that we can be politically exploited and manipulated by foreign powers on a mission to destroy the very democracy we fight for.

These attacks will continue until policies are enacted to quickly and harshly impose a real cost on bad actors so that they are dissuaded from engaging in and being complicit in predatory behavior online. It is not enough to simply rely on social-media companies closing the accounts of people engaged in fraud. These predators can too easily create new accounts and continue taking advantage of and manipulating Americans. The provocateurs behind the anonymous avatars must pay a price and be brought to justice.

The White House must recognize that cybersecurity is national security, and our virtual borders are far more porous and pose much greater dangers than our physical borders. The Department of Veterans Affairs must modernize and consider cyber-hygiene an important aspect of veterans' overall well-being. Internet-based companies must do more to educate and protect their users. Congress must pass laws that maintain Americans' First Amendment rights while removing foreign influence from our democracy.

An organization composed of women and men in their retirement years should not have to advocate for these changes. But we remember our founding principle: *Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.* VVA will keep fighting for as long as any veteran is at risk of abuse.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

White House

The aforementioned cyber-threats against American troops and veterans culminate in a serious national-security issue that will get worse as our adversaries advance their TTPs and technologies. As Commander-in-Chief, the President bears the ultimate responsibility to coordinate a response to persistent cyber-threats against American troops and veterans. Through the executive powers granted to the President by the Constitution, by law, and by precedent, the President can take swift action to address this growing crisis by issuing an Executive Order (EO).

Issue an Executive Order to Protect Troops and Veterans From Exploitation by Foreign Actors and to Strengthen American Cybersecurity

The President should immediately issue an EO for the purpose of focusing the attention of the concerned federal agencies and the American public on the problem of foreign elements persistently targeting American troops and veterans in cyber-environments. An EO would not only mobilize government resources, it would also be an opportunity for the President to leverage the office to elevate the issue[289] and begin a critical public-awareness campaign that is designed to strengthen vulnerable targets.

Create a Cybersecurity Agency, Appoint a Secretary of Cybersecurity

The increasing role of the internet in the lives of everyday Americans and its importance to the economy necessitates the establishment of a new department dedicated to cybersecurity. In 1930, with over four-million Americans having served in World War I, President Herbert Hoover recognized that the existing Veterans Bureau was not sufficient and signed Executive Order 5398 transforming the Veterans Bureau into the Veterans Administration, raising it to the level of a federal agency. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan recognized that with millions of American veterans of WWI, WW2, and the Korean and Vietnam wars depending on government services, the Veterans Administration needed to again be elevated. President George Bush explained the justification, saying "There is only one place for the Veterans of America, in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America."[290] Thus, the Veterans Administration became the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The fact that the internet is so ingrained in government, the economy, and the lives of all Americans makes clear that it is necessary to elevate the massive undertaking of American cybersecurity to the Cabinet level.

The role of Cybersecurity Coordinator was created by the Obama White House in 2008 as a modernization effort and for the purpose of "harmonizing government policy on cybersecurity and digital warfare."[291] On May 1, 2018, then-National Security Advisor (NSA) John Bolton[292] reportedly eliminated the position of Cybersecurity Coordinator on the National Security Council (NSC).[293] The purpose of this position had been to lead national efforts to ensure that Americans and our government were protected from ever-advancing cyber-threats.[294] The President should use the proposed EO to immediately reestablish and make permanent the role of Cybersecurity Coordinator on the NSC, and retitle the position as Secretary of Cybersecurity.

For the purposes of reporting to the President and in terms of rank in government, the Secretary of Cybersecurity should be considered a Cabinet-level position.

The National Cybersecurity Division — which currently exists as a division of the Office of Cybersecurity & Communications within the United States Department of Homeland Security's Directorate for National Protection and Programs[295] — should be made an autonomous department within the federal government and be renamed the Department of Cybersecurity. The Secretary of Cybersecurity would lead this new agency. This would ensure that America's chief cybersecurity coordinator has minimal barriers[296] to accessing the President. With the EO establishing rank and departmental autonomy this way, the Secretary of

Cybersecurity would become a culturally recognized and appreciated position within the Executive Branch.[297]

The EO should empower the Secretary of Cybersecurity to convene, share best practices among, and direct the necessary activities of the chief information officers (CIOs) and chief information security officers (CISOs) of every federal agency and department. The EO should also make the director of Cybersecurity the chair of the CIO Council.[298] Additionally, the EO should standardize the practice of CIOs and CISOs in every department and agency having deputy-secretary-level positions, reporting directly to the chief executive at their respective departments and agencies.

The Secretary of Cybersecurity would work closely with US Cyber Command (CYBERCOM), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency (NSA)[299] to ensure that all nefarious activities in cyber-environments by foreign and domestic actors are detected, disrupted, and when appropriate prosecuted in accordance with the law or dealt with harshly and swiftly in accordance with the laws of armed conflict.

CYBERCOM, the NSA, and the CIA were recently granted expanded authorities under the classified document known as “National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) 13.”[300] The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2019 also clarified CYBERCOM’s role in engaging foreign adversaries.[301] Together, these recent changes allow CYBERCOM to maintain a “defense forward” posture against state actors — specifically Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea.

CYBERCOM’s primary focus in this area would remain on activities by hostile state-sponsored actors, and the NSA would keep its role as an intelligence agency within the DoD. The FBI will remain charged with the investigation and prosecution of criminal cyber-activity.[302] The Department of Cybersecurity will focus on the detection and disruption of foreign and domestic non-state actors who attempt to exploit American government, infrastructure, commercial entities, and civilians in cyber-environments. If necessary, NSPM 13 should be amended to allow the Department of Cybersecurity to maintain a defense-forward posture against non-state actors.

The Secretary of Cybersecurity should maintain a 10-year term, in following with the precedent of the position of the FBI director as prescribed by Section 203 of the Crime Control Act of 1976.[303] This tenure would both insulate the Secretary from political influence by the Presidents under which they serve[304] and allow the nation to benefit from steady, consistent, non-political leadership at the helm of the proposed Department of Cybersecurity.

Engaging the Private Sector

Through the EO, the President should create a “Civilian Cybersecurity Advisory Board” consisting of CISOs from major US social-media, cybersecurity, and internet firms. This advisory board would work with the Secretary of Cybersecurity to promote seamless private-public partnerships for the betterment of US cybersecurity, and to promote the timely exchange of best-practices and knowledge of threats among private entities.

Work with Social-Media Companies to Verify Claimed MilVet Affiliation of Users/Accounts

Both individual and state-sponsored foreign cybercriminals have been using fake accounts with imitation MilVet identities and affiliations on social media to manipulate MilVets and the general public. As an incentive to fix this problem, continued membership on the President’s Civilian Cybersecurity Advisory Board should be contingent after a period of one year on the basis of whether or not the concerned tech firms have implemented policies to verify claimed military service by users of their platform. Members should also be responsible for verifying that claimed MilVet organizations that utilize their platforms are in good standing with the IRS.[305]

Ensure Internet Companies Maintain Evidence of All Suspected Cybercrimes

Members on the Civilian Cybersecurity Advisory Board must also maintain evidence of and report all cybercrimes and propaganda campaigns suspected to have been committed against Americans by foreign entities.

Appoint a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health, Direct VA to Consider Cyber-Hygiene a Critical Aspect of Veteran Wellness

Our adversaries are engaging in a form of psychological warfare when targeting veterans with deceptive online content. The falsified news that foreigners have directed at veterans includes stories about veterans' benefits being cut, which is meant to make veterans feel financially insecure and provoke outrage.[306] This type of psychological manipulation could potentially exacerbate veterans' service-related conditions such as PTSD or depression. Studies have shown that chronic psychological distress can increase a person's likelihood of worsening physical health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and stroke.[307]

For these reasons, VA must recognize the impact of cyber-threats on veterans' health and make efforts to inoculate veterans against cybercrime through training, education, and the distribution of information.

The President should use the EO to instruct the VA to develop programs dedicated to improving veterans' cyber-hygiene[308] and to recognize the maintenance of cyber-hygiene as a necessary aspect of healthy living for veterans in the 21st century and beyond. In order to accomplish this, a new position would be created within VA: a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health, who would report directly to the VA department's Under Secretary for Health.

Preventive Measures: Lifetime Identity-Theft Insurance and Credit-Monitoring for All Troops and Veterans

After the OPM data breach was discovered in 2015, OPM and DoD quickly responded by announcing an 18-month contract to provide identity-theft insurance and credit-monitoring for the 22-million affected Americans.[309] This executive action was necessary so that the government could provide immediate reassurance to victims of the hack and take steps to minimize potential damage should the data be used for nefarious purposes.

Congress then expanded this benefit through 2026 with section 633 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017, Public Law No. 115-31.[310] While the funding for this insurance is currently set to expire, the information obtained by APT (advanced persistent threat) Deep Panda will remain a looming danger throughout the lifetime of all victims whose data was exposed.

In recognition of the pervasive and persistent targeting and threats against MilVets in cyber-environments, the President should use the precedent set in 2015 and this proposed EO to expand the program to all current troops and veterans. Perhaps most importantly, the President should work with Congress to make this a permanent program, as even a temporary lapse could expose millions of MilVets to serious vulnerabilities.

Offer Complimentary Antivirus Software to All MilVets

While identity-theft insurance and credit-monitoring services are vital, prevention must be a key element of this EO. Antivirus software and secure password managers should be protecting all MilVets both from individualized targeting and worldwide malware campaigns not only on government systems, but on their personal electronic devices as well. The President should direct the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Secretary of Cybersecurity to come up with a plan to issue complimentary antivirus software and secure password managers to all MilVets within a year of the issuance of the EO.

The intended effects of these preventive measures would be multifold. First, securing the personal electronic devices of all MilVets will reduce the likelihood of identity theft. Decreased incidents of identity theft will reduce the rate of claims for identity-theft insurance, thus also reducing the cost of maintaining the lifetime identity-theft insurance program. Second, increased personal electronic security will make troops less likely to face cyber-intrusions that could compromise their security clearances and military readiness. Third, the public knowledge that MilVets and their personal devices are protected by antivirus software will make the community as a whole a less-attractive target for our cyber-adversaries. Even if attacks on individuals are successful, antivirus software and password managers will effectively create a cyber-herd-immunity that would decrease the risk of the spread of malware from MilVet to MilVet.

The government should seek to develop contracts with a diverse set of cybersecurity software providers and offer multiple options to MilVets regarding which free software to utilize for personal internet-connected devices. A diverse set of security-software options for MilVets to opt into would reduce the likelihood that a single zero-day vulnerability (a software vulnerability without a fix in place) would be shared across the entire population.

Department of Veterans Affairs

In recognition of the fact that in the 21st century the internet and electronic devices are an increasingly important part of veterans' lives, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should appoint a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health (as mentioned above in Chapter 1), who would be charged with efforts to improve cyber-hygiene for veterans.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the proposed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health should immediately commission studies to determine the impacts on physical and mental health, financial stability, and general well-being of veterans who have fallen victim to cybercrime.

The Department of Veterans Affairs should solicit proposals from cybersecurity firms on how to best protect veterans in cyber-environments. Proposals should include the types of complimentary antivirus and security software that the VA should offer veterans, employees, contractors, and private healthcare providers who handle veterans' records as a result of the MISSION Act and similar "Choice"-related programs.

Department of Defense

Working Group to Study Security Risks of Personal Devices Used by Troops

Global positioning systems (GPS-connected devices), dating apps, and social-media accounts, cameras on internet-connected devices, the use of private email, and other common apps all contain potential threats to the safety and security of our Armed Services.

The EO should direct the Secretary of Defense to create a working group to study risks presented by the use of common personal electronic devices and apps both in the field and at home.

On January 29, 2018, the *New York Times* revealed that the "Strava Fitness" running app revealed the locations and perimeters of forward-operating bases — including secret and sensitive locations — in Niger, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries.[311] Strava connects to common workout trackers, such as Fitbit, so that users can map and track their exercise. These workout trackers have been issued by the military to encourage healthy lifestyles and wellness — yet they present the unexpected danger of revealing covert operations.

This working group should be tasked with proposing new standards on a yearly basis (since apps and their risks are constantly evolving) for authorized and approved devices, as well as appropriate restrictions for use.

Once new standards are developed, training and enforcement should be integrated into regular health-and-welfare instructions for troops.

Department of State

Foreign-Policy Focus: Instruct State Department to Make Cybercrime Apprehensions a Priority in Foreign Nations

Through the EO, the President should posture the United States in a way that encourages the development and enforcement of anti-cybercrime laws abroad, while promoting the protection of the individual rights and freedoms of people around the world. The Secretary of State should prioritize negotiations supporting these laws and values when dealing with allies and adversaries alike. Through its Office of Economic Sanctions Policy and Implementation,[312] the State Department should develop sanctions for countries that refuse to fight cybercrime within their borders or engage in state-sponsored cybercrime. These sanctions should be aimed at reducing internet access for criminals within the country concerned by creating barriers to consumer products, technologies, and services that are commonly exploited for cybercrimes.

Department of Justice

Ensure that Internet Companies Maintain Evidence

The President should through the EO direct the Justice Department to order social-media and related companies to immediately begin preserving all data that is likely to be considered evidence of foreign entities attempting to deceive Americans for the purpose of: financial fraud; the imitation of American organizations or commission of identity theft of US persons; or to illegally influence political matters or participate in disinformation campaigns. The Department of Justice should issue a regulation mandating the reporting and submission of such evidence. In order to make this policy permanent, the President should work with Congress to amend internet privacy laws.

Congress

Congress should update laws regarding internet privacy and fraud protections, and grant law enforcement the jurisdiction to respond to and prevent cybercrimes.

Congress should guarantee that law enforcement has the personnel, authorities, and funding required to prioritize interdiction of networks of foreign cybercriminals who target Americans for financial fraud. Congress must ensure that all evidence of cybercrimes and foreign disinformation campaigns is preserved and that statutes of limitation are extended appropriately so that law enforcement and independent researchers can ensure that victims can see their perpetrators brought to justice.

Congress must create a statutory “duty to disclose” for internet companies to alert users when they have been exposed to content or accounts that are known to have been part of a coordinated disinformation campaign.

Congress must hold accountable the internet registrars and web-hosts who allow cybercriminals to anonymously create predatory websites — including but not limited to those who host malware; those who facilitate sales of counterfeit merchandise; and those who host foreign-born disinformation campaigns.

Congress should also hold accountable Western Union, PayPal, and other companies that facilitate financial fraud.

Congress should through legislation authorize the creation of the Department of Cybersecurity and the appointment of a Secretary of Cybersecurity. This department should be empowered to act in all appropriate matters of intelligence, defense, and law enforcement. As such, this department and its Secretary would be accountable to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the Senate Committee on Armed Services, and the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, as well as the House Committees on Energy and Commerce, Armed Services, Intelligence, and the Judiciary. Congress should legislate a 10-year term for the Secretary of this department, and confirmation must require a two-thirds majority vote, as a way of ensuring nonpartisan service in the position.

Committees on Veterans' Affairs

Commission Study

The Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs should commission studies on the physical and mental-health effects of cybercrimes and propaganda campaigns that are directed at veterans. The Committees should pass legislation to aid veterans who have fallen victim to cybercrime. The Committees must pass legislation to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs prioritizes cyber-hygiene of veterans and makes cyber-health a priority.

Pass a Law to Grant Lifetime Identity-Theft Insurance and Credit-Monitoring for All Veterans and Dependents

In recognition of the fact that military service increases the likelihood of targeting by cybercriminals and hostile nation states, the Committees on Veterans' Affairs should empower the VA to grant lifetime services of free identity-theft insurance and credit-monitoring to veterans and their families.

VA to Consider Cyber-Hygiene a Health Need

The Committees on Veterans' Affairs must instruct the VA to develop programs that recognize cyber-hygiene as a critical aspect of veterans' health and well-being. In order to facilitate this modernization, the Committees on Veterans' Affairs should legislate the creation of the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Cyber-Health, who would be charged with the mission of ensuring that veterans have the services and support that is required to maintain appropriate cyber-hygiene.

Require VA to Offer Complimentary Antivirus Software to All Veterans and Dependents

In order to protect veterans from becoming victims of cybercrime and targeting by hostile groups, the Committees on Veterans' Affairs should require the VA to contract services from a variety of American cyber-security companies, so that the VA can offer to veterans and their families their choice of the complimentary antivirus software. To ensure that cybersecurity services and products offered remain effective, the VA should ensure that a diverse set of options are available for veterans and their families to choose from, so that one contractors' zero-day vulnerability would not impact the entire system at once.

Committees on Armed Services

The Senate and House Committees on Armed Services must commission studies to evaluate the risk to force readiness presented by cybercrime and foreign-born propaganda campaigns, determine how many servicemembers have already been impacted, and what security risks are presented by servicemembers' use of personal devices and apps at home and abroad. The Committees should pass legislation to expand to all servicemembers and their families and make permanent lifetime credit-monitoring and identity-theft insurance. This legislation should instruct the Department of Defense to make the personal cyber-health of servicemembers a priority, and require training in cyber-hygiene. The

Committees should also pass legislation to offer complimentary antivirus software to all servicemembers and their families. Specifics follow below.

Commission Study

Studies should focus on answering the following: How many troops and families fall victim to romance scams or similar cybercrimes? What are the readiness risks associated with being a victim of said cybercrimes? What are the security risks of personal devices and apps used by troops?

Offer Lifetime Identity-Theft Insurance and Credit-Monitoring for All Troops

In recognition of the fact that military service increases the likelihood of targeting by cybercriminals and hostile nation states, the Committees on Armed Services should require the DoD to grant lifetime services of free identity-theft insurance and credit-monitoring to veterans and their families.

DoD Must Consider Cyber-Hygiene a Health Need, Mandatory Training

The Committees on Armed Services must instruct the DoD to develop programs that recognize cyber-hygiene as a critical aspect of servicemembers' health and well-being. In the next National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the Committees on Armed Services must include language that requires military commanders to perform regular cyber-hygiene checks as part of their traditional health-and-welfare inspections within their respective units.

Offer Complimentary Antivirus Software to All Troops

The Committees on Armed Services must ensure that all personal electronic devices used by American servicemembers at home and abroad are operating at the highest levels of security. The Committees on Armed Services should require the Department of Defense to provide complimentary antivirus software to all servicemembers for use on their personal electronic devices.

Social-Media and Internet Companies

General (all companies)

Social-media companies have borne the brunt of controversies related to the election interference, financial scams, and political division that they have facilitated, and for good reason. Social-media companies, however, are among the victims of these hostile foreign entities as well. They must enact reforms to ensure the security of their users.

Social-media companies should maintain all evidence of foreign interference — not just remove it from their platform and delete the offending content. Social-media companies should create public repositories of known propaganda so that the public can learn what disinformation looks like. Confirmed propaganda should be watermarked in these public repositories to reduce the risk of recirculation and reuse.

Social-media companies must proactively screen military- and veteran-focused accounts, groups, and pages for inauthentic behavior. These companies, particularly career-focused social-media platforms such as LinkedIn, must verify military service of those who claim it — perhaps with a new, green checkmark or verification badge — or they should include a clear warning for claimed but unverified military status.

Alternatively, these platforms should not let military affiliation or veteran status be made visible to other users unless it has been internally verified.

Social media shouldn't simply rely on reporting by users. They should be proactive in hunting for criminals who are abusing these platforms, collect evidence, and report criminal activity to law enforcement.

Social-media companies should empower reliable troll hunters with tools and special permission to assist them in their work, as well as amply compensate individuals and organizations who frequently produce reliable reporting.

Social-media companies must ensure that link-shorteners cannot be used to circumvent bans on dangerous websites or to disguise websites that users may otherwise know to avoid.

Social-media companies should create a joint-company threat intelligence committee, backed by a publicly funded non-profit as a facilitator.

Self-regulation is a critical step: Develop a company culture that includes a duty-to-disclose when users have been directly or indirectly impacted by inauthentic behavior. If a Facebook friend, a Twitter follower, or other connected social-media account is removed for abusive, predatory, or inauthentic behavior, the company should inform the people who have interacted with that account about the removal.

When inauthentic or fraudulent activity is discovered on an account that has affiliated accounts on other social-media platforms, social-media companies must also alert one another.

Facebook / Instagram

Include locations of all current and past admins in page history — make country of origin more prominent so that average users can see it without requiring a click-through.

Use artificial-intelligence (AI) tools to scan for confirmed political propaganda of Russian/foreign origin and notify users/pages that they have interacted with that propaganda. Also, when propaganda is discovered, it should be watermarked to help educate users to identify foreign-influence campaigns.

Develop AI to detect romance scammers — especially search for suspicious connections between military-affiliated West Africa users and Americans; look for repeated use of identical text, which is a hallmark of scammers, who buy, sell, and trade prepared scripts.

Scammers often claim to work at Facebook in their Facebook profiles. Facebook should not allow any non-employee to falsely claim employment by Facebook on their platform; furthermore, Facebook should verify users who claim to be employees.

Similarly, if people claim military service in their bio or work history, Facebook should verify it before allowing that information to be viewed publicly.

Facebook should scan posts for unauthorized use of names and trademarks of veterans service organizations and record these incidents, as well as provide evidence of fraudulent activity to law enforcement. Facebook should also notify victims of these incidents.

Facebook should form a partnership with LinkedIn and use facial-recognition software across platforms to detect and disrupt imitation accounts. Notify users who are being imitated.

Twitter

Twitter must proactively seek out and verify legitimate military and veterans advocates and organizations.

Twitter must study and disrupt attempts by foreign entities to infiltrate and influence the American military and veterans community.

Twitter should scan posts for unauthorized use of names and trademarks of veterans service organizations and record these incidents, as well as provide evidence of fraudulent activity to law enforcement. Twitter should also notify victims of these incidents.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn should verify claimed military and intelligence affiliations before allowing them to be claimed as work experience by users on their profiles.

LinkedIn should form partnerships with Facebook and Instagram and use facial-recognition software across platforms to detect and disrupt imitation accounts, as well as notify users who are being imitated.

Amazon

Amazon should scan photos of items listed for sale to detect illegal use of trademarked names and logos of military and veterans service organizations. Incidents of illegal use of trademarks must be recorded and provided to law enforcement. Amazon should also notify victims of these incidents.

APPENDIX 1: Facebook Primer

A person's Facebook **profile** is the core of their user experience — it's what they use to upload photos, create albums, send and accept friend requests, and post updates about their lives so that they can remain connected with friends and family across the globe. Profiles are meant to be personal.

Pages, on the other hand, are akin to a digital storefront, complete with online stores and customer-service messaging. Facebook pages were designed so that companies, public officials, and groups could communicate more easily with their customers, constituents, or members — while being able to control and project their brand's image.

Facebook pages can be viewed by any Facebook user (unless they are individually banned or blocked), whereas Facebook profiles can be set with restrictive privacy settings according to the preference of the individual. Facebook users can leave comments on most status updates, photos, and links posted by pages — and leave detailed reviews for the page and the brand it represents. Facebook users can also share anything posted by pages onto their own timeline, so that the individual users' friends and followers can see them.

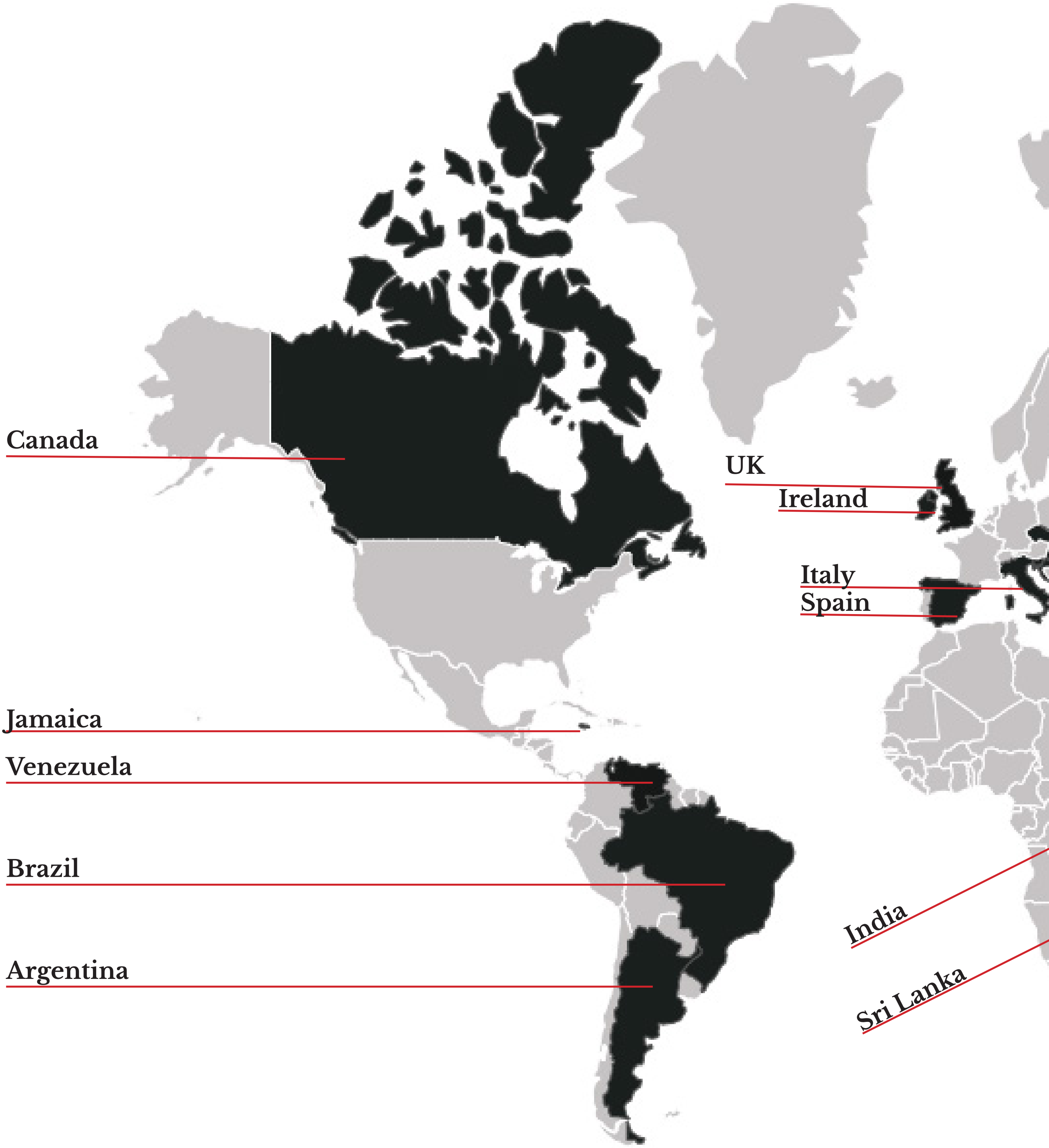
Pages don't necessarily have to represent a real-world entity. Pages can also be parodies or unofficial fan clubs, or a tool to aggregate and disseminate information and news about any topic of interest. Any Facebook user can create and be an administrator (aka admin) for a page and can authorize and assign other Facebook users administrator privileges to help manage the page.

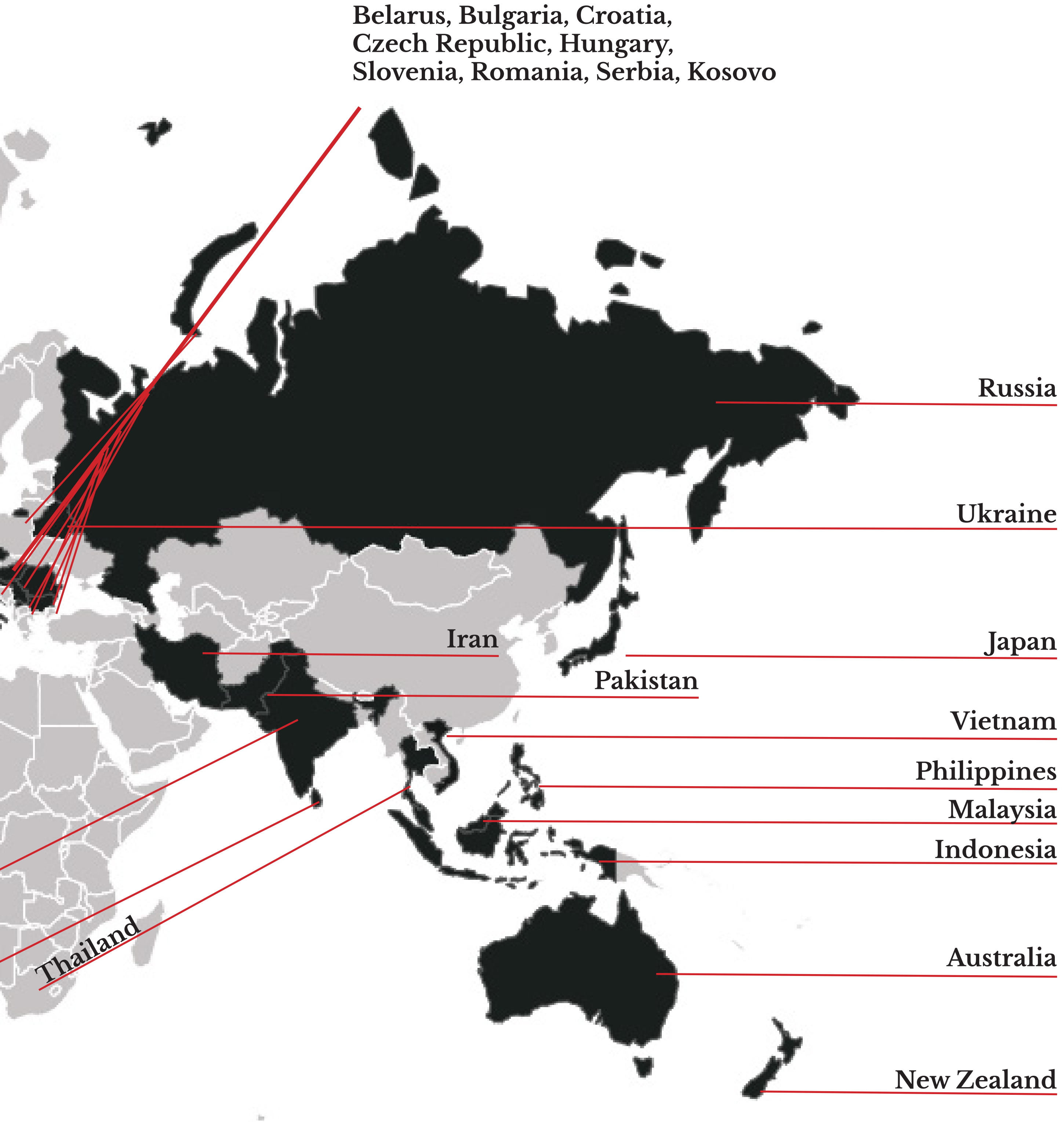
Facebook **groups** are similar to pages in that they are "owned" and moderated by a controlled set of admins, but they're designed in a way that usually allows any member to project their voice by posting to all other members of the group. Admins can relax settings so that it's a free-for-all, or they can tightly control the group so that posts by members need to be approved before being revealed to the entire group. As they can with a page, group admins are able to set the tone of the conversation within a group, as well as censor or hide whatever content or comments don't serve their purpose.

There are three different group types: public, closed, and secret, and admins can control privacy settings for the group to the various levels — which presents specific challenges to independent investigators that are not associated with the Facebook pages.

A "closed Facebook group" is a group that reveals posts only to Facebook users whom the admins allow to enter the group. Unlike with Facebook pages, where admins tightly control what appears, Facebook groups are designed around the idea of community-led discussion, which allows any member to post publicly. Admins and moderators, though, can delete posts and comments within the group, shaping discussions as they see fit.

APPENDIX 2: Foreign Admins' Countries of Origin




Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia,
Czech Republic, Hungary,
Slovenia, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo
Russia
Ukraine
Iran
Japan
Pakistan
Vietnam
Philippines
Malaysia
Indonesia
Thailand
Australia
New Zealand

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Kristofer Goldsmith joined the Policy & Government Affairs team at Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) in May 2016. In his role, he advises members of Congress and the administration on the implementation of policy regarding post-9/11 American veterans.

Mr. Goldsmith was born in New York and joined the Army to serve as a forward observer with the Army's Third Infantry Division shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He deployed with Alpha Company of the Third Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for the year of 2005.

Since separating from the Army with a General Discharge after surviving a PTSD-related suicide attempt, Mr. Goldsmith has become an advocate for veterans with PTSD and those with less-than-honorable discharges.

As a disabled student veteran using the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation program, Mr. Goldsmith found an opportunity both to recover from PTSD and to continue serving his fellow veterans. At Nassau Community College (NCC), he established a million-dollar veteran-resource facility, which serves as a center for hundreds of student veterans. After two years as president of NCC's Student Veterans of America chapter, he transferred to Columbia University's School of General Studies to pursue a bachelor's degree in political science.

Mr. Goldsmith is the founder and president of High Ground Veterans Advocacy, a 501c3 not-for-profit, which partners with military and veterans service organizations to train veterans to become grassroots advocates and leaders in their local communities. High Ground Veterans Advocacy was recognized in 2016 by HillVets as one of the nation's top new veterans organizations.

Since 2017, Mr. Goldsmith has been investigating foreign entities that target troops, veterans, and their families online. He believes it is the responsibility of today's young veterans to keep the motto of VVA alive: *"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."*

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I would like to thank the Policy & Government Affairs and Communications teams, the board of directors, and the officers at VVA. Thank you for your mentorship, the long leash, and letting me think outside the box.

To the journalists who have remained focused on protecting the American public from foreign interference, as well as those who are dedicated to the veterans' beat — and especially to those doing both — you have my unending gratitude. There's a reason that the press is the only profession that is explicitly protected in the Bill of Rights. Your work is a critical element of democracy, both American and abroad. So thank you for shining a light for justice to follow in even the darkest of times.

Professors Judith Russell and John Sivolella of Columbia University: Thank you for designing your undergraduate classes so that students can engage in work that we are passionate about and pursue projects that matter far beyond the classroom.

To this report's copy-editor, Carolyn Waldron, for the thousands of tweaks, corrections, and questions that made me and this report make sense; and to our designer, Kate Raley, who breathed beautiful life into the physical and digital representation of two years of research — I am beyond grateful to be affiliated with your work. It has been an absolute honor to collaborate with such incredibly talented women.

For the friends and colleagues in the service organizations supporting the military, veterans, and their families, who continue to serve their country long after leaving the base or ship for the last time — I am thankful for your dedication to ensuring that no one from our community is ever left behind.

I have a tremendous debt of gratitude for the congressional staff, who have dedicated themselves to serving Americans — and who are underpaid, work long hours, and are short on personnel. To the handful that read this far into the report, let me know, and I'll buy you a beer.

To all of my friends in the Truman National Security Project community, especially Kate Monson, Welton Chang, and Mark Jacobson. Kate — it's been wonderful (but also incredibly stressful) to have a partner with whom I could compile all of the daily news stories related to foreign interference in our democracy and which will one day be distilled to a few pages in the history books. Welton — thanks to you and your team for doing the deep-dive into the technical data that's far too complex and voluminous for me to comprehend on my own. I look forward to you sharing your research into the Twitter bot network. Mark — thanks for letting me know I was on the right track. That coffee came at just the right time.

My first mentor, Chuck Cutolo. Thank you for showing me how to go from the frustrating situation of seeing injustice and thinking "there oughta be a law!" — to developing a policy strategy — to seeing the President sign a bill with my fingerprints on it.

The women behind Advocates Against Romance Scams and Scam Stoppers, who dedicate their free time to fighting against trolls who steal the identities of American troops.

To Lisa Kaplan, founder of Althea Group, for being a sounding board as we dig through and destroy disinformation.

And finally — thank you to the researchers at the Computational Propaganda Research Project at the University of Oxford, Graphika, and New Knowledge for your invaluable research into the targeting of MilVets with propaganda and disinformation campaigns, and for pointing me in the right direction.

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