

Big Tech’s History Of Lying To Congress

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Big Tech

2018: Senate Intelligence Committee Report Concluded That Social Media Companies Including Facebook, Twitter & Google “Misrepresented Or Evaded” In Statements To Congress About Russian Influence

Senate Intelligence Committee Report Found Facebook, Twitter And Google “Misrepresented” And “Evaded” In Statements To Congress On Russian Interference In U.S. Elections Using Their Platforms And Failed To Turn Over Complete Data. “The tech companies’ foot-dragging was described in a pair of reports that the Senate Intelligence Committee published on Monday, in what were the most detailed accounts to date about how Russian agents have wielded social media against Americans in recent years. In the reports, Google, Twitter and Facebook (which also owns Instagram) were described by researchers as having “evaded” and “misrepresented” themselves and the extent of Russian activity on their sites. The companies were also criticized for not turning over complete sets of data about Russian manipulation to the Senate.” [New York Times, [12/17/18](#)]

Headline: New York Times: “Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Withheld Russia Data, Reports Say.” [New York Times, [12/17/18](#)]

Headline: New York Times: “Did Big Tech Lie to Congress About Russian Interference?” [New York Times, [12/18/18](#)]

Google’s Chief Legal Counsel May Have Provided Misleading Testimony To Congress On Whether Videos Made By Kremlin-Backed IRA Were Targeted At Particular Audiences.

“The reports were especially critical of Google, whose YouTube site hosted 1,100 videos made by the Kremlin-backed Internet Research Agency. The reports said Google had not only provided incomplete information about these videos, but one report accused Kent Walker, the company’s chief legal officer, of giving misleading testimony to Congress this year about whether those videos were targeted at a particular audience.” [New York Times, [12/17/18](#)]

Headline: Bloomberg: “Researchers Call Out Google For Limiting Data In Russia Report.” [Bloomberg, [12/17/18](#)]

Facebook

2021: Facebook Exec Claimed No Internal Concealment Of Docs – Later Reporting Showed Facebook Locking Down Internal Message Boards

September 2021: Facebook’s Global Head Of Safety Testified That Facebook Hadn’t Shut Down Internal Access To Documents & Pledged To Inform Blumenthal If It Did. “He also accused Antigone Davis, Facebook’s global head of safety who testified the week before Haugen’s Senate appearance, of appearing to provide “false or inaccurate testimony to me regarding attempts to internally conceal its research.” Davis testified that her understanding was that Facebook hasn’t shut down internal access to documents and that she would follow up with his office if that changed. But Blumenthal pointed to a New York Times article published after her testimony saying that Facebook had done just that in the weeks following her statements.” [CNBC, [10/20/21](#)]

Two Weeks Later, NYT Reported That Facebook Was Locking Down Internal Messaging Boards To Combat Leaks. “Facebook told employees on Tuesday that it was making some of its internal online discussion groups private, in an effort to minimize leaks. Many Facebook employees join online discussion groups on Workplace, an internal message board that workers use to communicate and collaborate with one another. In the announcement on Tuesday, the company said it was making some groups focused on platform safety and protecting elections, an area known broadly as “integrity,” private instead of public within the company, limiting who can view and participate in the discussion threads.” [New York Times, [10/13/21](#)]

2021: Blumenthal: Facebook Provided “Clearly Evasive And Misleading Answers” On Teen Mental Health And Platform Addiction

Blumenthal: “Facebook Provided Clearly Evasive And Misleading Answers” To Congress On Teen Mental Health And Platform Addiction. “Blumenthal accused Facebook of being evasive with him, his colleagues, and the public in regards to information about teen mental health and platform addiction. “When I sought specific information about Instagram and teens in an August letter, Facebook provided clearly evasive and misleading answers that have now been directly disputed by Ms. Haugen,” Blumenthal wrote.” [CNBC, [10/20/21](#)]

2019: Facebook Forced To Clarify Remarks Zuckerberg Made During Congressional Testimony That Falsely Suggested Company Conducted Fact Checks On Political Ads

Zuckerberg Suggested Under Questioning From Rep. Maxine Waters That Facebook Used Third Party Fact Checkers To Evaluate Political Ads It Hosted. "On Wednesday, in response to questions from House Financial Services Chair Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles, Zuckerberg seemed to suggest Facebook did use third-party fact-checkers to verify political ads. He contradicted himself moments later, saying the company did not want to get involved in verifying the truth of political claims. "Somebody fact-checks on ads? You contract with someone to do that. Is that right?" Waters asked Zuckerberg. "Yes," he replied."
[Associated Press, 10/25/19]

Facebook Issued Statement The Next Day Clarifying Its Policy To Not Fact Check Ads From Candidates, Only Political Advocacy Ads. "Facebook on Thursday sought to set the record straight, noting that while it will not fact-check political ads from candidates, it does evaluate the accuracy of political ads from political advocacy groups or political action committees. "In a democracy, people should decide what is credible, not tech companies," the company wrote in a statement emailed to the Associated Press on Thursday. "That's why - like other Internet platforms and broadcasters - we don't fact-check ads from politicians."
[Associated Press, 10/25/19]

Headline: Associated Press: "Facebook clarifies CEO's remarks on political ads Zuckerberg's congressional testimony left confusion." [Associated Press, 10/25/19]

Zuckerberg Made "Misleading Comments" In Testimony To Congress That Facebook Didn't Choose Daily Caller Subsidiary As One Of Its Independent Fact Checkers. "During his exchange with Ocasio-Cortez, Zuckerberg also made misleading comments about the company's reliance on third-party fact-checkers to evaluate false news stories posted to the site. Ocasio-Cortez asked Zuckerberg why Facebook had made the conservative publication The Daily Caller one of its third-party fact-checkers. In actuality, the fact-checking company is Check Your Fact, a subsidiary of The Daily Caller. The Daily Caller was founded by Fox News Channel host Tucker Carlson, who has been criticized for declaring white supremacy a "hoax." "We actually don't appoint the independent fact-checkers," Zuckerberg said in a response. "They go through an independent organization that has a rigorous standard for who they allow to serve as a fact-checker."
[Associated Press, 10/25/19]

Independent Fact Checking Organization Confirmed That Facebook Had Final Say Over Which Fact Checkers It Used. "Not so, said Baybars Orsek, who directs that organization, the International Fact-Checking Network at the St. Petersburg, Fla.-based Poynter Institute. "It is a misrepresentation of the program," he said, explaining that his network works to certify fact-checking organizations, including Check Your Fact. Facebook requires its fact-checkers to be network certified but has the final say on which fact-checkers it works with. "They make their decisions based on their priorities," he said. "We do not appoint fact checkers to work with Facebook."
[Associated Press, 10/25/19]

2018: Zuckerberg Misled Congress On Users' "Complete Control" Of Data – Facebook Established Partnerships That Gave Third Parties "Deep Access" To Users' And Their Friends' Data

June 2018: Rep. Cicilline Indicated Zuckerberg Lied To Congress Over User Control Of Access To Their Data. “David Cicilline, the ranking member of the House Judiciary antitrust subcommittee, took aim at Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg on Twitter Sunday following a New York Times report detailing the social network’s data sharing practices. “Sure looks like Zuckerberg lied to Congress about whether users have ‘complete control’ over who sees our data on Facebook,” he said. “This needs to be investigated and the people responsible need to be held accountable.”” [Yahoo Finance, [6/4/18](#)]

Zuckerberg Told Congress In March 2018 That Users Had “Complete Control” Over Who Saw Their Data On Facebook. “In a tense appearance before Congress in March, Facebook’s chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, emphasized what he said was a company priority for Facebook users. “Every piece of content that you share on Facebook you own,” he testified. “You have complete control over who sees it and how you share it.”” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

New York Times Report Indicated Facebook Made Data-Sharing Partnerships With At Least 60 Device Makers Which Allowed Partners To Access Data Of Users’ Friends Without Consent. “Facebook has reached data-sharing partnerships with at least 60 device makers — including Apple, Amazon, BlackBerry, Microsoft and Samsung — over the last decade, starting before Facebook apps were widely available on smartphones, company officials said. The deals allowed Facebook to expand its reach and let device makers offer customers popular features of the social network, such as messaging, “like” buttons and address books. But the partnerships, whose scope has not previously been reported, raise concerns about the company’s privacy protections and compliance with a 2011 consent decree with the Federal Trade Commission. Facebook allowed the device companies access to the data of users’ friends without their explicit consent, even after declaring that it would no longer share such information with outsiders. Some device makers could retrieve personal information even from users’ friends who believed they had barred any sharing, The New York Times found.” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

Headline: New York Times: “Facebook Gave Device Makers Deep Access to Data on Users and Friends.” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

Former Facebook Employee Confirmed Practice Was Flagged Internally And “Appears To Contradict Facebook’s Testimony To Congress.” “But the device partnerships provoked discussion even within Facebook as early as 2012, according to Sandy Parakilas, who at the time led third-party advertising and privacy compliance for Facebook’s platform. “This was flagged internally as a privacy issue,” said Mr. Parakilas, who left Facebook that year and has recently emerged as a harsh critic of the company. “It is shocking that this practice may still continue six years later, and it appears to contradict Facebook’s testimony to Congress that all friend permissions were disabled.”” [New York Times, [6/3/18](#)]

Los Angeles Times: “Report Raised Questions About Whether Zuckerberg Misled Congress In Testimony This Year.” “The report raised questions about whether Zuckerberg misled Congress in testimony this year, and whether the company was in violation of its decree with the Federal Trade Commission requiring it to obtain consent from users about how their information is shared.” [Los Angeles Times, [6/5/18](#)]

2019-2021: Amazon Testified To Congress That Company Did Not Use Seller Data To Compete With Its Own Brand – 2021 Investigations Found Amazon Systemically Used Seller Data To Boost Its Own Products

Bipartisan Group Of House Lawmakers Threatened Amazon With Federal Criminal Referral For Execs Providing Misleading Testimony On Company's Use Of Third-Party Seller Data. "Members of a congressional panel questioned Monday whether Amazon executives misled them during sworn testimony, giving the company two weeks to provide documentation supporting their statements or potentially face a criminal referral. In a letter addressed to chief executive Andy Jassy, lawmakers asked Amazon for "exculpatory evidence" to corroborate testimony its executives, including founder Jeff Bezos, provided to the House Judiciary Committee's antitrust panel regarding its use of data from third-party sellers and its search-engine rankings. Otherwise, they said, the matter may be referred to the Justice Department for criminal investigation." [Washington Post, [10/18/21](#)]

Headline: Washington Post: "Lawmakers: Amazon 'may have lied to Congress' about its business practices." [Washington Post, [10/18/21](#)]

October 2021 Investigations Found That Amazon Systemically Used Seller Data To Launch Its Own Branded Products And Boosted Its Own Products In Its Search Engine. "According to recent investigations by the Reuters news agency and the Markup, a data journalism nonprofit, Amazon has systematically used data it collects from third-party sellers to launch copycat products and has given its own goods a leg up against competitors on its search engine, practices the company has testified to Congress it does not engage in or are against its policies." [Washington Post, [10/18/21](#)]

Headline: Reuters: "Amazon copied products and rigged search results to promote its own brands, documents show." [Reuters, [10/13/21](#)]

Reuters Investigation Revealed Amazon Private Brands Team Exploited Internal Data To Replicate Products And Rigged Search Engine Results. "But thousands of pages of internal Amazon documents examined by Reuters – including emails, strategy papers and business plans – show the company ran a systematic campaign of creating knockoffs and manipulating search results to boost its own product lines in India, one of the company's largest growth markets. The documents reveal how Amazon's private-brands team in India secretly exploited internal data from Amazon.in to copy products sold by other companies, and then offered them on its platform. The employees also stoked sales of Amazon private-brand products by rigging Amazon's search results so that the company's products would appear, as one 2016 strategy report for India put it, "in the first 2 or three ... search results" when customers were shopping on Amazon.in." [Reuters, [10/13/21](#)]

Amazon Lawyer Testified To House Judiciary Committee In 2019 That Amazon Did Not Use Seller Data To Compete With Its Own Branded Products. "Last year, House Judiciary leaders questioned whether Amazon Associate General Counsel Nate Sutton misled Congress on the matter during a 2019 hearing, when he testified that the company does "not use any seller data ... to compete," nor "use any of that specific seller data in creating our own private-brand products." Sutton also testified that Amazon's search engine uses the "same criteria" to determine which products to surface to users." [Washington Post, [10/18/21](#)]

Headline: Bloomberg Law: “Amazon Testimony May Have Been Untruthful, Top Democrat Says.” [Bloomberg Law, [7/23/19](#)]

Headline: The Independent: “Possibly criminally false or perjurious': Congress wants Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to testify about alleged predatory business practices.” [The Independent, [5/1/20](#)]

Headline: Politico: “Democrats demand answers on whether Amazon 'lied' about data tactics.” [Politico, [4/23/20](#)]

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos Testified In July 2020 That Company Had A Policy Against Using Seller Data To Compete But Couldn't “Guarantee” It Had Never Been Violated. “The lawmakers demanded that then-CEO Bezos testify about the issue and threatened to issue a subpoena. He voluntarily testified at a blockbuster hearing alongside the CEOs of Facebook, Google and Apple in July 2020. When lawmakers pressed Bezos on Amazon's handling of user data at the hearing, the tech mogul said that while the company does have a policy “against using seller-specific data to aid our private-label business,” he couldn't “guarantee” that it has never been violated. Still, the two sides staved off a major legal confrontation over the matter at the time.” [Washington Post, [10/18/21](#)]

Google

2021: Google May Have Attempted To Interfere In Congressional Testimony Of Partner Company Match Group

Sens. Klobuchar & Lee: “Deeply Troubled By Match Group's Claims That Google May Have Attempted To Influence Another Witness's Testimony.” “In the letter addressed to White, subcommittee Chair Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and ranking member Mike Lee, R-Utah, asked for details of the alleged call, including the names of those on the call and what they said. “We are deeply troubled by Match Group's claims that Google may have attempted to influence another witness's testimony,” they wrote. “Any efforts to retaliate against those who speak up about public policy issues or possible legal violations are unacceptable, especially by dominant companies that have the power to destroy the business of a whistle-blower.” As they plan further hearings on competition matters, the senators wrote, “Witness intimidation in any form will not be tolerated.”” [CNBC, [4/27/21](#)]

Headline: CNBC: “Senators ask Google about phone call to Match on day before testimony.” [CNBC, [4/27/21](#)]

Lawyer For Match Group Testified That Google Employees Called Him After His Opening Testimony Became Public, One Day Before He Was To Appear In Front Of Congress. “Match's chief legal officer, Jared Sine, told senators during last week's hearing that employees at Google called Match after Sine's opening testimony became public. Sine said they asked why his testimony differed from Match's comments on its last earnings call, where executives said they believed they were having productive conversations about Google's 30% fee for in-app payments through its app store. In the testimony, Sine complained Google had made “false pretenses of an open platform.”” [CNBC, [4/27/21](#)]

2012: Google Testified To Congress That Data Collection Via Street View Project Was Unintentional – FCC Report On Issue Found It Was A Deliberate Act

Headline: The Hill: “Lawmakers question whether Google misled Congress on data collection.” [The Hill, [5/24/12](#)]

Google Officials Testified To Congress That Company “Mistakenly” Collected Data From Unprotected Wi-Fi Networks Through Its Street View Project Cars And Never Used It.

“From 2007 to 2010, Google cars collected data from unprotected Wi-Fi networks as they drove through neighborhoods taking pictures for the company's Google Maps Street View project. The data included Internet activity, passwords and other personal information. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Justice Department investigated the incident and concluded that Google did not violate wiretapping laws. In their letter, Pallone and Barrow noted that Google officials had said, including in testimony before Congress, that the company had "mistakenly" collected the data and never used it.” [The Hill, [5/24/12](#)]

FCC Report Found That Google’s Data Collection From Unprotected Networks Was Deliberate. “But the FCC's report on the issue indicated that the data collection was the deliberate act of a sole Google engineer who did access the personal information.” [The Hill, [5/24/12](#)]