



Secret Service Investigates Facebook Poll

FOX News reported on September 28 that the U.S. Secret Service is investigating a poll posted on the Facebook website that posed the shockingly reprehensible question: "Should Obama be killed?"

FOX News noted that, within the poll format, the answer choices were "no," "maybe," "yes," and "yes if he cuts my health care." Facebook spokesman Barry Schnitt stated that a "third-party application" enabled a Facebook user to create what Schnitt called an "offensive poll." The poll was posted on September 26, but was taken down as soon as Facebook became aware of it.



"The application was immediately suspended while the inappropriate content could be removed by the developer and until such time as the developer institutes better procedures to monitor their user-generated content," Schnitt declared in a statement to Fox News. Schnitt also said Facebook will cooperate with the Secret Service investigation.

According to Edwin Donovan, a Secret Service spokesman, the agency is taking "appropriate investigative steps" related to the poll. "We are continuing our investigation," Donovan told FOX News, but he declined to elaborate.

Bob Beckel, a strategist for the Democratic Party and contributor to FOX News, called for the individual responsible to suffer the full consequences that the law allows: "This is the kind of garbage that's generated from the extreme right against Obama, and it's going way over the line," Beckel told FOX News. "It's got to be stopped. Find him, prosecute him and put him in jail."

Beckel called such threats "un-American" and intolerable: "If they don't like what Obama is doing, then maybe they ought to go out and vote for someone else. But relying on this kind of attack is un-American and unacceptable."

Beckel is right that what amounts to a call for the assassination of the President of the United States deserves condemnation. During the current heated debate on healthcare, strong feelings are to be expected, but murder is not among the options for mature, responsible, sane adults.

Yet it is also necessary to be mature, responsible, and sane in evaluating the impact of such an anti-Obama poll. Beckel is quick to condemn the "extreme right," but they may not even be responsible for the poll. A rebellious teenager may have thought such a poll would gain him some notoriety. A foreign government or terrorist-related group may have used healthcare as a cover to call for Obama's assassination, knowing that someone, somewhere in America might be mentally unstable enough to answer this call even though he would never join a jihad.

Since the backlash against such a poll can only serve to silence critics of the President and stifle genuine debate on healthcare, it must be noted that the "extreme left" has the most to benefit from this whole situation. It is not inconceivable that the poll could have been posted to make critics of Obama's



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healthcare reform proposals look bad. The Internet allows for such anonymous ways to make your opposition look bad by impersonating them.

One final consideration is that Communist China recently enacted an Internet regulation requiring users to supply their real names and ID numbers when logging in and posting on Chinese news sites. Hopefully this incident will not spark a call for similar repressive measures here in the United States.



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