The Pentagon Wants You to Spend Lots of Time on Facebook

While Cornell University continues denying that it received any money from the Pentagon to pay for its study of emotional manipulation on Facebook, turns out that it is taking Defense Department dollars to conduct similar studies.

According to a story published online by *The Atlantic*, the Pentagon is paying Cornell researchers to conduct "analysis of social network posts for "sentiment," i.e. how people are feeling, in the hopes of identifying social "tipping points."

The list of "tipping points" on the website for the Pentagon's Minerva Initiative includes "the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the 2011 Russian Duma elections, the 2012 Nigerian fuel subsidy crisis and the 2013 Gazi park protests in Turkey."

Why is the military so interested in identifying these tipping points? The Minerva Initiative website offers this explanation:

> The Department of Defense is interested in innovative frameworks and new data that may assist policymakers in developing improved methods for anticipating and identifying potential areas of unrest, instability, and conflict. Insights may inform strategic thinking about resource allocation for defense efforts and humanitarian aid as well as insights for national policy and engagement with both state and non-state actors....

For those unfamiliar with the globalist jargon, "non-state actors" are individuals and groups not associated with official governments. In other words: you and I.

It isn't difficult to see how the Defense Department would be able to target potential rebels for special social media surveillance. How often have you posted anti-administration memes or messages to your various social media accounts? If you have, then you are now a non-state actor that could be identified as a "potential area of unrest, instability, and conflict."

Congratulations.

A quick review of the information available on that website reveals a chilling effort by the U.S. military to learn precise methods of using social media to manipulate the emotions of people around the world, knowing just when to deploy troops to quell potential uprisings.

For example, the military wants scientists to study "group identifiers" that will help it learn when users might move from simple belief in something to mobilizing in defense of that thing.

Another current study funded by the military as part of its Minerva Initiative looks at what social media posts can reveal about a person's stability and resistance to rebellion.

There is even an element of the study that highlights the ways international armed forces might be used

to deter civil unrest. Under the section marked "Beyond conventional deterrence," the Minerva Initiative website explains, "The objective of this research track is to offer new theories, models, and approaches to escalation and deterrence theory that incorporate strategic behavior among international actors across new and traditional geographic domains."

In other words, if the military determines that a rebellion is growing beyond its ability to contain, it will have information on how to use "international actors" in the armed quashing of the disturbance.

Despite the discovery of these Manchurian Candidate-style Defense Department-funded Facebook experiments, users don't seem to be fleeing from the social media behemoth. The latest data show that Facebook has over 1.23 billion monthly active users, 945 million mobile users, and 757 million daily users. That's a huge number of potential subjects.

Just how badly does the military want to keep you in that pool of involuntary participants in psychological studies? *The Atlantic* reports:

> Defense One recently caught up with Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency who said the U.S. military has "completely revamped" the way it collects intelligence around the existence of large, openly available data sources and especially social media like Facebook. "The information that we're able to extract form social media—it's giving us insights that frankly we never had before," he said.

> In other words, the head of one of the biggest U.S. military intelligence agencies needs you on Facebook.

> "Just over a decade ago, when I was a senior intelligence officer, I spent most of my time in the world of 'ints'—signals intelligence imagery, human intelligence—and used just a little bit of open-source information to enrich the assessments that we made. Fast forward to 2014 and the explosion of the information environment in just the last few years alone. Open-source now is a place I spend most of my time. The open world of information provides us most of what we need and the 'ints' of old, they enrich the assessments that we're able to make from open-source information."

How much of the money "legally" plundered from American taxpayers is funneled into university coffers to pay for this creepy research? Again, from *The Atlantic*, "The military will be spending an increasing amount of the $50 billion intelligence budget on private contractors to perform open-source intelligence gathering and analysis, according to Flynn. That's evidenced by the rise in companies eager to provide those services."

Finally, lest you think by getting off Facebook and Twitter you are safe from being unwittingly recruited into one of these experiments, consider this additional information in *The Atlantic* story:

> Many of the groups doing this sort of work on behalf of the government are small outfits you probably have never heard of. And ideally, you never would.

> One of them is a company out of Austin, Texas, called SnapTrends, founded in 2012. They provide a "social listening" service that analyzes posts to provide insights about the circumstances of the poster, one ~~of~~ the most important of which is the poster's location. The company uses cell tower density, social network knowhow, and various other elements to figure out who is posting what and where. Are you someone who refuses to geo-tag your tweets out of concerns for privacy? Do you turn off your phone's GPS receiving capability to stay under the proverbial radar? It doesn't matter to SnapTrends.

Besides, given the never-ending supply of funds being plundered from the American people to pay for these studies, any mass defection from Facebook or Twitter to some other platform would just signal to the military where to find the next group of guinea pigs.

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