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Subject: If Congress wants war on Syria, maybe they should act. After all, that is their job

Maybe those wanting the President to act should take a look at the Constitution



The Power Beat Daily

All The News That Doesn't Fit the Page

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Cartoon: Golden Gate

California opens the gates to illegal immigration.

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Americans for Limited Government President Rick Manning: "It is beyond comprehension how Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein would have allowed the U.S. Attorney in Manhattan and the FBI based in Manhattan to become pawns in Mueller's Constitution-destroying game. Rod Rosenstein should not still have a job by the end of this week. This prosecutorial insanity has to end."

Hans A. von Spakovsky: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg should answer these questions when he testifies before Congress

“When Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before Congress Tuesday and Wednesday he will have plenty of explaining to do to answer a torrent of criticism that has been leveled at his company in recent weeks. We’ve compiled a list of 10 of the most important questions we think lawmakers should ask Zuckerberg when he is scheduled to testify at a joint meeting of the Senate Judiciary and Commerce Committees on Tuesday and then before the House Commerce and Energy Committee on Wednesday.”

If Congress wants action on Syria, maybe they should act. After all, that is their job.



By Printus LeBlanc

On April 3, President Donald Trump told the nation he was considering pulling U.S. troops out of Syria after Islamic State was defeated, as the President campaigned on not getting the U.S. into unnecessary foreign wars.

"As far as Syria is concerned, our primary mission in terms of that was getting rid of ISIS. We've almost completed that task, and we'll be making a decision very quickly in coordination with others as to what we'll do... I want to get out. I want to bring our troops home," Trump said.

This angered many in D.C. as they were hoping for an open-ended conflict and regime change. Then, according to reports, the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against its population again. Before the bodies were even cold, D.C. was blaming the President for the Assad attack and calling for him to take action against the regime. Maybe those wanting the President to act should take a look at the Constitution.

Congress and only Congress has the power to declare war. Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution states: "The Congress shall have power... To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water." Seems clear, only Congress can declare war.

This begs the question, why are members of Congress asking the President to go to war with Syria, for which there is no authorization, without doing its constitutionally mandated job? A search on Congress.gov shows there is no bill calling for war to be declared on Syria or the regime of Bashar al-Assad. A few bills calling for going after Islamic State in Syria, but conducting regime change in Damascus. Not one Member of Congress, from either side of the aisle, complaining about the President's possible withdraw from Syria, has introduced legislation making regime change legal. If you believe in the mission so much, shouldn't you put your money your mouth is?

An argument can be made the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) covered the President's actions against Islamic State. The AUMF authorized the use of the military by the President to pursue terrorist organizations that planned authorized, committed, or aided the group that carried out 9/11. ISIS is a terrorist group split off from al-Qaeda, the group responsible from the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

But, the Assad regime is not part of ISIS. Yes, the Assad regime is led by horrible war criminals who deserve to die, but there is no authorization to remove them, or permanently station troops in Syria. If certain Senators believe the U.S. military should depose Assad or keep bases in Syria, they should introduce legislation stating as much.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) agrees, and just today stated, "The use of chemical weapons absolutely requires a response from the United States," Sen. Lee said. "But if that response is going to include military force, the President of the United States should come to Congress and ask for authorization before military force is used." Lee is right. There is no such authorization. Congress would have to pass one.

Not only are some Members of Congress asking the President to go to war without doing its constitutionally mandated job, they are asking the President to send the military to war after spending almost a decade destroying the military. The U.S. military is in tatters and it is a direct result of Congress.

The mainstream media might not be paying attention, but the U.S. military has had a rash of aviation crashes. In the last three weeks alone, six crashes have led to 16 deaths. From fiscal year 2013 through 2017 at least 133 members of the military were killed in aviation mishaps, according to Military Times. To give an idea of how high that number is, the U.S. military lost 278 members in Afghanistan in the same time frame.

Air Force Gen. Herbert Carlisle, former head of Air Combat Command, blamed the rise in mishaps and deaths on severe defense cuts. When talking to the Military Times Carlisle stated, “We are reaping the benefits — or the tragedies — that we got into back in sequestration.” Carlisle continued about the cuts discussing the increase in accidents stating it was “actually a lagging indicator. By the time you’re having accidents, and the accident rates are increasing, then you’ve already gone down a path.”

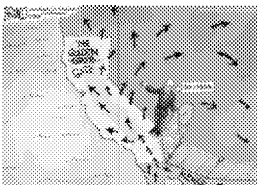
Passing one budget, six months late mind you, does not fix the problem. It will take the military years to get out of the hole Congress dug for them. Pilots need to increase training to make up for missed flight hours. It takes time to manufacture the needed aircraft parts, and it takes an inordinate amount of time to refit, repair, and build new navy ships. Just because you gave them the money to fix what you broke, that doesn’t mean it is magically fixed.

Congress, you cannot have it both ways. You do not get to complain the President is not going to war when it is your duty to declare war. You do not get to underfund the military, leaving readiness levels dangerously low, while trying to send our men and women into combat poorly trained with subpar equipment. Congress should try doing its job first. There is nothing worse than someone complaining about the job someone else is doing, a job they want, when they are failing at their job.

Printus LeBlanc is a contributing editor at Americans for Limited Government.

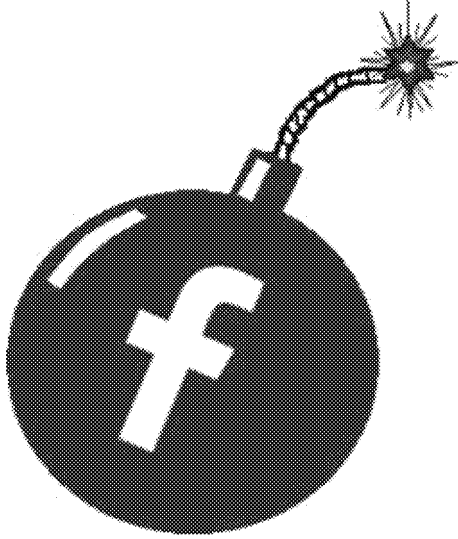
Cartoon: Golden Gate

By A.F. Branco



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Facebook faces attack for not being anti-conservative enough



By Robert Romano

Diamond and Silk, two pro-Trump commentators, have scored a significant concession from Facebook after the social media site labeled their videos “unsafe to the community.” The pair say their social media traffic was doing great but that suddenly it had been throttled in recent months, with many users no longer able to see the pair’s content on their newsfeeds.

After months of attempting to reach out to the social media giant, they finally received a reply, stating that their content had been deemed “unsafe,” causing the video creators, Lynnette "Diamond" Hardaway and Rochelle "Silk" Richardson, to come forward. But Facebook may finally be changing its tune.

A Facebook spokesperson told Fox News, “We are aware of this issue. We are reaching out to the creators of Diamond & Silk to try and resolve this matter.” That was after the pair appeared on Fox to raise the alarm bell over the throttling.

The concession stands in stark contrast to how Facebook dealt with its labeling Breitbart.com with a Wikipedia description that it is a “far-right” news outlet that is “intentionally misleading,” a description that now appears on every post Breitbart puts on Facebook like a scarlet letter. It has no resemblance to reality. Breitbart is fairly mainstream publication where conservatives can go to get news. One might disagree with what they put out there, but they are accountable to facts and have a thorough editorial process. Yes, it publishes opinion pieces, but those are held to similar standards and there isn’t a newspaper that doesn’t have editorials. They have done nothing to be labeled political extremists by Facebook, but there it is.

In the meantime, Facebook hosts pages for Antifa groups all over the world, a group whose stated tactic is to commit political violence against its opponents. They bear no such moniker as “violent” or “unsafe” or even “far-left” even as the group is under active criminal investigation for its many attacks.

There is absolutely a double-standard at Facebook. Looking elsewhere, just look at how it has handled fallout from Cambridge Analytica, which was accused of “harvesting” data from Facebook users to support President Donald Trump’s campaign in 2016, as if that was unusual.

In truth, as expertly reported by Chris Kavanagh at Medium.com, Cambridge developed an app, a personality quiz, that took advantage of a Facebook feature that allowed app developers to also get

information on the friends of people who downloaded the app. It was called “friends permission.” Thousands of app developers were using it without much controversy for years.

Facebook eventually discontinued the practice in 2015 but by then, the firms that had already gathered data would have retained it.

But it was not much different than the way websites use advertiser cookies to gather data on website visitors. Some sites will even refuse to serve up the content unless you switch off your ad-blocker. That’s because they are gathering data for ad purposes. They are able to customize that data when advertisers purchase ads on their sites that can target based on user interests, say, what stories you read, the same exact thing Facebook does, and arguably with far less transparency.

So why is Facebook being targeted for something app developers were allowed to and even encouraged to do for years as a part of the social media company’s API and is increasingly common on websites across the Internet, not just Facebook?

And why has Facebook done such a poor job of defending itself against what appears to be a scurrilous attack?

The outward appearance is that the only reason Facebook is being targeted with potential regulatory action is because data was supposedly used to help President Trump win the election. But who cares? That’s not a crime.

Similarly, here are thousands of apps made for Facebook that gather and are still gathering data.

In the meantime, that data is used by all political actors. Right now, it’s easy-peasy to just buy an ad and target it to whoever you want. You don’t need an app. Want to target Donald Trump supporters on Facebook in 10 states? No problem. Just buy an ad and target it to followers of the President’s page. Want to go at Bernie Sanders supporters instead? Sure.

That’s just the basic functionality of its ads manager, and there’s nothing wrong with it. In fact, followers of non-political pages can be targeted with political ads. They never “signed up” for political ads, but there is not a dimension or characteristic that cannot be targeted with an ad. For example, want to target Millennials who like Apple with a message about tech policy? Go for it.

Carol Davidsen, one-time Director of Integration & Media Targeting at Obama for America, [tweeted in March how Facebook allowed the 2012 Obama campaign to do things with its data that no one else would have been allowed to](#): “Facebook was surprised we were able to suck out the whole social graph, but they didn’t stop us once they realized that was what we were doing... They came to office in the days following election recruiting [and] were very candid that they allowed us to do things they wouldn’t have allowed someone else to do because they were on our side.”

Was that an in-kind contribution to the Obama campaign? Even if it was, presuming the campaign actually got access to things nobody else is allowed to access, so far, no allegations have been leveled against the Obama campaign for “harvesting” data. Or that Facebook violated user privacy by using that data to target Obama supporters’ friends.

Because it’s a silly allegation. Everyone who was using Facebook’s API at the time could target friends of users.

In short, the only apparent reason that Facebook is in the regulatory crosshairs is not because its data was used politically — it's always been used politically by Democrats and Republicans — but because Facebook's data was used on behalf of President Trump in 2016.

It's being attacked for not being anti-conservative enough. Not anti-Trump enough.

The data might not have even been any good. The Trump campaign ended up using RNC data for voter identification, not Cambridge. But there you have it. They're Republicans! Get 'em!

And Facebook appears to be capitulating.

A media mob is attempting to bully Facebook into acting even more to shut down conservative pages and groups. Diamond and Silk may be achieving some small yet important concessions right now for their own page, but it is clear that there is a wider effort afoot to censor conservative voices everywhere on social media platforms, not just Facebook, with shadow-banning and other types of throttling.

Facebook must resist that. The reason it has thrived as a platform was because users could generate their own content and promote it. It's a great place to do promotions. But groups that might normally defend Facebook on free market grounds are now silent as the regulators are getting ready to pounce, because they feel they have been treated unfairly by Facebook because of political bias. Now they have no friends.

Facebook would be far better served by acting as a neutral actor politically. It need not filter out politics. Just stop playing favorites. Because at the end of the day, Facebook is an ad company, and in a free market setting on the Internet, there's nothing wrong with targeting ads toward individuals based on characteristics selected by the advertiser.

Robert Romano is the Vice President of Public Policy at Americans for Limited Government.



Rosenstein should be fired after 'inexcusable' FBI raid on Trump personal attorney

April 9, 2018, Fairfax, Va.—Americans for Limited Government President Rick Manning today issued the following statement calling for Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to be fired after the FBI raided the office of President Donald Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen:

"It is inexcusable that Special Counsel Robert Mueller would recommend that President Donald Trump's attorney-client privilege be violated in one more example of the win-at-any-cost attitude by this rogue prosecutor. It is beyond comprehension how Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein would have allowed the U.S. Attorney in Manhattan and the FBI based in Manhattan to become pawns in Mueller's Constitution-destroying game. Rod Rosenstein should not still have a job by the end of this week. This prosecutorial insanity has to end."

To view online: <https://getliberty.org/2018/04/rosenstein-should-be-fired-after-inexcusable-fbi-raid-on-trump-personal-attorney/>



ALG Editor's Note: In the following opinion piece from Fox News, Hans von Spakovsky compiled a list of 10 questions that should be asked of Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg when he testifies before Congress:



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg should answer these questions when he testifies before Congress

By Hans A. von Spakovsky

When Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before Congress Tuesday and Wednesday he will have plenty of explaining to do to answer a torrent of criticism that has been leveled at his company in recent weeks.

We've compiled a list of 10 of the most important questions we think lawmakers should ask Zuckerberg when he is scheduled to testify at a joint meeting of the Senate Judiciary and Commerce Committees on Tuesday and then before the House Commerce and Energy Committee on Wednesday. We list these below – but first, here's some background.

Facebook's handling of its users' personal data has sparked privacy concerns as well as questions about how others – including political campaigns – have used that data.

Zuckerberg was invited to testify before Congress after multiple sources reported that the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica gained access to as many as 87 million Facebook profiles. Cambridge Analytica allegedly used that information improperly after it was hired by the Donald Trump presidential campaign. This raises two questions.

First, what information did Cambridge Analytica acquire and how did it come by that information? Zuckerberg has indicated publicly that he knows the answer to these questions, so Congress should have no trouble sorting that out.

Cambridge Analytica used the information to craft sophisticated, targeted political ads. And that raises the second – and far more interesting – question: Did Cambridge Analytica's actions constitute a novel use of Facebook user information, or is this precisely how the social media company *intends* the data to be used by its paying customers?

What members of Congress and the general public need to keep in mind is that nothing is free. While individuals who use Facebook don't have to pay for it, Facebook makes money – and lots of it – using their information.

Facebook's net income was nearly \$16 billion last year. The company sells advertising to commercial clients seeking to target Facebook users based on profiles derived from those users' online activities.

That very same ability – to identify and reach users most likely to be receptive to a client’s product or service – was valuable not just to the Trump campaign, but also to President Obama’s 2012 re-election effort. Indeed, it was the Obama campaign that pioneered the use of such data to win elections.

In light of this, here are 10 of the most important questions that we suggest lawmakers ask Zuckerberg when he appears before Congress:

1. Mr. Zuckerberg, you recently said: “At Facebook, we are squarely in the camp of the companies that work hard to charge you less and provide a free service that everyone can use.” If users of your platform are not the source of your income, who is?
2. Specifically, what services do you provide to your paying customers and how much access do you give them to the data of Facebook users?
3. How do political campaigns leverage your services, and what are your rules governing campaign-sponsored advertisements and access to individual Facebook user data? What will be the impact of new rules you announced Friday to require people to reveal their identities and verify their location before they are allowed to buy political or “issue” ads?
4. Carol Davidsen, the director of data integration and media analytics for President Obama’s 2012 re-election campaign, said: “Facebook was surprised we were able to suck out the whole social graph, but they didn’t stop us once they realized what we were doing.” She noted that “they (Facebook) were very candid that they allowed us to do things they wouldn’t have allowed someone else to do because *they were on our side*.” Did Facebook, in fact, let the Obama campaign use Facebook data in ways that were outside of the company’s normal and acceptable use standards? If so, why? Who at Facebook made this decision?
5. Did the Mitt Romney presidential campaign receive access to the same information and company expertise provided to the Obama campaign? If not, why not? Who at Facebook made this decision?
6. You and other Facebook executives tell users that “we do not sell your data.” Are you asserting that all marketing and targeting data that is sold to commercial customers is anonymized and generalized so that no individual Facebook user can be specifically targeted or marketed to?
7. Doesn’t the Obama campaign’s use of your information to identify and target individual so-called “persuadables” on Facebook contradict the above claim?
8. Did the way that the Obama campaign used Facebook’s data influence your decision to change your data use policies in 2014? If so, how?
9. Does Facebook now, or has it ever, deliberately collected the content of users’ phone calls and/or messages via any of your company’s applications or services? If so, what have you done with that data?
10. Why have you suggested that the government may need to regulate you and other tech companies? Why don’t you simply adopt the practices you believe are necessary to protect the privacy of your users without requiring government coercion?

Modern technology is changing how we communicate. Those changes bring major advantages, but they also raise serious questions. One of those questions is: How much privacy do users of a social

media platform like Facebook have a right to expect when they post personal information to share with their families, their friends and the world at large?

[Get the full story here.](#)

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