

Facebook approached FBI about Michigan militia six months ago

9 October 2020, by Kurt Wagner and Christian Berthelsen, Bloomberg News



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Facebook Inc. first approached the FBI six months ago about activity on its platform that led to 13 men being charged in Michigan with planning to storm the state capitol and kidnap the governor.

The company alerted the Federal Bureau of Investigation that there were discussions happening on its social network about overthrowing the government and law enforcement, according to a person familiar with the tip who asked not to be identified discussing the confidential probe. The FBI was already investigating a Facebook Group for a Michigan militia, called the Wolverine Watchmen, and the company ultimately removed the group in late June.

Details of the alleged plot were released Thursday by law enforcement.

Facebook confirmed that it worked with the FBI, and said in a statement that it removes content and accounts immediately when they are reported to law enforcement authorities if there is a "credible threat of imminent harm to people or [public safety](#)."

"We proactively reached out and cooperated with the FBI early in this ongoing investigation," a company spokesperson added.

Facebook didn't give further information about the help it provided to [law enforcement](#). The person familiar with the matter said that after Facebook alerted the FBI, the agency began the portion of the investigation into two of the alleged plotters, Michigan resident Adam Fox and Barry Croft of Delaware.

Facebook is often criticized from all sides of the political spectrum for how it polices its own platform. Democrats and civil rights organizations believe the company is too lenient with its rules, and doesn't do enough to fight [hate speech](#) and disinformation on the service. Republicans, including President Donald Trump, have alleged that the company stifles free speech and takes down too many posts.

Dangerous organizations are not allowed on Facebook, but some have thrived there, including the conspiracy group QAnon. On Tuesday, Facebook banned all Groups and Pages linked to QAnon, which has spread conspiracies that a cabal of highly influential celebrities and politicians are running a child sex trafficking ring, and is out to get the president. Facebook previously expanded its policy against violent and dangerous organizations in August to remove more militia groups that celebrate violence, or threaten to use weapons.

A Facebook spokesperson said that the company has blocked a handful of militia groups in Michigan from organizing on its service since August, including groups called the Michigan Liberty Militia and the Michigan Militia Corps, plus a separate group that also uses the name Wolverines.

©2020 Bloomberg News
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

APA citation: Facebook approached FBI about Michigan militia six months ago (2020, October 9) retrieved 5 December 2021 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-10-facebook-approached-fbi-michigan-militia.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.