

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN GOOGLE'S COUNTER-TERROR ADS ALGOS?

Some weeks ago, the government went to Silicon Valley to ask for new ways to counter ISIS' propaganda. We're now seeing the response to that request, with the report that Google will show positive ads when people search for extremist content.

In a new development, Google said it's testing ways to counter extremist propaganda with positive messages on YouTube and in Google search results.

Google executive Anthony House told MPs that taking extremist videos down from YouTube isn't enough, and people searching for that content should be presented with competing narratives:

We should get the bad stuff down, but it's also extremely important that people are able to find good information, that when people are feeling isolated, that when they go online, they find a community of hope, not a community of harm.

There are two programs being tested by Google to make sure the positive messages are seen by people seeking out extremist content: one to make sure the "good" kind of videos are easily found on YouTube; and another to display positive messages when people search for extremist-related terms.

The second program involves giving

grants to nonprofit organizations to use Google AdWords to display competing ads alongside the search results for those extremist-related terms.

If Google wants to do this, that's fine.

But I'm wondering about the legal standard here. It's unclear whether Google will only show these "positive" (whoever and however that gets defined) when people search for "extremist" content, or whether they'll show Google ads to those whose email content reflects an interest in "extremist" material.

In both cases, however, Google will use material that counts as "content" to decide to show these ads.

And then what happens? That is, what happens to Google's records determining that these users should get that content? Do the records, stripped of the content itself, count as a third party record that can be obtained with a subpoena? Or do they count as content?

Congress hasn't passed legislation requiring tech companies to report their terrorist users. But does having Google use its algorithms to determine who is an extremist give the government a way to find out who Google thinks is an extremist?