

FACEBOOK TROLL ACCOUNT EVENTS HAPPEN IN WAKE OF GUCCIFER 2.0 RELEASED TARGETING DATA

In this post, I noted that the Russian troll Facebook events identified to date – including an event that drew four people in Idaho – weren't exactly a smoking gun showing the troll accounts had intervened meaningfully in the election.

The Daily Beast has found an account – which it assumes must be tied to Internet Research Agency because it was shut down the same time as the other IRA accounts were, which seems a fair assumption – that does appear to be more legitimately tied to the election.

The demonstrations—at least one of which was promoted online by local pro-Trump activists—brought dozens of supporters together in real life. They appear to be the first case of Russian provocateurs successfully mobilizing Americans over Facebook in direct support of Donald Trump.

The Aug. 20, 2016, events were collectively called “Florida Goes Trump!” and they were billed as a “patriotic state-wide flash mob,” unfolding simultaneously in 17 different cities and towns in the battleground state. It's difficult to determine how many of those locations actually witnessed any turnout, in part because Facebook's recent deletion of hundreds of Russian accounts hid much of the evidence. But videos and photos from two of the locations—Fort Lauderdale and Coral Springs—were reposted to a

Facebook page run by the local Trump campaign chair, where they remain to this day.

“On August 20, we want to gather patriots on the streets of Floridian towns and cities and march to unite America and support Donald Trump!” read the Facebook event page for the demonstrations. “Our flash mob will occur in several places at the same time; more details about locations will be added later. Go Donald!”

The Florida flash mob was one of at least four pro-Trump or anti-Hillary Clinton demonstrations conceived and organized over a Facebook page called “Being Patriotic,” and a related Twitter account called “march_for_trump.” (The Daily Beast identified the accounts in a software-assisted review of politically themed social-media profiles.)

Being Patriotic had 200,000 followers and the strongest activist bent of any of the suspected Russian Facebook election pages that have so far emerged.

Unlike the previously reported events, the Florida ones took place in a swing state. And the numbers represent more significant turnout than other reported events.

I’m also interested that these events happened in FL – and happened in late August – for another reason. Florida was the first of the swing states for which Guccifer 2.0 publicly released DCCC data, including targeting information. He released that information via his website on August 15, admittedly too close to the rallies to do much good, but early enough to know they were available before the rallies. But by that point, HelloFLA already had (and had released) documents.

As I have said, we don’t have to prove that Republicans helped the IRA target ads, because

we already know that Russians obtained targeting information by stealing it from the Democrats. It just so happens that this first instance where Facebook events might affect the Presidential came in the wake of targeting information for key congressional districts became publicly available (and therefore deniable for entities more closely with with Russia).