FACEBOOK ANONYMOUSLY ADMITS IT IDED GUCCIFER 2.0 IN REAL TIME

The headline of this story focuses on how Obama, in the weeks after the election, nine days before the White House declared the election, "free and fair from a cybersecurity perspective," begged Mark Zuckerberg to take the threat of fake news seriously.

> Now huddled in a private room on the sidelines of a meeting of world leaders in Lima, Peru, two months before Trump's inauguration, Obama made a personal appeal to Zuckerberg to take the threat of fake news and political disinformation seriously. Unless Facebook and the government did more to address the threat, Obama warned, it would only get worse in the next presidential race.

But 26 paragraphs later, WaPo reveals a detail that *should* totally change the spin of the article: in June, Facebook not only detected APT 28's involvement in the operation (which I heard at the time), but also informed the FBI about it (which, along with the further details, I didn't).

> It turned out that Facebook, without realizing it, had stumbled into the Russian operation as it was getting underway in June 2016.
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> At the time, cybersecurity experts at the company were tracking a Russian hacker group known as APT28, or Fancy Bear, which U.S. intelligence officials considered an arm of the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU, according to people familiar with

> Facebook's activities.
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> Members of the Russian hacker group were best known for stealing military plans and data from political targets, so the security experts assumed that they were planning some sort of espionage operation — not a far-reaching disinformation campaign designed to shape the outcome of the U.S. presidential race.
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> Facebook executives shared with the FBI their suspicions that a Russian espionage operation was in the works, a person familiar with the matter said. An FBI spokesperson had no immediate comment.
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> Soon thereafter, *Facebook's cyber experts found evidence that members of APT28 were setting up a series of shadowy accounts — including a persona known as Guccifer 2.0 and a Facebook page called DCLeaks* — to promote stolen emails and other documents during the presidential race. Facebook officials once again contacted the FBI to share what they had seen.
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> Like the U.S. government, Facebook didn't foresee the wave of disinformation that was coming and the political pressure that followed. The company then grappled with a series of hard choices designed to shore up its own systems without impinging on free discourse for its users around the world. [my emphasis]

But the story doesn't provide the details you would expect from such disclosures.

For example, where did Facebook see Guccifer 2.0? Did Guccifer 2.0 try to set up a Facebook account? Or, as sounds more likely given the description, did he/they use Facebook as a signup for the WordPress site?

More significantly, what did Facebook do with the DC Leaks account, described explicitly?

It seems Facebook identified, and — at least in the case of the DC Leaks case — shut down an APT 28 attempt to use its infrastructure. And it told FBI about it, at a time when the DNC was withholding its server from the FBI.

This puts this passage from Facebook's April report, which I've pointed to repeatedly, in very different context.

> Facebook is not in a position to make definitive attribution to the actors sponsoring this activity. It is important to emphasize that this example case comprises only a subset of overall activities tracked and addressed by our organization during this time period; however our data does not contradict the attribution provided by the U.S. Director of National Intelligence in the report dated January 6, 2017.

In other words, Facebook had reached this conclusion back in June 2016, and told FBI about it, twice.

And then what happened?

Again, I'm sympathetic to the urge to blame Facebook for this election. But this article describes Facebook's heavy handed efforts to serve as a wing of the government to police terrorist content, without revealing that sometimes Facebook has erred in censoring content that shouldn't have been. Then, it reveals Facebook reported Guccifer 2.0 and DC Leaks to FBI, twice, with no further description of what FBI did with those leads.

Yet from all that, it headlines Facebook's insufficient efforts to track down other abuses of the platform.

I'm not sure what the answer is. But it sounds like Facebook was more forthcoming with the FBI about APT 28's efforts than the DNC was.