

Google's alliance with the military: The ruling class responds to social unrest in America

Andre Damon
10 March 2018

Last week, Google confirmed that it has provided artificial intelligence software to assist the United States military and intelligence apparatus in analyzing data as part of its drone war and assassination program in the Middle East and beyond.

The website Gizmodo, which first broke the story, reported that the military program using Google is called Project Maven. A military report announcing the project last year said it “focuses on computer vision—an aspect of machine learning and deep learning—that autonomously extracts objects of interest from moving or still imagery.”

Marine Corps Col. Drew Cukor, identified as the “chief of the Algorithmic Warfare Cross-Function Team in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Operations Directorate-Warfare Support,” said at the time that the US is “in an AI arms race,” and noted that “Eric Schmidt [executive chairman of Google’s parent company, Alphabet] is calling Google an AI company.”

The revelations directly implicate Google in the criminal activities of the US government all over the world. They also further expose the intimate relationship between the giant internet and telecommunications companies and the repressive apparatus of the state.

A revolving door has been established between the workforces of the technology monopolies and military and intelligence agencies. At a hearing in January, a spokesman for Facebook bragged that, in doubling its army of censors, which will hit 20,000 at the end of this year, the company is prioritizing hiring “former intelligence and law-enforcement officials” who had previously “worked in the area of counterterrorism.”

Schmidt himself has become an advisor to the

Pentagon and the chair of its Defense Innovation Advisory Board. A private/military joint partnership called the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx) has been established just minutes from Google’s main headquarters.

These developments have the most far-reaching and sinister implications for democratic rights within the United States. Imperialist war and domestic repression are two sides of the same ruling class policy.

Over the course of the past two years, Google, Facebook, Twitter and other tech companies, in close coordination with the government, have moved extremely rapidly to censor content online through the manipulation of search results and news feeds. Carried out within the CIA-Democratic Party’s campaign over “fake news” and “Russian meddling,” the purpose of these measures is to silence, suppress and criminalize domestic opposition.

Google’s censorship of its search algorithms, first unveiled last April, was followed by alterations in Facebook’s news feed to promote “trusted” news outlets—such as the *New York Times*—over independent news organizations that advance “alternative viewpoints.” More aggressive measures are being planned and implemented.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has been a principal target of a campaign that has affected a wide array of left-wing, anti-war and progressive web sites.

The corporate and financial elite is terrified of the growth of working class struggle, which poses the greatest threat to its drive to control the world and its preparations for a global conflict with large powers, including Russia and China.

This mortal threat is evident in the spreading wave of

social unrest in the United States, which is beginning to break free of the institutions of the capitalist state—including the trade unions. The strike by West Virginia teachers, which took the form of an incipient rebellion against the unions, has been followed by demands for strike action from teachers and other sections of the working class throughout the country.

Social media is playing a critical role in allowing workers to communicate with each other within the United States and beyond its borders. The corporate media is taking note. The *New York Times* commented worriedly earlier this week that “West Virginia teachers found ways to organize and act outside the usual parameters of traditional unionism. Teachers and service workers across the state aired their frustrations in an enormous Facebook group.”

The *Los Angeles Times* warned of “social media’s influence on the labor unrest,” pointing to the fact that teachers throughout the country, from West Virginia to Oklahoma, were using Facebook to coordinate their struggles.

What the ruling elite fears above all is the emergence of a revolutionary socialist movement that will challenge the two-party system and the financial oligarchy that it represents. It is highly cognizant of the role of the WSWS, which is seeing a rapid growth in readership with the escalation of the class struggle. The ruling class already had in 2015 the experience of the rebellion of auto workers against the UAW, with tens of thousands of workers reading and sharing WSWS articles on social media.

Standing upon a social powder keg, the ruling class is desperately seeking to gain control of information. Whatever tools the military develops for use abroad, moreover, will be extended to the “total army” of police and intelligence agencies at home. And capitalist ruling elites throughout the world are taking similar measures.

The alarm must be sounded! Opposition to censorship must be connected to the fight against imperialist war and the mobilization of the working class—in the United States and internationally—against inequality and exploitation. The fight against the assault on free speech and a free internet is at the same time a fight to overthrow the capitalist system, abolish the military-intelligence agencies and transform the giant telecommunications companies and other major

corporations into publicly-owned and democratically-controlled utilities.

To expose the growing drive toward censorship, and to organize resistance, the *World Socialist Web Site*, International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and the Socialist Equality Party are holding a series of meetings throughout the US, “Organizing Resistance to Internet Censorship.” We urge all of our readers to attend these meetings, publicize them as widely as possible, and contact the WSWS to take part in the fight against war, inequality and internet censorship.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact