

US investigators identify 70 current and former immigration agents in far-right, racist Facebook groups

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An internal investigation by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) revealed 70 names, including 62 current employees, tied to Facebook groups which contained racist and derogatory posts. One of the groups, called “I’m 10-15,” was discovered by ProPublica investigators earlier this month to feature posts making fun of the brutal conditions in the immigrant concentration camps as well as sexually explicit posts targeting Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Assistant Commissioner for CBP’s Office of Professional Responsibility Matt Klein told reporters on Monday that the majority of the individuals subscribed to the “I’m 10-15” group while others belonged to similar, but smaller groups like “The Real CBP Nation.”

“Obviously the number of cases, we anticipate will continue to grow as we receive additional information and perform further research and conduct interviews,” Klein said.

According to the CBP the posts were turned over to the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General. While what, if any, disciplinary action will be taken against officers remains unclear, any investigation is certain to be a whitewash. Earlier this month, Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan said several CBP employees were placed on administrative duty after their Facebook activity was revealed.

McAleenan said, “We’ve already put several agents on administrative duties. We’ve issued cease and desist letters to more. This investigation is continuing and the agents will be held accountable if they’re CBP employees who did inappropriate things.”

Despite these threadbare efforts at damage control, the CBP knew about the existence of a private Facebook group with offensive posts as early as 2018, according to a memo obtained by CNN. Titled, “Social Media Posts,” the memo did not specify any specific Facebook group but reminded employees of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies for the workplace and while off-duty.

Reporters asked Klein about the memo to which he replied that it concerned a separate group. “This was a different group and the nature of the posting was different, we were talking about a different employee,” he said. “We didn’t immediately jump to the conclusion that there are other groups. The two were not related.”

The CBP’s efforts to feign shock at such groups have become complicated by the fact that the current chief of the US Border Patrol, Carla Provost, was herself a poster on the “I’m 10-15” group. Three months after being appointed chief, Provost posted a comment about someone who questioned her appointment to head the agency. While she has since left the group, her comment raises serious questions as to how well known such groups are to leading officials.

As a result of investigations by The Intercept, chief patrol agents, multiple agents in charge of individual stations, and top officials in the Border Patrol’s union with direct ties to President Trump have been identified in the secret Facebook group. Politico followed with a report on how senior officials in the Border Patrol, as well as CBP public affairs officials, knew about the group since 2016 but supposedly monitored it as an “intelligence” stream to review the sentiment of the employees.

Although the CBP has promised disciplinary action, it is unclear if any has taken place, or will ever take place. The government would have to prove that the specific use of racist or derogatory language would impact their job performance.

Another issue is how a number of posts, especially those involving sexual violence, were allowed to remain on Facebook, given the company's rules against sexual content and hate speech. Democratic House Oversight Chairman Elijah Cummings of Maryland wrote a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg saying the posts in "I'm 10-15" group violated the social media platform's standards and called on the company to maintain records of the group and its posts.

These latest revelations of the social media groups hosting thousands of active and former Border Patrol agents where they freely express their fascistic views points to the immense dangers facing all workers, immigrant and native-born alike.



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