

## Pentagon Personae

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We think of Facebook and Twitter as platforms for you and me and our fellow citizens to share information and opinions and photos and just plain fun.

But our government agencies are also on those platforms, secretly as well as openly.

And not just for fun and games.

It's a serious information war out there — with mis- and dis-elements, too — and Facebook and Twitter may be in over their heads.

"The takedowns in recent years by Twitter and Facebook of more than 150 bogus personas and media sites created in the United States," wrote

**Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defense for policy, last week instructed the military commands that engage in psychological operations online to provide a full accounting of their activities by next month . . .**

Ellen Nakashima in the *Washington Post* in mid-September, "was disclosed last month by internet researchers Graphika and the Stanford Internet Observatory. While the researchers did not attribute the sham accounts to the U.S. military, two officials familiar with the matter said that U.S. Central



Command is among those whose activities are facing scrutiny."

Ms. Nakashima's report begins with the big news: "Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defense for policy, last week instructed the military commands that engage in psychological operations online to provide a full accounting of their activities by next month," and we are told of a "sweeping audit" to probe how the Pentagon "conducts clandestine information warfare."

This is largely in response to Facebook and Twitter identifying and removing "fake accounts suspected of being run by the U.S. military in violation of the platforms' rules."

Social media companies took down actual U.S. military psy-op accounts. But it is worth noting that the report does not mention Facebook or Twitter taking down foreign equivalents, though that has happened in the past.

It might be time to reconsider *all* government activity in social media.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.