

Analyzing a Twitter Takedown Originating in Saudia Arabia | Stanford Internet Observatory

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On December 20, 2019 Twitter announced the removal of 88,000 accounts managed by Smaat, a digital marketing company based in Saudi Arabia, and attributed thousands of these accounts to involvement in “a significant state-backed information operation”. On December 17 Twitter shared with the Stanford Internet Observatory 32,054,257 tweets from 5,929 randomly sampled accounts. In this report we provide a first analysis of the data.

Smaat is notable in part because it was co-founded by Ahmed Almutairi (also known as Ahmed Aljbreen), a Saudi agent of the royal family who recruited two Twitter employees to spy on the accounts of critics of the Saudi government. Almutairi is now wanted by the FBI.

[...]

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