

Facebook's New Toxic Stew: Militia Groups and Vaccine Conspiracies | Tech Transparency Project

By Tech Transparency Project

August 20, 2021

Facebook's twin failures to prevent the spread of extremism and Covid misinformation are combining into a dangerous new trend: Far-right militia groups are embracing and amplifying vaccine conspiracy theories as a way to build their movement.

A Tech Transparency Project (TTP) investigation found that militia groups on Facebook, some with thousands of members, are rife with Covid vaccine misinformation, often drumming up fears that vaccine mandates are a sign of government tyranny.

The activity is all the more disturbing because Facebook promised to crack down on U.S.-based militia organizations nearly a year ago. Now these groups have become key spreaders of vaccine conspiracies, at a time when U.S. Covid infections are on the rise due to stagnating vaccination rates and the highly transmissible delta variant.

Facebook even allowed one militia group administrator, who regularly posts vaccine misinformation, to adopt a "Group Expert" badge, a feature the company released in April to recognize "trusted, well-informed members." This admin calls the delta variant "BS" and warns, "The unvaxxed are armed. It'll be a short fight."

[...]

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