

# He Combs the Web for Russian Bots. That Makes Him a Target | The New York Times

By Adam Satariano

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HADDINGTON, Scotland — In August 2017, Ben Nimmo was declared dead by 13,000 Russian bots on Twitter.

“Our beloved friend and colleague Ben Nimmo passed away this morning,” read the epitaph, which was manipulated to look as if it were from a co-worker’s Twitter account. “Ben, we will never forget you.”

The message was immediately shared thousands of times by the network of automated accounts. Notes began pouring in from worried friends and colleagues — even though Mr. Nimmo was very much alive.

It didn’t take long for Mr. Nimmo, who helped pioneer investigations into online disinformation, to figure out what was going on: He had been targeted by a shadowy group after reporting, along with others, that American far-right groups had adopted [pro-Kremlin messages](#) on social media about Ukraine. His fake death notice was a sinister attempt at disinformation, which is the spreading of falsehoods with the deliberate intent to mislead.

[...]

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