

Meta, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter dodge questions on social media and national security | TechCrunch

By Taylor Hatmaker

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Executives from four of the biggest social media companies testified before the Senate Homeland Security Committee Wednesday, defending their platforms and their respective safety, privacy and moderation failures in recent years.

Congress managed to drag in a relatively fresh set of product-focused executives this time around, including TikTok COO Vanessa Pappas, who testified for the first time before lawmakers, and longtime Meta executive Chris Cox. The hearing was convened to explore social media's impact on national security broadly and touched on topics ranging from domestic extremism and misinformation to CSAM and China.

Committee Chair Sen. Gary Peters pressed each company to disclose the number of employees they have working full-time on trust and safety and each company in turn refused to answer — even though they received the question prior to the hearing. Twitter General Manager of Consumer and Revenue Jay Sullivan chipped in the only numerical response, noting that the company has 2,200 people working on trust and safety “across Twitter,” though it wasn't clear if those employees also did other kinds of work.

It's no secret that social media moderation is patchy, reactive and uneven, largely because these companies refuse to invest more deeply in the teams that protect people on their platforms. “We've been trying to get this information for a long time,” Peters said. “This is why we get so frustrated.”

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