

What, Exactly, Were Russians Trying to Do With Those Facebook Ads? | The Atlantic

By Alexis C. Madrigal

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Alexis Madrigal suggests that “From what we know now,” Russian use of Facebook ads were “too small to seriously influence the election, but too big to be an afterthought.” Read more at: [What, Exactly, Were Russians Trying to Do With Those Facebook Ads?](#)

Many questions remain about the ads purchased by Russian-linked accounts during the 2016 presidential election.

Earlier this month, the company announced that Russian-linked accounts had [purchased \\$100,000 worth of advertising](#).

The scale of this advertising buy is mysterious. In an election where billions of dollars were spent, why even bother to spend \$100,000? It seems like a drop in the bucket, but also more than nothing. For comparison, in 2015 and 2016, all campaigns *directly* paid Facebook a collective \$11,313,483.59 across all races, according to Federal Election Commission numbers. The Trump campaign paid Facebook \$261,685 *directly* for ads. But those numbers are only lower bounds for the amount of money spent on Facebook because many campaigns pay consultants, who then purchase ads on their behalf. (For example, Cambridge Analytica, which worked with the Cruz and then Trump campaigns, took in \$15.4 million during the cycle, including \$5 million in one payment from the Trump campaign on September 1.)

So, the Russian ad buy is a significant Facebook purchase, but not one that seems scaled to the ambition of interfering with a national U.S. election.

Source: [What, Exactly, Were Russians Trying to Do With Those Facebook Ads?](#)