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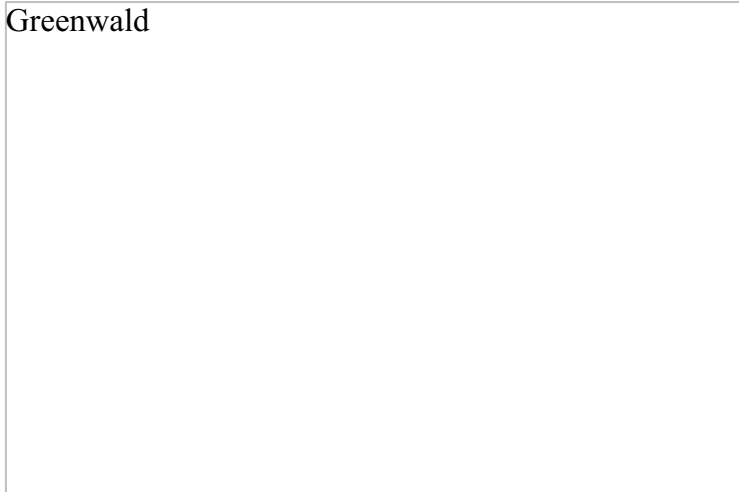


How Covert Agents Infiltrate The Internet To Manipulate, Deceive, And Destroy Reputations

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by [Larry Diffey](#) , [February 26, 2014](#)

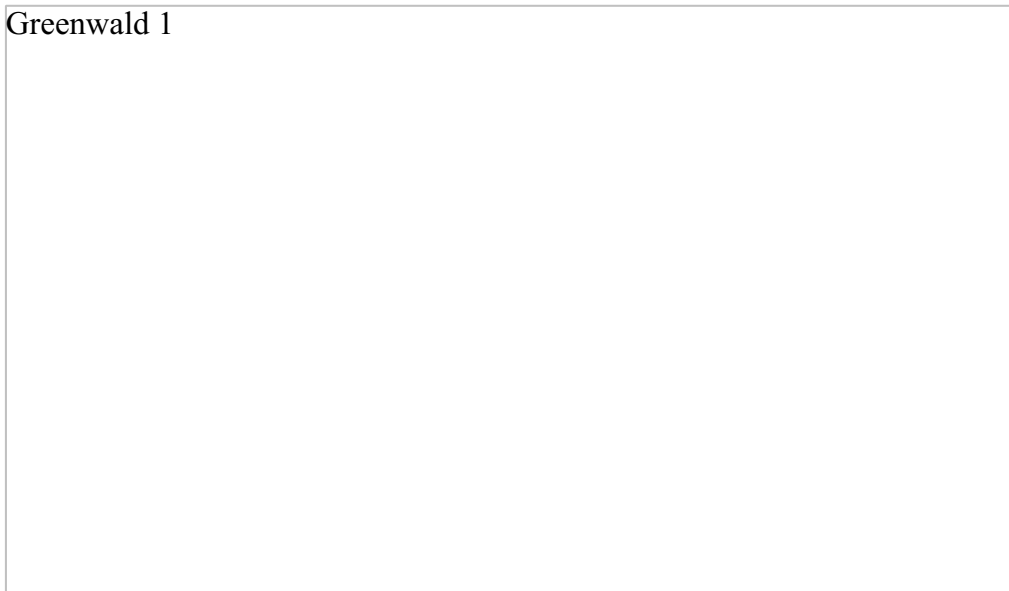
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by Glenn Greenwald

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A page from a GCHQ top secret document prepared by its secretive JTRIG unit

One of the many pressing stories that remains to be told from the Snowden archive is how western intelligence agencies are attempting to manipulate and control online discourse with extreme tactics of deception and reputation-destruction. It's time to tell a chunk of that story, complete with the relevant documents.

Over the last several weeks, I worked with *NBC News* to publish a [series](#) of [articles](#) about [“dirty trick” tactics](#) used by GCHQ's previously secret unit, JTRIG (Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group). These were based on [four classified GCHQ documents](#) presented to the NSA and the other three partners in the

English-speaking [“Five Eyes” alliance](#). Today, we at *the Intercept* are publishing [another new JTRIG document](#), in full, entitled “The Art of Deception: Training for Online Covert Operations.”

By publishing these stories one by one, our NBC reporting highlighted some of the key, discrete revelations: the monitoring of YouTube and Blogger, the targeting of Anonymous with the very same DDoS attacks they accuse “hacktivists” of using, the use of “honey traps” (luring people into compromising situations using sex) and destructive viruses. But, here, I want to focus and elaborate on the overarching point revealed by all of these documents: namely, that these agencies are attempting to control, infiltrate, manipulate, and warp online discourse, and in doing so, are compromising the integrity of the internet itself.

Among the core self-identified purposes of JTRIG are two tactics: **(1)** to inject all sorts of false material onto the internet in order to destroy the reputation of its targets; and **(2)** to use social sciences and other techniques to manipulate online discourse and activism to generate outcomes it considers desirable. To see how extremist these programs are, just consider the tactics they boast of using to achieve those ends: “false flag operations” (posting material to the internet and falsely attributing it to someone else), fake victim blog posts (pretending to be a victim of the individual whose reputation they want to destroy), and posting “negative information” on various forums. Here is one illustrative list of tactics from the latest GCHQ document we’re publishing today:

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Other tactics aimed at individuals are listed here, under the revealing title “discredit a target”:

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