

# Facebook chose not to act on militia complaints before Kenosha shooting

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*Multiple users reported the account for inciting violence, but were told it did not violate platform policy*

By Russell Brandom | Aug 26, 2020, 5:15pm EDT

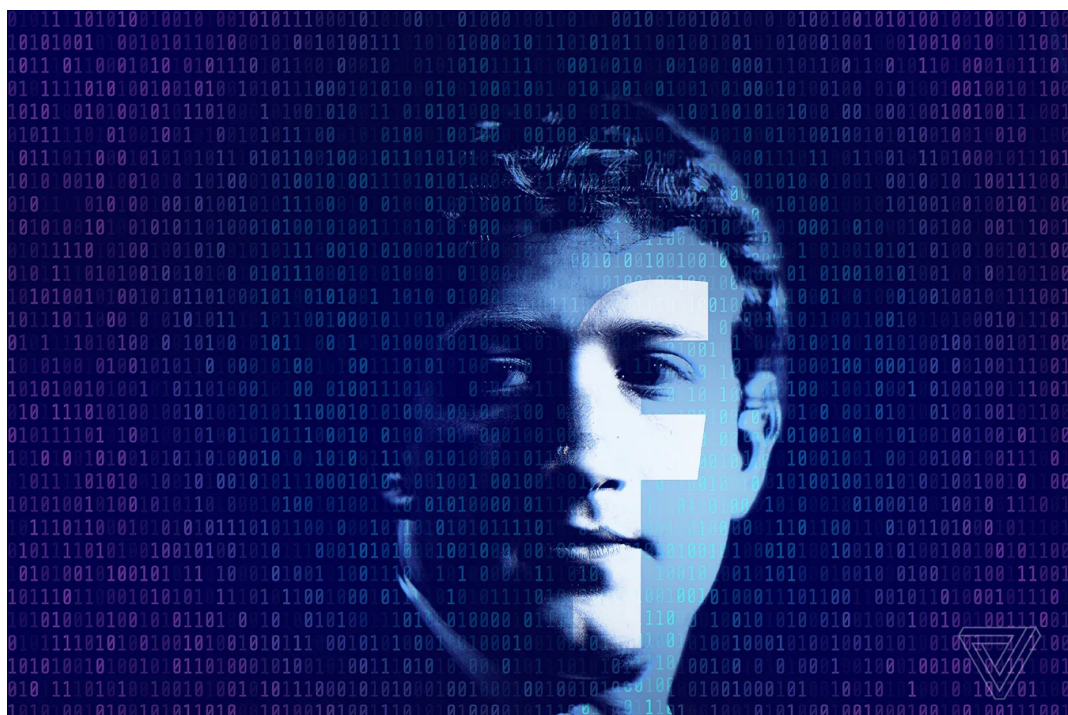


Illustration by James Bareham / The Verge

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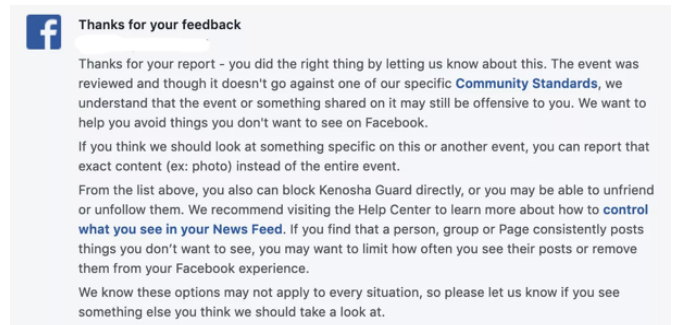
In the wake of an apparent double murder Tuesday night in Kenosha, Facebook has faced a wave of scrutiny over posts by a self-proclaimed militia group called Kenosha Guard, which issued a “call to arms” to in advance of the protest.

[Facebook took down Kenosha Guard's Facebook page](#) Wednesday morning, identifying the posts as violating community standards. But while the accounts were ultimately removed, new evidence suggests the platform had ample warning about the account before the shooting brought the group to prominence.

At least two separate Facebook users reported the account for inciting violence prior to the shooting, *The Verge* has learned. In each case, the group and its counter-protest event were examined by Facebook moderators and found not to be in violation of the platform's policies.

One user, who asked not to be identified by name, said she had reported the Kenosha Guards event in advance of the protest. Facebook moderators responded that the event itself was not in violation of platform policy, but specific comments could be reported for inciting violence. She reported a specific comment threatening to put nails in the tires of protestors' cars, but it too was found to be within the bounds of Facebook policy.

“There were lots of comments like that in the event,” she says. “People talking about being ‘locked and loaded.’ People asking what types of weapons and people responding to ‘bring everything.’”



Facebook's response to a user who reported the Kenosha Guard event for inciting violence. (Time stamp redacted for privacy)

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The comments could not be verified, as the initial event listing is no longer publicly available.

Another Facebook user reported the event itself, and was told that the content did not violate Facebook community standards.

“I felt it had the possibility to end in violence, and it did,” he told *The Verge*.

Both reports were filed before the shooting took place, but identified the event and broader Kenosha Guard community as likely to incite violence. Last week, Facebook specifically identified militia groups as potentially inciting violence and removed a number of militia pages alongside hundreds of groups affiliated with QAnon. Still, it seems those warnings weren't enough to trigger Facebook's existing policies. It wasn't until Wednesday morning, more than nine hours after the shooting took place, that Kenosha Guard was cited by Facebook as violating the Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy and removed.

Kenosha has been racked by protests for three days, in response to a police shooting that paralyzed Jacob Blake. Late Tuesday night, two people were killed by an armed counter-protestor during a march, who appears to have left the scene without being apprehended by police. Kyle Rittenhouse was subsequently identified as the shooter through footage distributed on social media, and charged with double murder by Illinois police on Wednesday afternoon.

Reached for comment, Facebook said the company's investigation had produced no direct links between the shooting and the Kenosha Guard accounts. “We’ve designated this shooting as a mass murder and have removed the shooter’s accounts from Facebook and Instagram,” a Facebook representative said. “At this time, we have not found evidence on Facebook that suggests the shooter followed the Kenosha Guard Page or that he was invited on the Event Page they organized. However, the Kenosha Guard Page and their Event Page violated our new policy

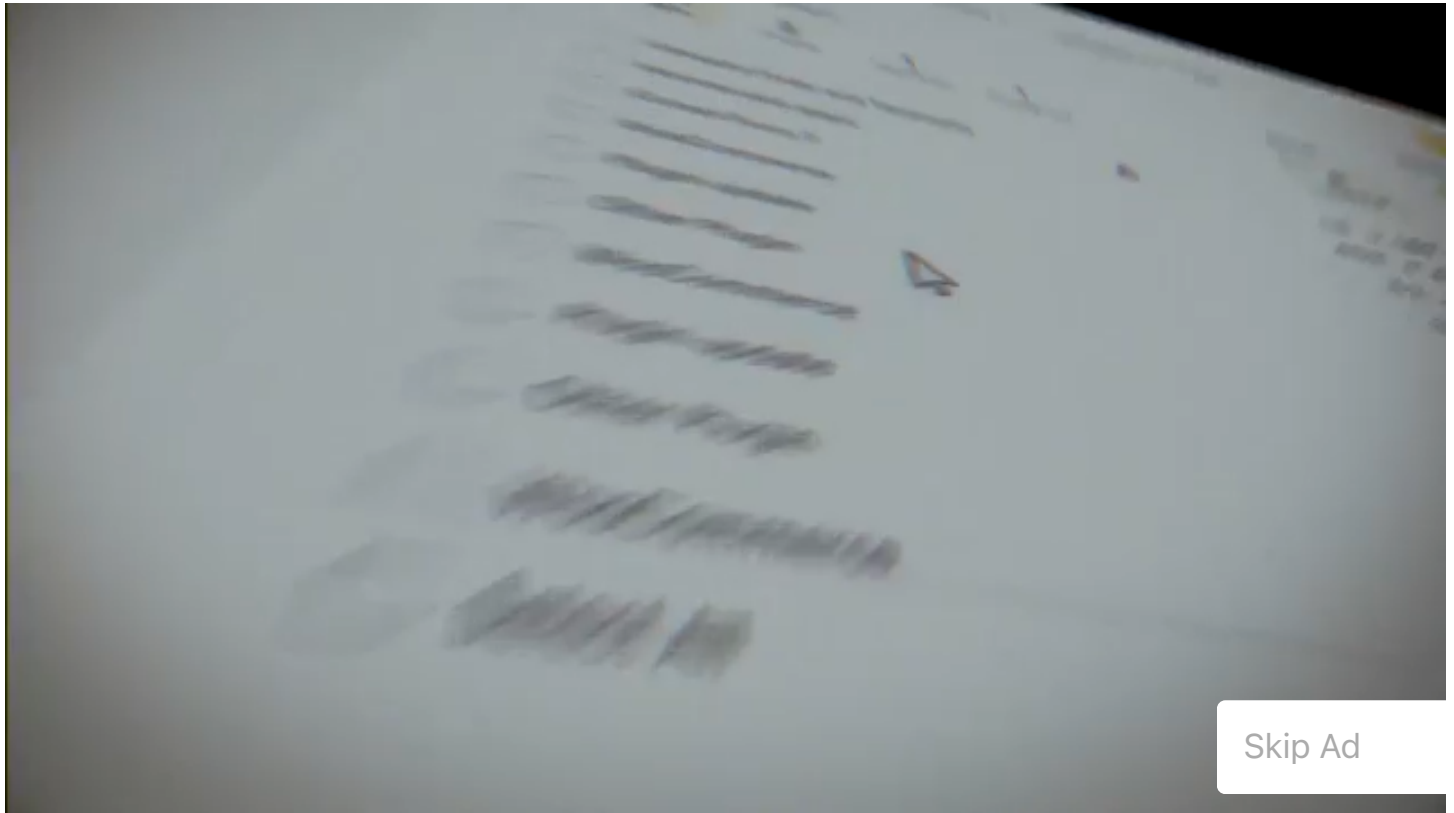
addressing militia organizations and have been removed on that basis.”

**Update August 26th, 5:42PM ET:** *Updated with comment from Facebook.*

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## The ID 4 is VWs electric SUV for the masses



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The Volkswagen ID 4 is the German automaker’s most important car in decades. It’s also one of the most relaxed EVs we’ve ever driven. Our review of the ID 4 found a lot to like, including whimsical design touches, decent range, and a connection to a large and growing EV charging network.

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