

Prepared Statement by Senator Dianne Feinstein of California
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Joint hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Commerce Committee
Facebook, Social Media Privacy, and the Use and Abuse of Data
April 10, 2018

Chairman Grassley, Chairman Thune, thank you both for holding this important hearing. Mr. Zuckerberg thank you for coming. I think it is important that you have come to answer questions directly. You have a real opportunity here today to lead the industry and demonstrate a meaningful commitment to protecting individual privacy.

What we have learned over the past few months is alarming. We have seen how foreign actors are abusing social media platforms, like Facebook, to interfere in elections *and* taking millions of Americans' personal information without their knowledge to manipulate public opinion and target individual voters.

Specifically, on February 16th, Special Counsel Mueller issued an indictment against the Russia-based Internet Research Agency and thirteen of its employees for "interference operations targeting the United States."

Through this thirty-seven page indictment, we learned that the IRA ran a coordinated campaign through 470 Facebook accounts and pages. The campaign included ads and false information to create discord and harm Secretary Clinton's campaign – and the content was seen by an estimated 157 million Americans.

A month later, on March 17th, news broke that Cambridge Analytica exploited the personal information of approximately 50 million Facebook users without their knowledge or permission.

And last week we learned that number was even higher – 87 million Facebook users who had their private information taken without their consent. [Facebook, April 4, 2018] Specifically, using a personality quiz he created, Professor Aleksandr Kogan collected the personal information of 300,000 Facebook users, and then collected data on millions of their "friends."

It appears the information collected included everything these individuals had on their Facebook pages – and, according to some reports, even included private direct messages between users.

Prof. Kogan is said to have taken data from over 70 million Americans. It has also been reported that he sold this data to Cambridge Analytica for \$800,000.

If accurate, that means Cambridge Analytica paid less than one penny (\$0.009) for each person's private information.

Cambridge Analytica then took this data and created a "psychological warfare tool" to influence U.S. elections. In fact, CEO Alexander Nix, declared that Cambridge Analytica "ran all the

digital campaign, the television campaign and [its] data informed all the strategy” for the Trump campaign.

The reporting has also speculated that Cambridge Analytica worked with the Internet Research Agency to help Russia identify which American voters to target with its propaganda.

I am concerned that press reports indicate Facebook learned about this breach back in 2015, but appears to have not taken significant steps to address it until this year.

Today’s hearing is the first step toward learning how this happened, who knew about these tactics, what can be done to prevent this in the future, and what else we can do to protect individual privacy and the integrity of our elections.

This hearing takes on a significance with the testimony of this CEO. It is important that he take the initiative and outline specific steps his company will take to regulate and control its platforms so that this cannot happen again.

Hopefully private industry will reform and monitor its practices to prevent manipulation of elections and violations of individual privacy. But if they won’t, Congress will have to do it for them.

This is a critical time to take real action and remedy a bad situation. Thank you.