Graphika

UK Trade Leaks

Operators keen to hide their identities disseminated leaked UK/US trade documents in a similar fashion to Russian operation "Secondary Infektion," exposed in June 2019

Updated on Dec. 8th with an appendix on additional insights shared by Reddit

12.2019

By Ben Nimmo, Director of Investigations

Executive Summary

The unredacted UK-US trade documents that leaked in the lead-up to Britain's general election were amplified online in a way that closely resembles the known Russian information operation “Secondary Infektion.” The similarities to Secondary Infektion are not enough to provide conclusive attribution but are too close to be simply a coincidence. They could indicate a return of the actors behind Secondary Infektion or a sophisticated attempt by unknown actors to mimic it.

- The leaks were published on October 21, 2019, by a Reddit user called Gregoratior. That account used grammatically incorrect English and made specific errors that were also characteristic of “Secondary Infektion”.
- On October 23, a German-language persona called Max Ostermann posted an article about the leaks to three different sites: German subreddit r/de; Austrian local-news blog site meinbezirk[.]at; and Berlin-based platform homment[.]com. On each German site, the persona used an account that was created that day, only posted once, and was never used again (such accounts are referred to in this report as “single-use burner accounts”).
- Single-use burner accounts were repeatedly used on the same three sites as part of Russian operation Secondary Infektion, which was originally exposed in June 2019.[1]
- Simultaneously with the German posts, a user going by the name “Wilbur Gregoratior” republished the original English-language Reddit post on the conspiracy site beforeitsnews[.]com, a site also repeatedly used in the Secondary Infektion campaign.
- Unlike user Max Ostermann, Wilbur Gregoratior had already published three other articles in early October. All three were plagiarized, suggesting an effort at camouflage or audience building.
- The same day, a Twitter account, @gregoratior, began tweeting the English-language Reddit post directly to senior UK politicians and media figures. This resembled earlier amplification efforts by Secondary Infektion.
- The operation struggled to draw attention to the documents it disseminated and employed various strategies for doing so. Only after unknown actors emailed the Reddit post directly to political activists in the UK in late November did the leaks make the news.
- The most urgent question is how the leaked documents - apparently genuine - came to be disseminated online in what appears to be an information operation, six weeks before the UK’s general election.

[1] DFRLab, “Top Takes: Suspected Russian Intelligence Operation,” DFRLab, June 22, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/top-takes-suspected-russian-intelligence-operation-39212367d2f0. The operation appeared to be still active in November 2019: see Nika Aleksejeva, “Secondary Infektion redux? Suspected Russian intelligence operation targets Greenland,” DFRLab, November 13, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/secondary-infektion-redux-suspected-russian-intelligence-operation-targets-greenland-c4e04deb27c5.

Background | Operation Secondary Infektion

Secondary Infektion is the name given to a long-running information operation originating from Russia that Facebook initially exposed and attributed in May 2019.[2] The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) found that the operation spread across at least six languages and dozens of platforms, especially Reddit and smaller blogging forums, including beforeitsnews[.]com, homment[.]com, and meinbezirk[.]at.

For the purposes of this report, five features of Secondary Infektion stand out. First, the operation repeatedly used the same usernames, or variants on the same name, to publish the same article across different platforms; for example, the operation used a persona called "Tom Taylor from Braunau" to post a false story about US actions in Venezuela to meinbezirk[.]at[3] and a persona called "TomTay" to post the identical story to homment[.]com[4] and ask1[.]org.[5]

Second, it paid great attention to operational security and almost invariably used single-use burner accounts to publish its stories. In the example above, "Tom Taylor from Braunau" created his account on meinbezirk[.]at on March 1, 2019, posted one article that same day, and never posted again;[6] "TomTay" joined ask1[.]org on March 1, 2019, posted one article that same day, and never returned to the site.[7]

[2] Nathaniel Gleicher, "Removing More Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior from Russia," Facebook Newsroom, May 6, 2019, https://about.fb.com/news/2019/05/more-cib-from-russia/, archived at http://archive.ph/4ZlV1.

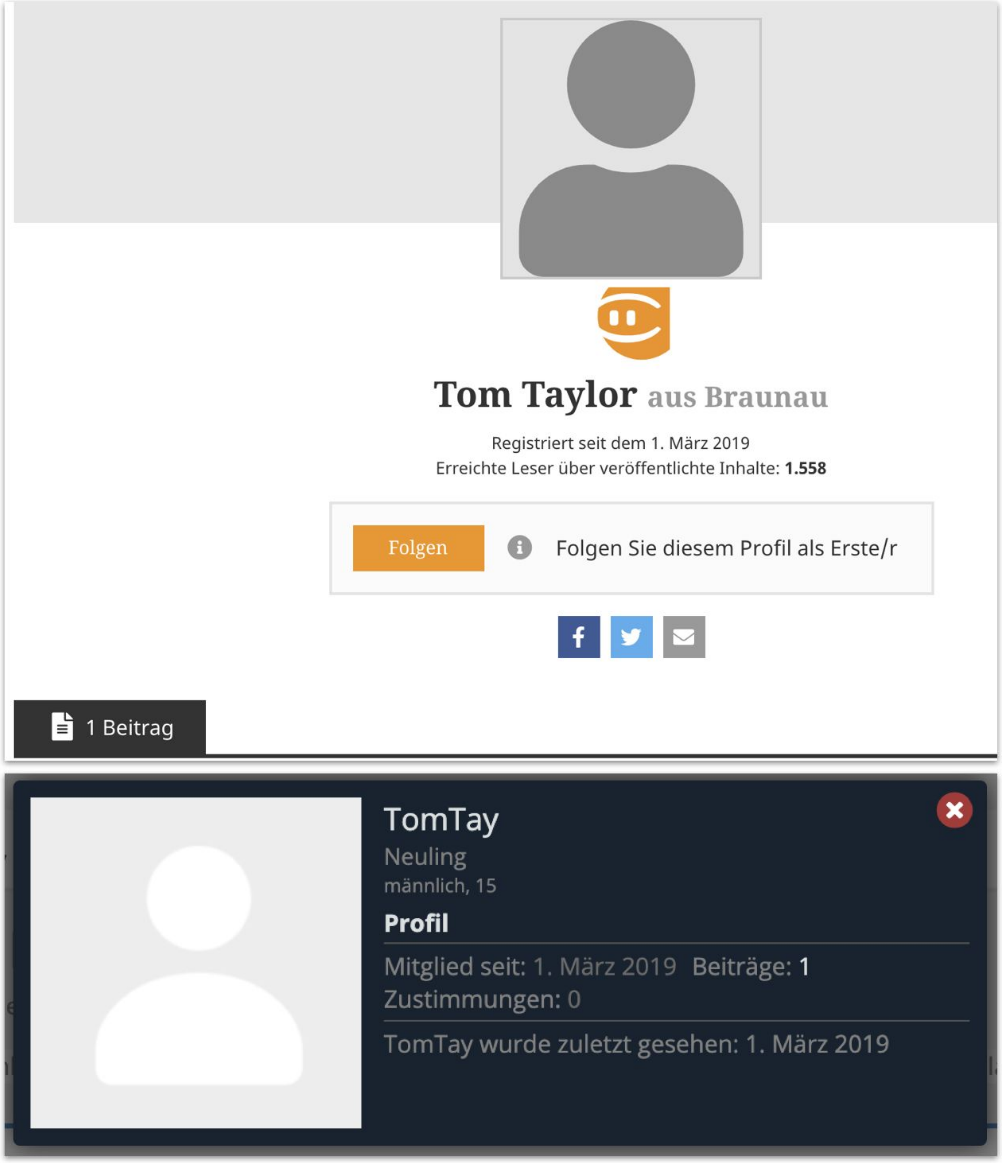
[3] Attributed to "Tom Taylor," "Irak. Syrien. Venezuela? Die USA planen chemische Attacke," meinbezirk[.]at, March 1, 2019, https://www.meinbezirk.at/braunau/c-politik/irak-syrien-venezuela-die-usa-planen-chemische-attacke_a3231990, archived at http://archive.ph/uDLSj.

[4] Attributed to "TomTay," "Irak. Syrien. Venezuela? Die USA planen chemische Attacke," homment[.]com, March 1, 2019, https://homment.com/LHWAgfOMNYtJHJAGPTRs, archived at http://archive.ph/a5xUA.

[5] Attributed to "TomTay," "Irak. Syrien. Venezuela? Die USA planen chemische Attacke," ask1.org, March 1, 2019, https://www.ask1.org/threads/irak-syrien-venezuela-die-usa-planen-chemische-attacke.18117/, archived at http://archive.ph/wiXcH.

[6] Profile page for "Tom Taylor from Braunau," meinbezirk[.]at, https://www.meinbezirk.at/braunau/profile-521712/tom-taylor?type=article, archived at http://archive.ph/wfvcO.

[7] The author's profile can be seen by clicking on the article at https://www.ask1.org/threads/irak-syrien-venezuela-die-usa-planen-chemische-attacke.18117/, archived at http://archive.ph/wiXcH.



Tom Taylor aus Braunau

Registriert seit dem 1. März 2019
Erreichte Leser über veröffentlichte Inhalte: **1.558**

Folgen   Folgen Sie diesem Profil als Erste/r

1 Beitrag

TomTay
Neuling
männlich, 15

Profil

Mitglied seit: 1. März 2019 Beiträge: 1
Zustimmungen: 0

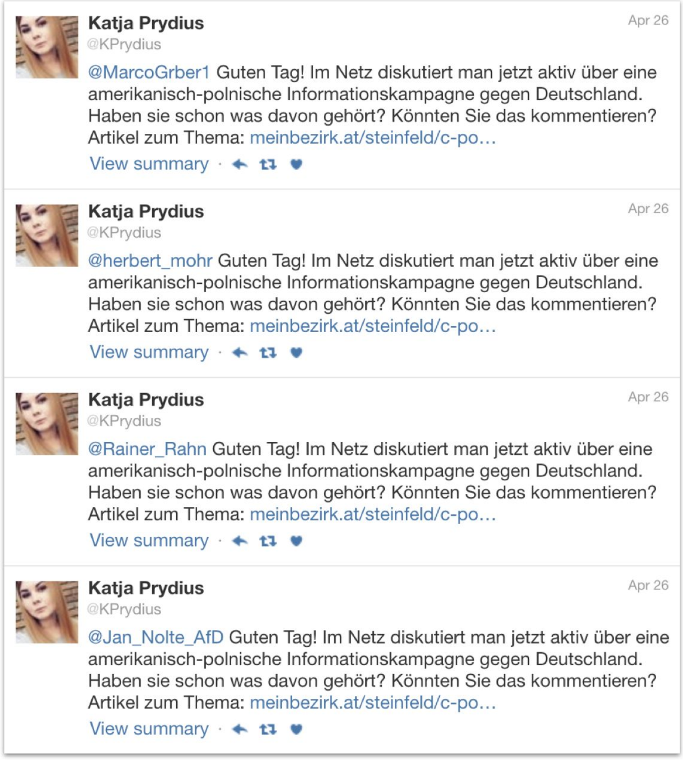
TomTay wurde zuletzt gesehen: 1. März 2019

Profile pages for Secondary Infektion assets "Tom Taylor from Braunau" on meinbezirk[.]at, top and "TomTay" on ask1[.]org, bottom. The "Tom Taylor" account was registered on March 1, 2019 and only contributed one post ("1 Beitrag"). The "TomTay" account was registered the same day, only made one post, and last logged in ("wurde zuletzt gesehen") on March 1, 2019.

Third, the Secondary Infektion personas repeatedly used the same combination of sites to post their German-language content, including the Austrian local-news site meinbezirk[.]at and the fringe German-based site homment[.]com. This is an unusual and distinctive combination, including both German and Austrian sites; moreover, homment[.]com has fewer than 5,000 monthly unique visitors, marking it as a niche site.

Fourth, the operators repeatedly made language errors in their English posts. In particular, they struggled with the words "a" and "the" and with the word order in questions, giving rise to quotes such as "Current situation is jeopardizing our joint action directed against the regime of usurper Maduro"[8] and "Why the Democrats collude with Ukraine?".[9] These specific errors repeatedly featured in earlier Russian information operations, although this is inconclusive on its own.

Finally, the operation used the handful of accounts it controlled on Twitter and Facebook to try to draw the attention of politicians and journalists to its stories. On Twitter, operation accounts addressed their posts directly to such influencers using @-mentions; on Facebook, they posted the stories into politically focused groups.[10] This technique was not, of course, unique to the operation, but is significant in the context of the UK leaks.



Katja Prydius @KPrydius Apr 26
@MarcoGrber1 Guten Tag! Im Netz diskutiert man jetzt aktiv über eine amerikanisch-polnische Informationskampagne gegen Deutschland. Haben sie schon was davon gehört? Könnten Sie das kommentieren? Artikel zum Thema: meinbezirk.at/steinfeld/c-po…
View summary

Katja Prydius @KPrydius Apr 26
@herbert_mohr Guten Tag! Im Netz diskutiert man jetzt aktiv über eine amerikanisch-polnische Informationskampagne gegen Deutschland. Haben sie schon was davon gehört? Könnten Sie das kommentieren? Artikel zum Thema: meinbezirk.at/steinfeld/c-po…
View summary

Katja Prydius @KPrydius Apr 26
@Rainer_Rahn Guten Tag! Im Netz diskutiert man jetzt aktiv über eine amerikanisch-polnische Informationskampagne gegen Deutschland. Haben sie schon was davon gehört? Könnten Sie das kommentieren? Artikel zum Thema: meinbezirk.at/steinfeld/c-po…
View summary

Katja Prydius @KPrydius Apr 26
@Jan_Nolte_AfD Guten Tag! Im Netz diskutiert man jetzt aktiv über eine amerikanisch-polnische Informationskampagne gegen Deutschland. Haben sie schon was davon gehört? Könnten Sie das kommentieren? Artikel zum Thema: meinbezirk.at/steinfeld/c-po…
View summary

Tweets from Secondary Infektion account @KPrydius directly to German nationalist politicians, promoting a false story planted by the operation.

[8] Attributed to "Joel Forster," "Iraq. Syria. Venezuela? The U.S. prepares a chemical attack…," indybay.org, March 1, 2019, https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2019/03/01/18821536.php, archived at https://archive.is/LUKij.

[9] Attributed to "jknotts," "Why the Democrats collude with Ukraine?" debatepolitics.com, April 18, 2019, https://www.debatepolitics.com/us-partisan-politics-and-political-platforms/354334-why-democrats-collude-ukraine.html, archived at http://archive.ph/Mwt1E.

[10] See, for example, the archived account @KPrydius at http://archive.is/yj8B3.

October 21 | The UK Leaks

The leak of the unredacted UK-US trade documents began on Monday, October 21, 2019, when Reddit user u/gregoratior posted a link to the documents, together with a summary of their content, in two popular subreddits: r/worldpolitics (978,000 members as of December 1, 2019)[11] and r/wikileaks (141,000 members as of the same date)[12]:

> I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have much time to look through the internal secret documents that contain specific details of the upcoming FTA [Free Trade Agreement] between the UK and the USA (...) From now on, it is no longer a secret who is pushing the UK government to no-deal Brexit.

The article provided a summary of the 451-page leak, pulling out selected highlights and claiming that they showed the negative effects UK citizens would suffer from a free-trade deal with the United States, for example, "British citizens will inevitably face a sharp decline in the quality of imported food products" and "Cooperation is out of the question while [EU data protection law] GDPR stands in the way of American corporations like Facebook and Google."

The article did not mention the possible impact on the British National Health Service (NHS) or any details on the pricing of pharmaceuticals, even though concerns over this issue have been among the most prominent in UK domestic reporting.[13]

The u/gregoratior account was created on May 4, 2017,[14] but its earliest known post was on September 12, 2019. Its profile picture was taken from a photo series by French photographer Romain Laurent.[15]

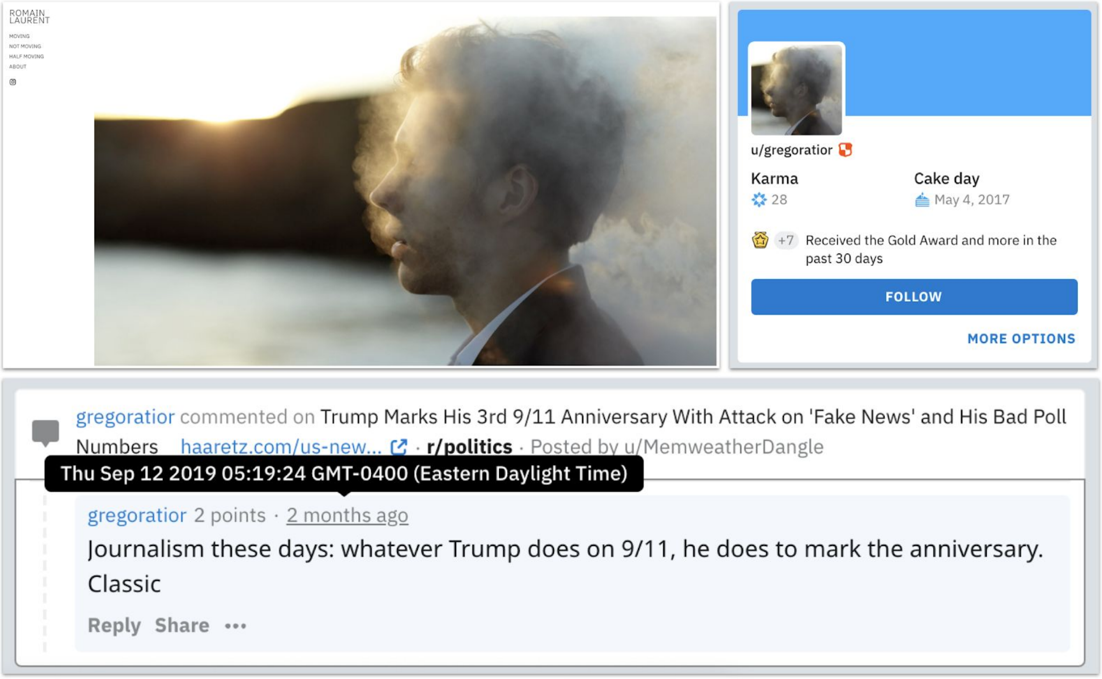
[11] Attributed to "gregoratior," "OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically standing on her knees working on a trade agreement with the US," r/worldpolitics, October 21, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/, archived at http://archive.ph/3oFrv.

[12] The post was later removed, but remains at https://www.removeddit.com/r/WikiLeaks/comments/dkxm37/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/ and is archived at http://archive.ph/aqyPG.

[13] For example, Sarah Neville, "Could the NHS be part of a US-UK trade deal?" Financial Times, June 5, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/7795cb64-877d-11e9-97ea-05ac2431f453.

[14] https://www.reddit.com/user/gregoratior/, archived at http://archive.ph/ZGnRz.

[15] https://romain-laurent.com/Burnout.



u/gregoratior

Karma
28

Cake day
May 4, 2017

+7 Received the Gold Award and more in the past 30 days

gregoratior commented on Trump Marks His 3rd 9/11 Anniversary With Attack on 'Fake News' and His Bad Poll Numbers haaretz.com/us-new... · r/politics · Posted by u/MemweatherDangle

Thu Sep 12 2019 05:19:24 GMT-0400 (Eastern Daylight Time)

gregoratior 2 points · 2 months ago

Journalism these days: whatever Trump does on 9/11, he does to mark the anniversary. Classic

Top right, u/gregoriator, showing its profile picture and creation date ("cake day") on May 4, 2017. Top left, "Burnout" by Romain Laurent. Bottom, u/gregoriator's first known post.

Before posting its leak, the account made 16 comments to different subreddits and created a subreddit of its own called r/ukwhistleblower but did not post anything there.[16] Some of its comments also display grammatical errors that matched those made by "Secondary Infektion":

> "Why I am not surprised at all?"[17]
>
> "It s really fun to watch how easily mass media can turn every point on the map into a hotspot of the US politics."[18]
>
> "I wish he starts his every public speaking saying this."[19]

The article that shared the trade leaks was also written in clumsy English that resembled the language used by "Secondary Infektion":

[16] https://www.reddit.com/r/ukwhistleblower/, archived at http://archive.ph/xllBQ.

[17] https://www.reddit.com/r/Libertarian/comments/d6fmpv/cnn_caught_staging_the_narrative_before_making/f0v6288/?context=3, archived at http://archive.ph/6Y0Wq.

[18] https://www.reddit.com/r/politics/comments/d7zymt/reporters_should_stop_helping_donald_trump_spread/f17jbqd/?context=3, archived at http://archive.ph/quQ5f.

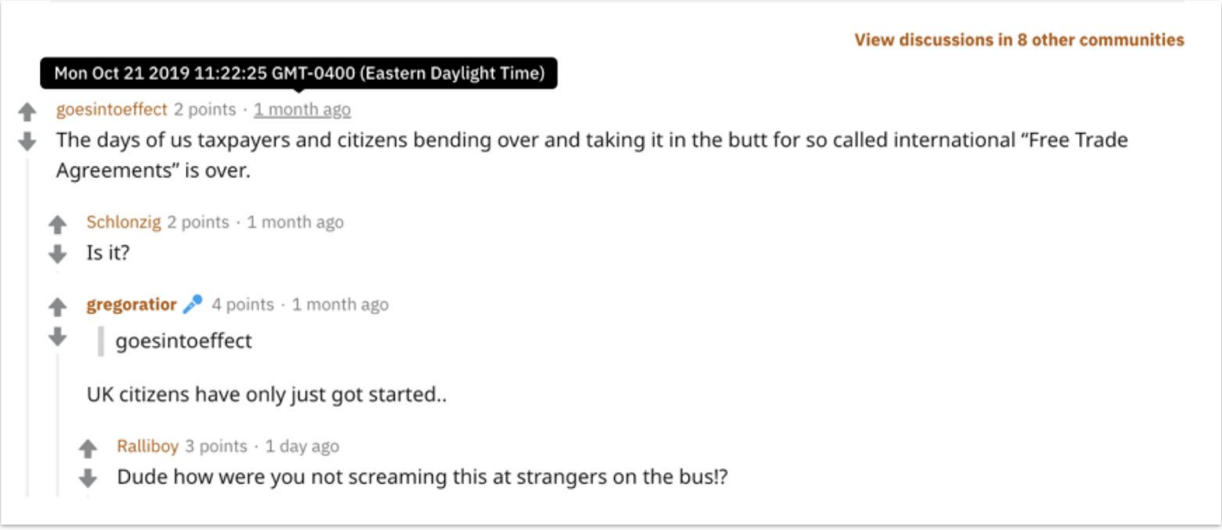
[19] https://www.reddit.com/r/unitedkingdom/comments/d5tjko/boris_johnson_makes_his_case_to_the_supreme_court/f0rpx3x/?context=3, archived at http://archive.ph/eAm5D.

> "Great Britain is practically standing on her knees…"
>
> "The United States is strongly determined to expand markets thus placing UK in 'take it or leave it' position."
>
> "The language and the tone in which negotiations are held sometimes give the impression that the second side of the process is not Great Britain, but a third world country."
>
> "Based on the content of these documents, we can now imagine what a terrible price Britain will have to pay to conclude a free trade agreement with the United States - from betraying partners and the interests of own citizens to betraying her national policies."

Linguistic markers are never sufficient on their own to attribute the origin of a user account. Their significance in this case is that they closely resemble the type of linguistic errors observed in Secondary Infektion posts.

To recap: the mysterious user seemingly originated the leak of a diplomatic document by posting it around online, just six weeks before the UK elections. This raises the question of how the user got hold of the document in the first place. This is the single most pressing question that arises from this report.

Despite the scale of the leak's later impact, it passed almost unnoticed at first. The post only gained one response on October 21, some three hours after it was published; the next reply came two days later.



View discussions in 8 other communities

Mon Oct 21 2019 11:22:25 GMT-0400 (Eastern Daylight Time)

goesintoeffect 2 points · 1 month ago

The days of us taxpayers and citizens bending over and taking it in the butt for so called international "Free Trade Agreements" is over.

Schlonzig 2 points · 1 month ago

Is it?

gregoratior 4 points · 1 month ago

> goesintoeffect

UK citizens have only just got started..

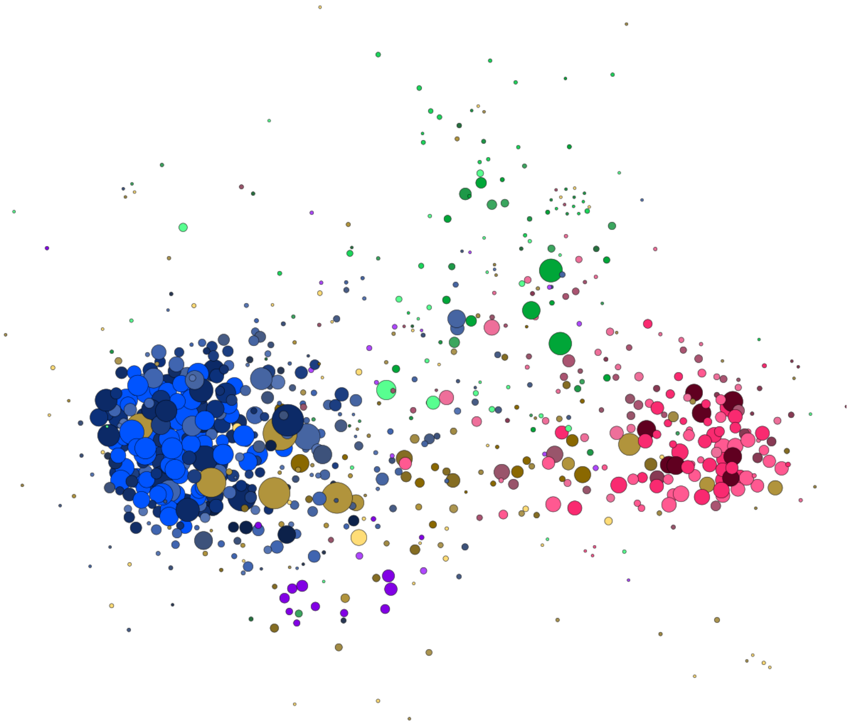
Ralliboy 3 points · 1 day ago

Dude how were you not screaming this at strangers on the bus!?

The first response to u/gregoratior's post, on October 21. The next response was October 23.

A date-limited Google search for exact phrases used in the original post did not show any other copies posted elsewhere over the next two days. By November 21, 2019, the Reddit post had only received 13 upvotes (i.e., positive reactions), according to a web archive made that day.[20] The r/worldpolitics subreddit typically sees an average of at least one new story posted every five minutes, meaning that u/gregoratior's post to that subreddit would likely have vanished off the bottom of the screen in less than an hour.

All the evidence shows that u/gregoratior's post went all but unnoticed on the day it was made, and the day after.



The network map above shows the dissemination footprint for the Reddit URLs on Twitter. The network is small, indicating very little traffic. The blue cluster comprises supporters of the Labour Party and Corbyn, and the red clusters are those in opposition to Brexit. There are a small number of media commentators scattered throughout the map (in green).

[20] https://web.archive.org/web/20191121125933/https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

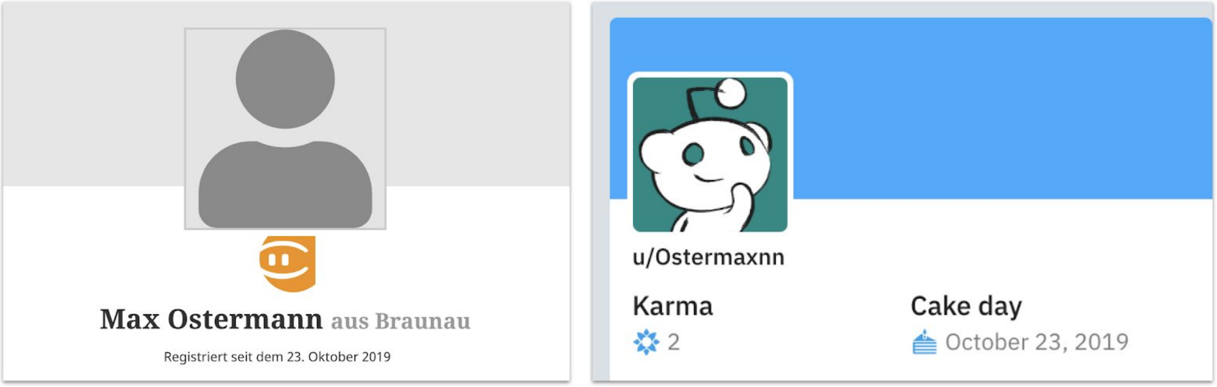
October 23, 2019 | German Amplification

On the morning of October 23 (European time), a user variously called “Max Ostermann from Braunau”, “Ostermaxnn,” and “Ostermax” posted a German article linking to the u/gregoratior leak on three websites: meinbezirk[.]at,[21] Reddit’s main German subreddit r/de,[22] and homment[.]com.[23] The brief article summarized the findings in the leak and pitched them as an act of the UK betraying the EU:

> “There were six bilateral meetings, 12 themes were discussed, the report has 451 pages! What do you say to that? And all behind EU partners’ backs!”
>
> “It’s obvious that the Americans know everything that’s happening behind the scenes in Europe, and of course they’ll exploit the information they get from the Brits politically. Really, the negotiations between the USA and Great Britain are nothing but treason.”

Both “Max Ostermann from Braunau”[24] and u/ostermaxnn[25] were created on the day they posted their articles; neither one ever posted again. Homment does not show when the Ostermax account was created, but online searches did not reveal any other articles on the site attributed to the same persona.

[21] Attributed to “Max Ostermann from Braunau,” “Brexit: Hinter No-Deal stehen die USA”, meinbezirk[.]at, October 23, 2019, archived at http://archive.ph/bnOtN.
[22] Attributed to “u/Ostermaxnn,” “Brexit: Hinter No-Deal stehen die USA,” Reddit, October 23, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/de/comments/dlwnfj/brexit_hinter_nodeal_stehen_die_usa/, archived at http://web.archive.org/web/20191128210521/https://www.reddit.com/r/de/comments/dlwnfj/brexit_hinter_nodeal_stehen_die_usa/.
[23] Attributed to “Ostermax,” “Brexit: Hinter No-Deal stehen die USA,” homment[.]com, October 23, 2019, https://homment.com/sarOAHFnRyB2s3VBlXE5, archived at http://archive.ph/AsR8M.
[24] Profile at https://www.meinbezirk.at/braunau/profile-550935/max-ostermann?type=article, archived at http://archive.ph/L3c8N.
[25] Profile at https://www.reddit.com/user/Ostermaxnn/, archived at http://archive.ph/pGswr.



Max Ostermann aus Braunau

Registriert seit dem 23. Oktober 2019

u/Ostermaxnn

Karma

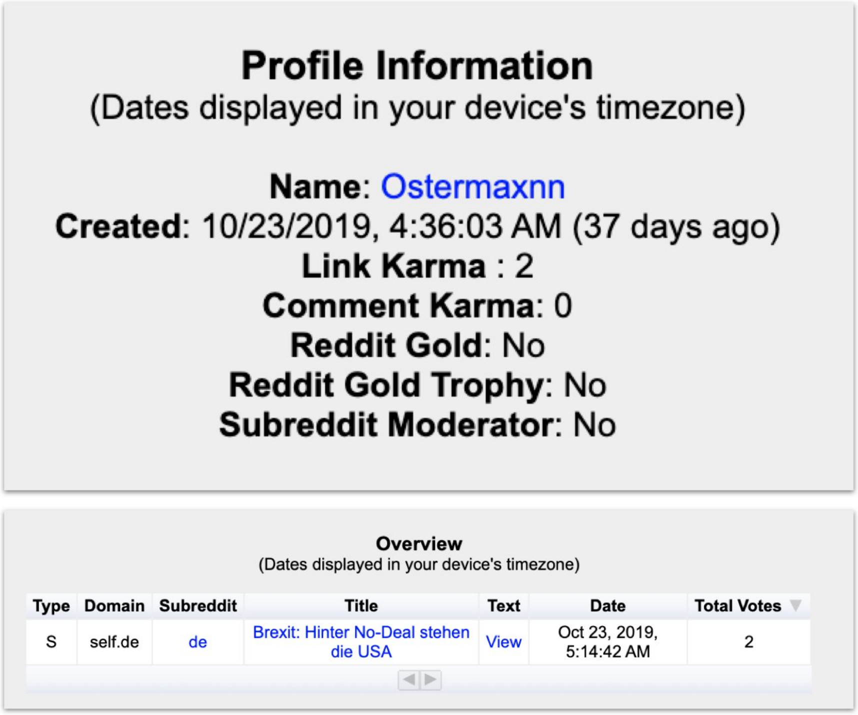
2

Cake day

October 23, 2019

Profile pictures of “Max Ostermann from Braunau” and u/Ostermaxnn, showing the creation date, October 23, 2019.

Moreover, the time lag between account creation and posting was extremely short. According to the open-source tool redective.com, which analyzes the metadata of Reddit accounts, u/Ostermaxnn was created at 04:36 ET on October 23, just 40 minutes before posting its only article at 05:14 ET.



Profile Information
(Dates displayed in your device's timezone)

Name: Ostermaxnn
Created: 10/23/2019, 4:36:03 AM (37 days ago)
Link Karma : 2
Comment Karma: 0
Reddit Gold: No
Reddit Gold Trophy: No
Subreddit Moderator: No

Overview
(Dates displayed in your device's timezone)

Type	Domain	Subreddit	Title	Text	Date	Total Votes
S	self.de	de	Brexit: Hinter No-Deal stehen die USA	View	Oct 23, 2019, 5:14:42 AM	2

Screenshot from redective.com, showing the creation date and time and posting date and time for u/Ostermaxnn. The screenshots were taken on a computer set to Eastern Time.

This practice of employing single-use burner accounts on exactly the same combination of websites used by Secondary Infektion's operators is a strong behavioral parallel between Secondary Infektion and the UK trade leaks dissemination operation.

This combination of websites is itself unusual. According to the web analytics platform SimilarWeb.com, meinbezirk[.]at, which is a site for Austrian local news, is the 36th most visited site in Austria,[26] with 2.45 million unique monthly visits; of those, over four-fifths come from Austria. [27] Reddit is the 32nd most visited site in Austria and the 39th most visited in Germany. But homment[.]com is the 381,018th most visited website in Germany, with under 5,000 unique visitors per month, three-quarters of them from Germany and just 4 percent from Austria.[28]

A casual user is highly unlikely to create three single-use burner accounts on three websites repeatedly used by Secondary Infektion, all on the same day, use them to post the same article, and then decide to abandon all three. This promotion of the original, English-language Reddit post in the German-language space can only realistically have come from the original Secondary Infektion operators returning to their old techniques or from an unknown actor mimicking Secondary Infektion.

In either case, this amplification pattern constitutes a deliberate information operation.

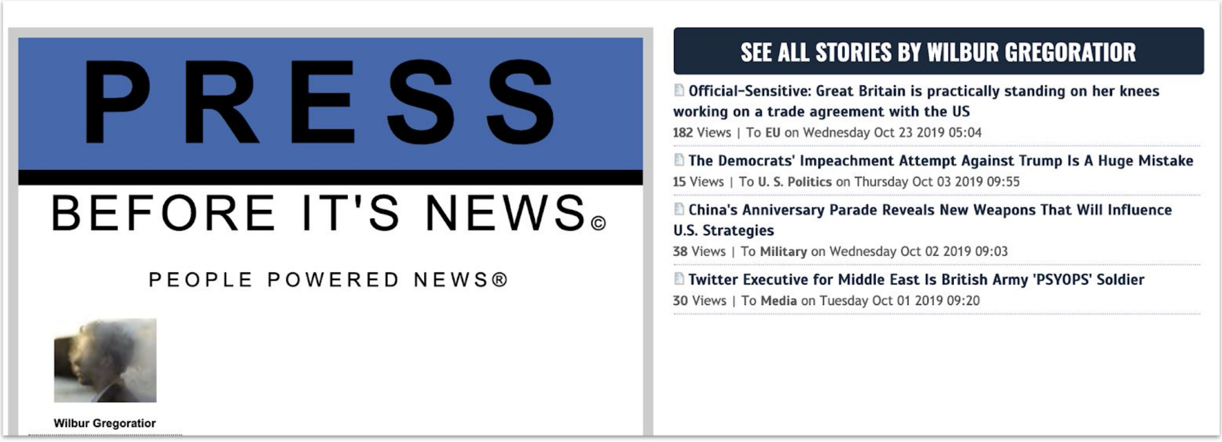
Given that the English-language post passed almost unnoticed in the English-language sphere and was not copied to any other website, it is also highly unlikely that the Max Ostermann operator happened to find it online. It is far more likely that the persona was part of the same operation and aimed to amplify the leaks and inflame anti-UK and anti-American sentiment in the German-language online space.

October 23, 2019 | English Amplification

While the German amplification operation was ongoing, an English-language user called Wilbur Gregoratior posted a verbatim copy of the original English-language article to the conspiracy

[26] https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/austria.
[27] https://pro.similarweb.com/#/website/worldwide-overview/meinbezirk[.]at/*/999/3m?webSource=Total.
[28] https://pro.similarweb.com/#/website/worldwide-overview/homment[.]com/*/999/3m?webSource=Total.

website beforeitsnews[.]com.[29] This persona used the same profile picture as the Reddit user, as well as the same surname.[30]



PRESS

BEFORE IT'S NEWS©

PEOPLE POWERED NEWS®

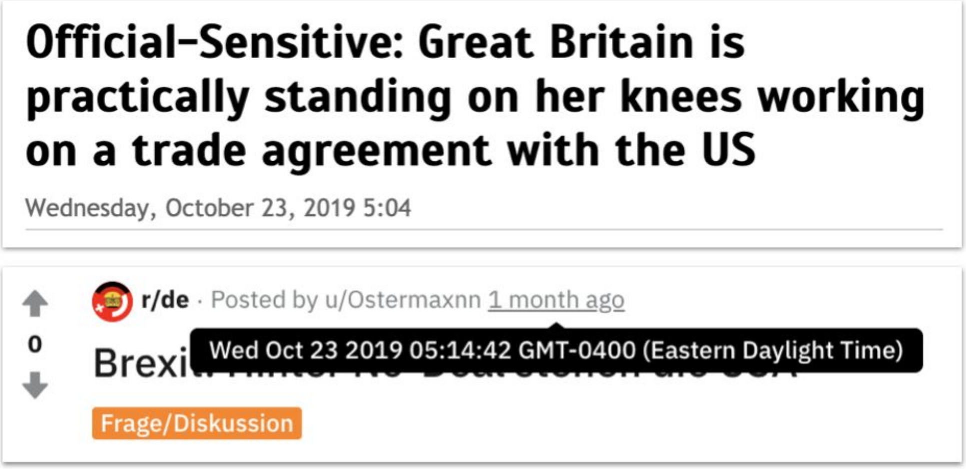
Wilbur Gregoratior

SEE ALL STORIES BY WILBUR GREGORATIOR

- Official-Sensitive: Great Britain is practically standing on her knees working on a trade agreement with the US
  182 Views | To EU on Wednesday Oct 23 2019 05:04
- The Democrats' Impeachment Attempt Against Trump Is A Huge Mistake
  15 Views | To U. S. Politics on Thursday Oct 03 2019 09:55
- China's Anniversary Parade Reveals New Weapons That Will Influence U.S. Strategies
  38 Views | To Military on Wednesday Oct 02 2019 09:03
- Twitter Executive for Middle East Is British Army 'PSYOPS' Soldier
  30 Views | To Media on Tuesday Oct 01 2019 09:20

Author page for "Wilbur Gregoratior," showing the profile picture and earlier posts.

The article was timestamped 05:04. The site stamps its stories in 24-hour format and displays them in Eastern Time: thus the English article was posted 36 minutes after the u/Ostermaxnn account was created on Reddit and ten minutes *before* it published its only post.



Official-Sensitive: Great Britain is practically standing on her knees working on a trade agreement with the US

Wednesday, October 23, 2019 5:04

r/de · Posted by u/Ostermaxnn 1 month ago

0

Brexi

Wed Oct 23 2019 05:14:42 GMT-0400 (Eastern Daylight Time)

Frage/Diskussion

Top, the header of the article on Before It's News, showing the time and date. Bottom, the header of the u/Ostermaxnn post, showing the time and date.

[29] Attributed to "Wilbur Gregoratior", "Official-Sensitive: Great Britain is practically standing on her knees working on a trade agreement with the US", Before It's News, October 23, 2019, https://beforeitsnews.com/eu/2019/10/official-sensitive-great-britain-is-practically-standing-on-her-knees-working-on-a-trade-agreement-with-the-us-2652245.html, archived at http://archive.ph/IjNJQ.

[30] Profile at https://beforeitsnews.com/v3/contributor/bio/?uid=709340, archived at http://archive.ph/w5NVP.

It is possible that this timing was coincidental, but unlikely, given how little attention the original Reddit post received. It is more likely that the different posts were the work of a single operation, pushing out their content in multiple languages on multiple channels.

Unlike the German personas, “Wilbur Gregoratior” published more than one post on beforeitsnews[.]com. The account posted one article each on October 1,[31] October 2,[32] and October 3[33] and then fell silent until its October 23 byline. However, all three of these early articles were copied from other sources, the news site *Middle East Eye*[34] and the conspiracy site *Moon of Alabama*.[35,36] The copying was overt, in the sense that the persona provided links to the originals at the foot of the article, but it nevertheless served to give the persona a small stock of material that likely served to build a character and a potential audience. Similar behavior regarding the re-use of news articles has been observed in a number of information operations.[37]

The parallels between Wilbur Gregoratior and Secondary Infektion are less obvious than in the case of the German accounts, but they exist nonetheless. Secondary Infektion also used beforeitsnews[.]com at least twice, once with a single-use burner account[38] and once with a more

[31] Attributed to “Wilbur Gregoratior,” “Twitter Executive for Middle East Is British Army 'PSYOPS' Soldier,” Before It’s News, October 1, 2019, https://beforeitsnews.com/media/2019/10/twitter-executive-for-middle-east-is-british-army-psyops-soldier-2509214.html, archived at http://archive.ph/ANtDw.

[32] Attributed to “Wilbur Gregoratior,” “China's Anniversary Parade Reveals New Weapons That Will Influence U.S. Strategies,” Before It’s News, October 2, 2019, https://beforeitsnews.com/military/2019/10/chinas-anniversary-parade-reveals-new-weapons-that-will-influence-u-s-strategies-2482856.html, archived at http://archive.ph/tb7uj.

[33] Attributed to “Wilbur Gregoratior,” “The Democrats' Impeachment Attempt Against Trump Is a Huge Mistake,” Before It’s News, October 3, 2019, https://beforeitsnews.com/u-s-politics/2019/10/the-democrats-impeachment-attempt-against-trump-is-a-huge-mistake-2578924.html, archived at http://archive.ph/wj6wo.

[34] Ian Cobain, “EXCLUSIVE: Twitter executive for Middle East is British Army 'psyops' soldier,” Middle East Eye, September 30, 2019, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/twitter-executive-also-part-time-officer-uk-army-psychological-warfare-unit, archived at http://archive.ph/aRXdo.

[35] Attributed to “b,” “China's Anniversary Parade Reveals New Weapons That Will Influence U.S. Strategies,” Moon of Alabama, October 1, 2019, https://www.moonofalabama.org/2019/10/chinas-anniversary-parade-reveals-new-weapons-that-will-influence-us-strategies.html, archived at http://archive.ph/W9jWw.

[36] Attributed to “b,” “The Democrats' Impeachment Attempt Against Trump Is a Huge Mistake,” Moon of Alabama, September 25, 2019, https://www.moonofalabama.org/2019/09/the-democrats-impeachment-attempt-against-trump-is-a-huge-mistake.html, archived at http://archive.ph/N3lIb.

[37] See for example Jeffrey St Clair and Joshua Frank, “Ghosts in the Propaganda Machine,” Counterpunch, January 5, 2018, https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/01/05/ghosts-in-the-propaganda-machine/, archived at http://archive.ph/OIdrT.

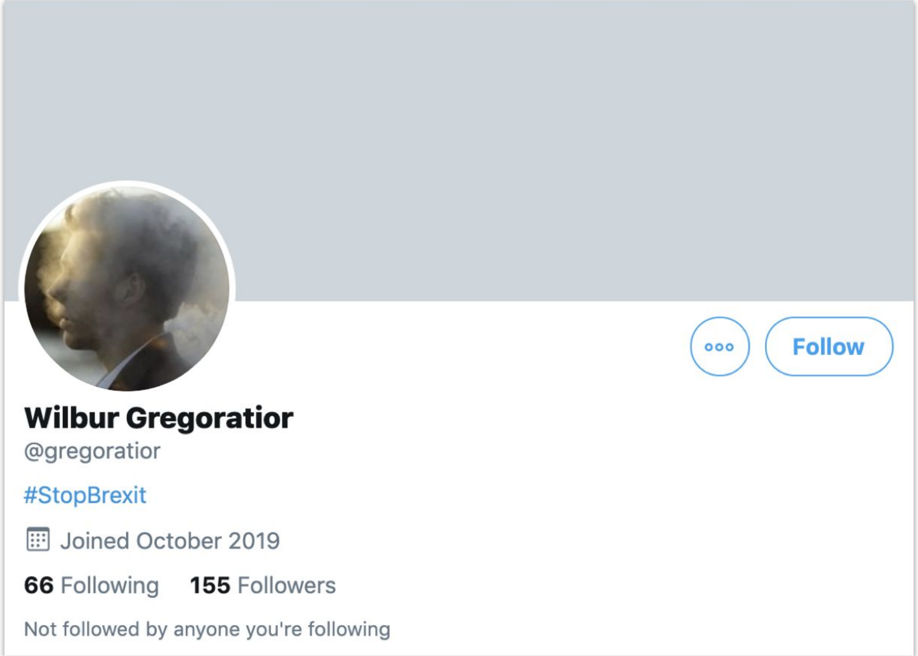
[38] Attributed to “Widobson,” “After Brexit, Northern Ireland May Obtain a Special Status in the EU,” Before It’s News, August 9, 2018, https://beforeitsnews[.]com/v3/politics/2018/3017352.html, archived at http://archive.is/9UMyq.

prolific and developed persona.[39] That the Wilbur Gregoratior account posted its story on beforeitsnews[.]com while the German Max Ostermann account was setting up its story on r/de marks this as the probable work of a single operation.

October 23, 2019 | Twitter Amplification

Beforeitsnews[.]com was not the only place the operators amplified the original Reddit article on October 23. The same day, a Twitter account called @gregoratior began tweeting a link to the article to various high-profile UK politicians, most notably opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, by tagging the politicians' Twitter accounts in the posts.

The account gave its name as Wilbur Gregoratior and used the same profile picture as the persona on Reddit and beforeitsnews[.]com. The Twitter account was created on October 2, 2019 but did not post until October 23.[40]



Wilbur Gregoratior
@gregoratior

#StopBrexit

Joined October 2019

66 Following **155** Followers

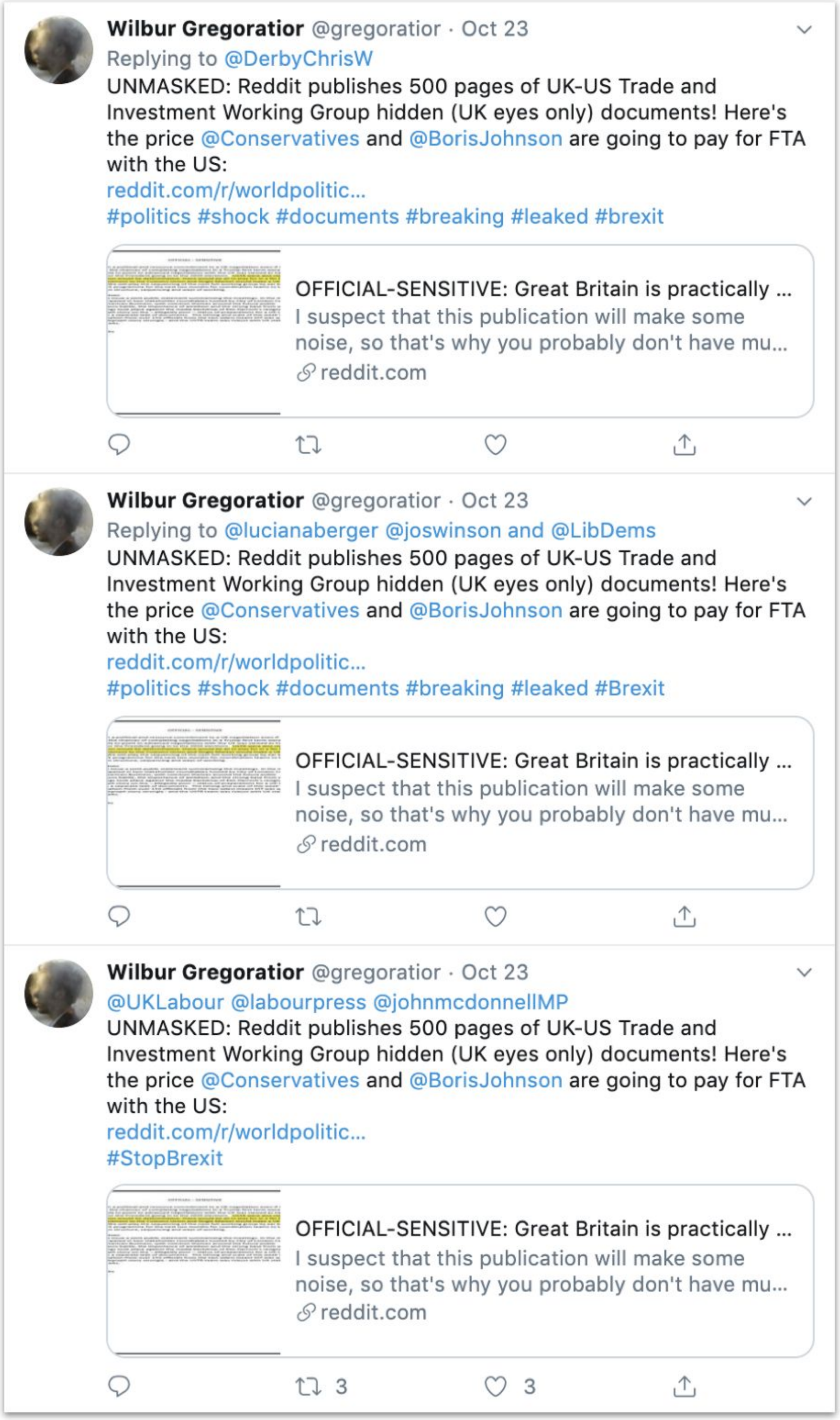
Not followed by anyone you're following

The Twitter profile of "Wilbur Gregoratior."

[39] Ben Nimmo, Kanishk Karan and Eto Buziashvili, "Russian Op 4: The Dark Lady Sings," DFRLab, June 22, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/russian-op-4-the-dark-lady-sings-48d59859d46f, archived at http://archive.ph/OVLr9.

[40] The account was suspended on November 28, 2019. Its full portfolio of 83 tweets is archived here: http://archive.ph/8gaZz.

The account's sole activity was to amplify the Reddit link. It posted the identical tweet 22 times on October 23, 10 times on October 24, and 19 times on October 25. Every time, it tagged a politician, a journalist, or (rarely) a pro-Assad or pro-Putin blogger.



Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 23
Replying to @DerbyChrisW
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#politics #shock #documents #breaking #leaked #brexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically ...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have mu...
reddit.com

Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 23
Replying to @lucianaberger @joswinson and @LibDems
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#politics #shock #documents #breaking #leaked #Brexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically ...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have mu...
reddit.com

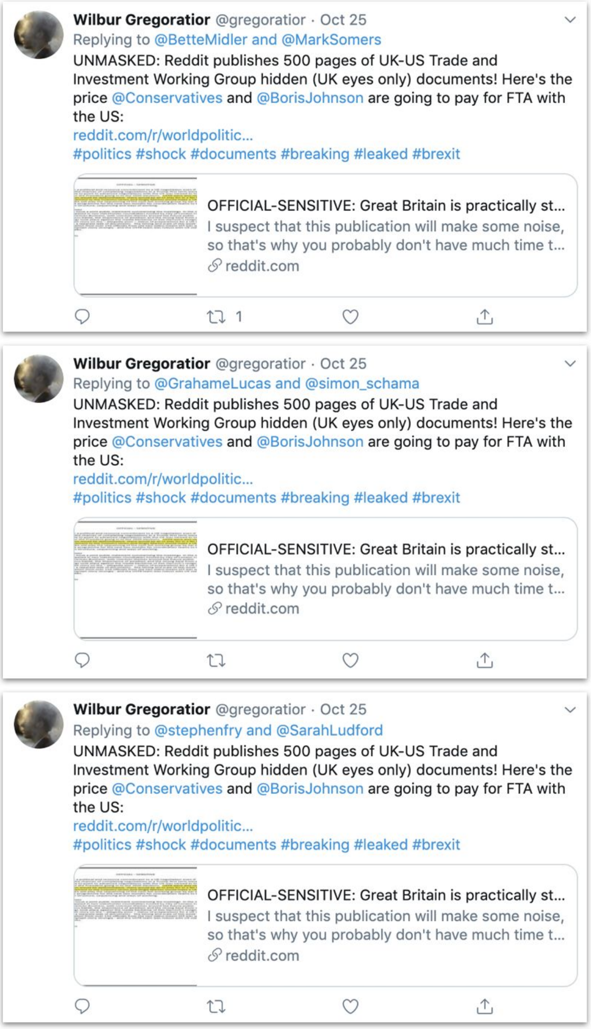
Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 23
@UKLabour @labourpress @johnmcdonnellMP
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#StopBrexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically ...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have mu...
reddit.com

@gregoratior's first three tweets, tagging the UK Labour and Liberal Democrat parties and a number of members of parliament from these parties.

This was also the behavior exhibited by the earlier Secondary Infektion account @Kprydius.[41] Though a weak signal on its own, as many would-be influencers repeat their own posts and tag genuine influencers in an attempt to climb the social-media ladder, it gains significance in the broader context of the operation.

Unlike the other assets in this network, the Twitter account continued sporadically posting into November, spreading its net ever wider to include comedian and actor Stephen Fry, historian Simon Schama, and actress Bette Midler.



Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 25
Replying to @BetteMidler and @MarkSomers
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#politics #shock #documents #breaking #leaked #brexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically st...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have much time t...
reddit.com

1

Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 25
Replying to @GrahameLucas and @simon_schama
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#politics #shock #documents #breaking #leaked #brexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically st...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have much time t...
reddit.com

Wilbur Gregoratior @gregoratior · Oct 25
Replying to @stephenfry and @SarahLudford
UNMASKED: Reddit publishes 500 pages of UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group hidden (UK eyes only) documents! Here's the price @Conservatives and @BorisJohnson are going to pay for FTA with the US:
reddit.com/r/worldpolitic...
#politics #shock #documents #breaking #leaked #brexit

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE: Great Britain is practically st...
I suspect that this publication will make some noise, so that's why you probably don't have much time t...
reddit.com

Tweets by @Gregoratior to Bette Midler (top), Egyptian radio host Mark Somers, Simon Schama, journalist Grahame Lucas, Stephen Fry, and Liberal Democrat peer Sarah Ludford.

[41] Described by Ben Nimmo, Eto Buziashvili and Reema Hibrawi, "Russian Op 5: Target Germany and Immigrants," DFRLab, June 22, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/russian-op-5-target-germany-and-immigrants-13202a6b1917, archived at http://archive.ph/y5PxV.

The account tweeted its message at Financial Times chief political correspondent Jim Pickard (@PickardJE) seven times on November 6, in an apparent last-ditch attempt to be noticed. It also tweeted four times to the leader of the Scottish National Party, Nicola Sturgeon.

November 19, 2019 | Impact

In the first weeks after the posting of the leaks, none of the attempts at generating momentum via social media gained significant traction. It was not until after November 19, 2019 that the Reddit post finally took off. On that day, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn accused Prime Minister Boris Johnson of wanting to "sell out" the NHS in trade talks with the United States and showed him a redacted version of the document that had been obtained under the UK's Freedom of Information Act (FoIA).[42] On November 21, pressure group Global Justice Now (GJN) confirmed that they had issued the FoIA request.[43] The BBC then reported that:[44]

> "GJN spokesperson Jonathan Stevenson says that after the debate, the organisation was contacted via email and alerted to the presence of the uncensored documents on Reddit."

The email address from which the mail came has not been confirmed, making it unclear whether the Gregoratior persona was behind these later efforts to disseminate the leaks through email. GJN's Director Nick Dearden told Vice News that the sender was effectively anonymous; Dearden did not reveal the email address[45]:

> Vice News (V): *You got the redacted documents earlier this year. When did you get the unredacted documents?*
> Nick Dearden (D): We only saw them for the first time a couple of days ago. Somebody basically emailed us saying, "Look, I've seen the work you've been doing on this, I've seen the secret documents, I have the real things and here they are," and they pointed us to them.

[42] Jon Stone, "Election debate: Corbyn accuses Boris Johnson of wanting to 'sell NHS to Trump' after Brexit," The Independent, October 19, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/election-debate-boris-johnson-nhs-trump-corbyn-trade-deal-brexit-itv-a9209811.html, archived at http://archive.ph/udbsQ.
[43] "Liz Truss must release records of US-UK trade talks following drug prices 'pledge,'" Global Justice Now, November 21, 2019, https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2019/nov/21/liz-truss-must-release-records-us-uk-trade-talks-following-drug-prices-pledge, archived at http://archive.ph/GDGuL.
[44] Mike Wendling, "General election 2019: Where did the leaked US-UK trade documents come from?" BBC, November 29, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-50589351, archived at http://archive.ph/dJRvS.
[45] Oscar Rickett, "The Inside Story of Labour's 'NHS For Sale' Leak," Vice News, November 28, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/ywaydx/nhs-for-sale-labour-documents-leaks, archived at http://archive.ph/hi3pW

> V: *Are you allowed to tell us who this person is?*
> D: Well, I don't know!
>
> V: *So they emailed you from a secure email, with no name?*
> D: That's right. And in fact we even tried to email back and it wouldn't let us email back, so it was clearly an email set up for the purpose of distributing these documents.
>
> V: *Did you get nothing else from them?*
> D: That's it, that's all we got. And then we looked at them and there's no way someone could sit down and make up trade documents like that, and we compared them against our redacted documents.
>
> V: *It now turns out that someone put them on Reddit…*
> D: My assumption is that's the same person and that they probably overestimated the reach of just putting something on Reddit. I guess they had seen Jeremy Corbyn on the leaders debate holding up our redacted documents, and I think they sent it to the Labour Party as well, because the party phoned me to ask about them and it seemed as though they had seen them already.

On November 27, Corbyn presented the full, unredacted documents at a press conference,[46] and the release triggered widespread media coverage,[47] and led to a number of investigations that traced the original leak back to the Gregoratior Reddit post.[48]

[46] Kylie MacLellan and Elizabeth Piper, "Labour's Corbyn accuses Conservatives of offering up UK health service in U.S. talks," Reuters, November 27, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-election-labour-health/labours-corbyn-accuses-johnson-of-offering-up-uk-health-service-in-us-talks-idUSKBN1Y112P, archived at http://archive.ph/b0XVY.

[47] For example, Frances Perraudin, "Jeremy Corbyn reveals dossier 'proving NHS up for sale,'" The Guardian, November 27, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/nov/27/jeremy-corbyn-reveals-dossier-proving-nhs-up-for-sale ; Bianca Britton, "Jeremy Corbyn reveals 'evidence' the UK's NHS is part of US trade talks," CNN, November 27, 2019, https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/27/uk/jeremy-corbyn-nhs-unredacted-documents-intl-gbr-ge19/index.html; Jack Elsom, "Jeremy Corbyn's dodgy NHS dossier: Labour leader presents year-old preliminary trade talk documents that have been floating around on Reddit as 'proof' the health service is for sale 'to Donald Trump.' So what do they REALLY say?" Daily Mail, November 27, 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7731047/Jeremy-Corbyns-dodgy-NHS-dossier-Labour-leader-presents-year-old-preliminary-trade-talk-documents.html; "Britain's health service is for sale, leaked trade docs suggest," Al Jazeera, November 27, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/britain-health-service-sale-leaked-trade-docs-suggest-191127102742069.html.

[48] Henry Dyer, "From an Austrian news site to 4chan: How the leaked Corbyn documents surfaced online over a month ago", Scram News, November 27, 2019, https://scramnews.com/austrian-news-site-4chan-leaked-jeremy-corbyn-us-uk-trade-nhs-documents-surfaced-online-over-month-ago/, archived at http://archive.ph/s2OXH. See also the BBC report referenced in note 44 above.

If the emails did indeed come from the same operators who posted the leak to Reddit in the first place, Dearden was right: they overestimated the reach of Reddit but found a different way to have an impact on the UK debate, by emailing the leak directly to interested individuals.

Conclusion

The leaked UK documents spent their early public life languishing in unwatched corners of the internet. It was only after the emails and subsequent press conference in late November, over a month after they were first leaked, that they entered the public debate. This case demonstrates how hard information operations try to land their products in front of influencers and the impact it can have when influencers react.

The early attempts to seed and amplify the leak are crucial for understanding how the operation was conducted. The pattern of behavior in English and German mirrored the behavior of known Russian information operation Secondary Infektion, although that operation primarily amplified forgeries, not genuine and apparently unaltered leaks. That mirroring, which included the same combination of websites, the same type of single-use burner accounts, and similar language errors, appears too close to be coincidental.

Two hypotheses are possible. First, the operation could have been run by the same Russian operators who ran Secondary Infektion. Second, it could have been run by unknown operators who wanted to look like Secondary Infektion for unknown reasons. At this juncture and based on the available open-source information, Graphika cannot provide attribution of the operation and hopes that further analysis of this material by others will lead to additional insights.

In either case, the most pressing question is not who was behind the dissemination operation, but how the unredacted documents ended up in their hands in the first place. Public information on how the leak happened might begin to fill in the blanks on the actors behind it.

Appendix:

Reddit takes action against assets involved in disseminating the leaks, corroborates ties to previous Russian operation

On December 6, Reddit published the results of its investigation into the activity that Graphika and Reuters[49] had identified on its platform.[50]

Reddit confirmed that it had found a number of extra assets associated with Secondary Infektion and the Leaks campaign, and stated:

“All of these accounts have the same shared pattern as the original Secondary Infektion group detected, causing us to believe that this was indeed tied to the original group.”

Reddit concluded that the accounts u/gregoratior and u/ostermaxnn were linked to the original Secondary Infektion operation[51] mentioned above in the report and attributed to Russian actors by Facebook’s threat intelligence team. The key outstanding question, as before, is how the documents came to end up on Reddit in the first place.

Reddit also listed the other user accounts that it had identified as related to this operation. Graphika reviewed these and confirmed that their behavior matched the known pattern described in this report, and originally investigated in the Secondary Infektion report: single-use burner accounts that were created, used and abandoned all on the same day, posting articles that also appeared on websites frequented by Secondary Infektion, not least homment[.]com.

[49] Jack Stubbs, “Leak of papers before UK election raises 'spectre of foreign influence' - experts”, Reuters, December 2, 2019, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-election-foreign/leak-of-papers-before-uk-election-raises-spectre-of-foreign-influence-experts-idUKKBN1Y6206.
[50] Reddit security, “Suspected Campaign from Russia on Reddit”, Reddit, December 6, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/redditsecurity/comments/e74nml/suspected_campaign_from_russia_on_reddit/, archived at http://archive.ph/UlJfm.
[51] DFRLab, “Operation Secondary Infektion”, June 22, 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/operation-secondary-infektion/.

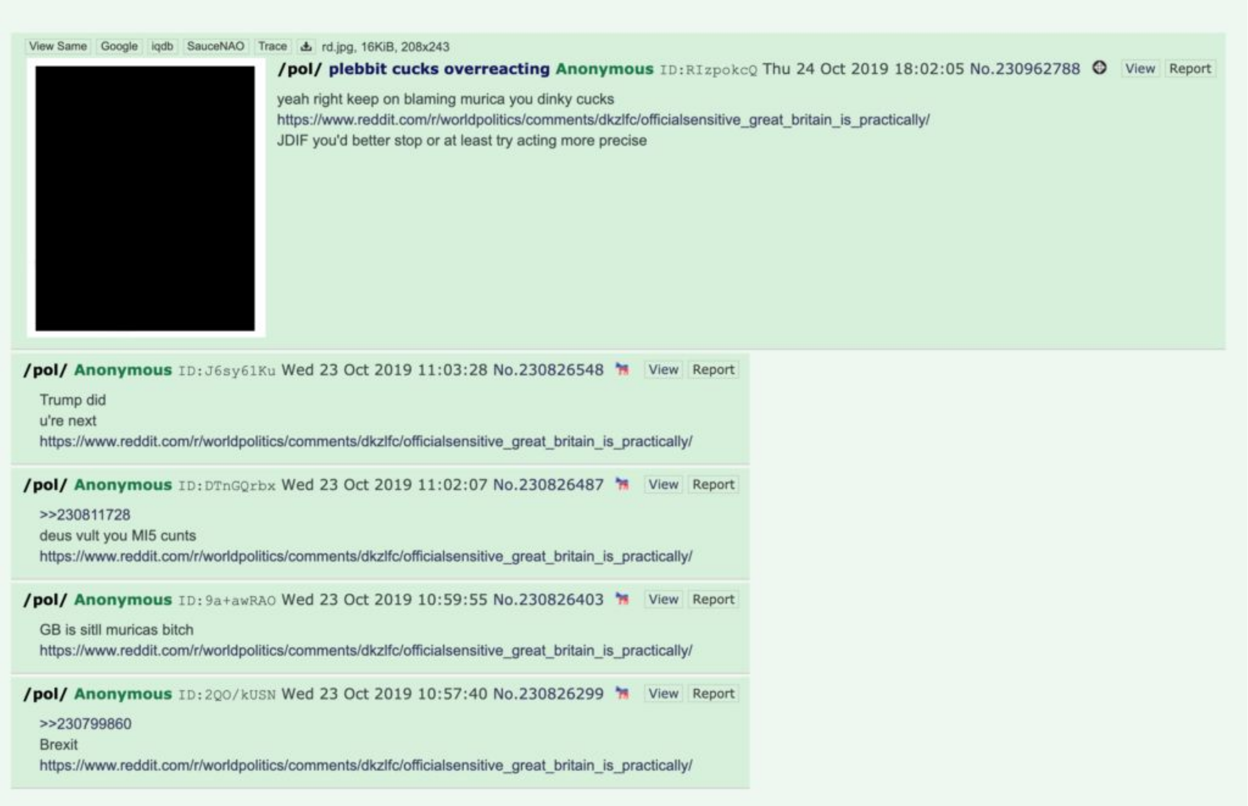
Other appearances of the leaks:

After Graphika's publication, investigative journalist Henry Dyer pointed out that screenshots of the leaked trade documents emerged on image-sharing site Imgur on October 18, three days before the Reddit post.[52] The Imgur post pointed to a file-sharing URL where the full documents could be downloaded.[53] This was the same URL as that shared by u/gregoratior on Reddit three days later. The Imgur post did not provide any information on the user who uploaded the image; as such, it shows that the leaks were already online by October 18, but does not provide an immediate route to attribution.

Dyer also highlighted a number of posts on 4chan's /pol/ board which amplified the leaks. These were posted on October 23, the same day as the German-language posts and @gregoratior's first tweets. They were posted anonymously from five different user IDs, using language typical of 4chan, and pointed users back to the original Reddit post. Open-source evidence cannot determine whether these accounts were linked to the operation or the work of independent actors; 4chan's anonymized system of posting means that these assets, too, are unlikely to lead to a reinforced attribution by open sources.

[52] Henry Dyer, "Telegraph published same leaked trade documents as Corbyn, now claims it's "Russian disinformation"", Scram News, December 3, 2019, https://scramnews.com/telegraph-published-same-leaked-trade-documents-as-jeremy-corbyn-claims-russian-disinformation/, archived at http://archive.ph/rAOPq.

[53] The Imgur post is online at https://imgur.com/LyQUTYA, archived at http://archive.ph/HeJZP.



rd.jpg, 16KiB, 208x243

[redacted]

/pol/ plebbit cucks overreacting Anonymous ID:RIzpokcQ Thu 24 Oct 2019 18:02:05 No.230962788

yeah right keep on blaming murica you dinky cucks
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/
JDIF you'd better stop or at least try acting more precise

/pol/ Anonymous ID:J6sy61Ku Wed 23 Oct 2019 11:03:28 No.230826548

Trump did
u're next
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:DTnGQrbx Wed 23 Oct 2019 11:02:07 No.230826487

>>230811728
deus vult you MI5 cunts
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:9a+awRAO Wed 23 Oct 2019 10:59:55 No.230826403

GB is sitll muricas bitch
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:2QO/kUSN Wed 23 Oct 2019 10:57:40 No.230826299

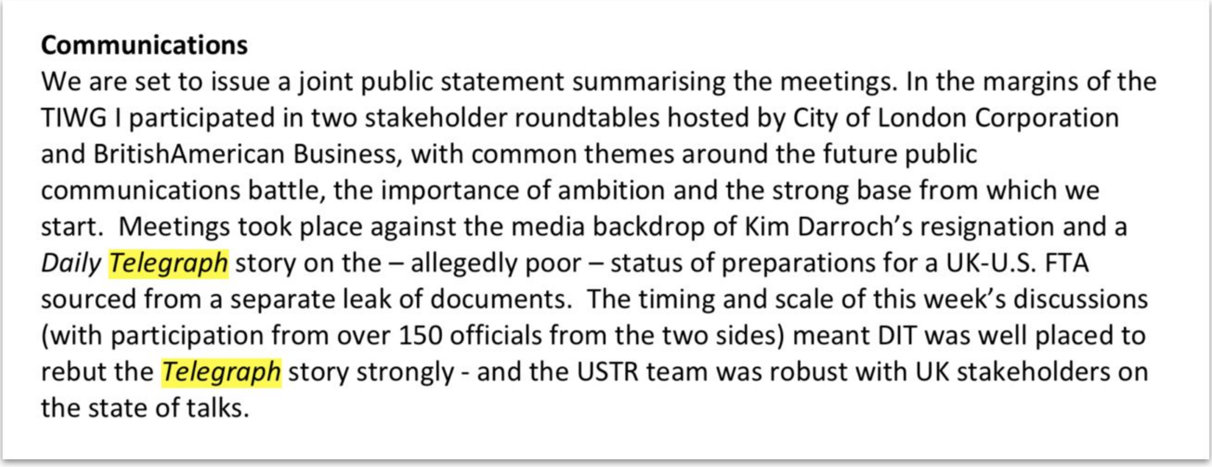
>>230799860
Brexit
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

Screenshot of the 4chan traffic, from Scram News.[54]

A number of researchers also pointed out that the pro-government Daily Telegraph newspaper ran an article on July 10, 2019, that appeared to quote from some of the same documents as were later leaked by u/gregoratior.[55] However, the final round of talks covered in the Gregoratior leaks was held on July 10-11, 2019, after the Telegraph report, and the metadata show that the documents were last modified on July 18, 2019. The leaked readout of the final round of talks even mentioned the Telegraph article.

[54] Henry Dyer, "From an Austrian news site to 4chan: How the leaked Corbyn documents surfaced online over a month ago", Scram News, November 27, 2019, https://scramnews.com/austrian-news-site-4chan-leaked-jeremy-corbyn-us-uk-trade-nhs-documents-surfaced-online-over-month-ago/, archived at http://archive.ph/s2OXH.

[55] Anna Isaac, James Rothwell and Asa Bennett, "Leaked documents expose lack of progress in US-UK trade talks", Daily Telegraph, July 10, 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/07/10/lack-progress-us-uk-trade-talks-laid-bare-cache-leaked-documents/, archived at http://archive.ph/B6hia.



Communications
We are set to issue a joint public statement summarising the meetings. In the margins of the TIWG I participated in two stakeholder roundtables hosted by City of London Corporation and BritishAmerican Business, with common themes around the future public communications battle, the importance of ambition and the strong base from which we start. Meetings took place against the media backdrop of Kim Darroch's resignation and a *Daily Telegraph* story on the – allegedly poor – status of preparations for a UK-U.S. FTA sourced from a separate leak of documents. The timing and scale of this week's discussions (with participation from over 150 officials from the two sides) meant DIT was well placed to rebut the *Telegraph* story strongly - and the USTR team was robust with UK stakeholders on the state of talks.

Extract from the final leaked document, showing the reference to the Daily Telegraph piece.

Given this timing, the leak that led to the Imgur and Reddit posts appears to have constituted a separate and later incident. To date, there is insufficient evidence to conclude whether the two leaks came from the same source.

Graphika is grateful to the open-source community for its collective work in piecing together the history of these leaks, and especially to Professor Martin Innes of Cardiff University, Lisa-Maria Neudert of Oxford University, and Graham Brookie of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, for their review of our initial findings.

As our original report made clear, the most pressing question is how the trade documents made it from the UK government to a Reddit account that appears connected to a known Russian online campaign. Reddit's own disclosure only makes that question more urgent.

Appendix:

Reddit takes action against assets involved in disseminating the leaks, corroborates ties to previous Russian operation

On December 6, Reddit published the results of its investigation into the activity that Graphika and Reuters[49] had identified on its platform.[50]

Reddit confirmed that it had found a number of extra assets associated with Secondary Infektion and the Leaks campaign, and stated:

"All of these accounts have the same shared pattern as the original Secondary Infektion group detected, causing us to believe that this was indeed tied to the original group."

Reddit concluded that the accounts u/gregoratior and u/ostermaxnn were linked to the original Secondary Infektion operation[51] mentioned above in the report and attributed to Russian actors by Facebook's threat intelligence team. The key outstanding question, as before, is how the documents came to end up on Reddit in the first place.

Reddit also listed the other user accounts that it had identified as related to this operation. Graphika reviewed these and confirmed that their behavior matched the known pattern described in this report, and originally investigated in the Secondary Infektion report: single-use burner accounts that were created, used and abandoned all on the same day, posting articles that also appeared on websites frequented by Secondary Infektion, not least homment[.]com.

[49] Jack Stubbs, "Leak of papers before UK election raises 'spectre of foreign influence' - experts", Reuters, December 2, 2019, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-election-foreign/leak-of-papers-before-uk-election-raises-spectre-of-foreign-influence-experts-idUKKBN1Y6206.

[50] Reddit security, "Suspected Campaign from Russia on Reddit", Reddit, December 6, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/redditsecurity/comments/e74nml/suspected_campaign_from_russia_on_reddit/, archived at http://archive.ph/UlJfm.

[51] DFRLab, "Operation Secondary Infektion", June 22, 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/operation-secondary-infektion/.

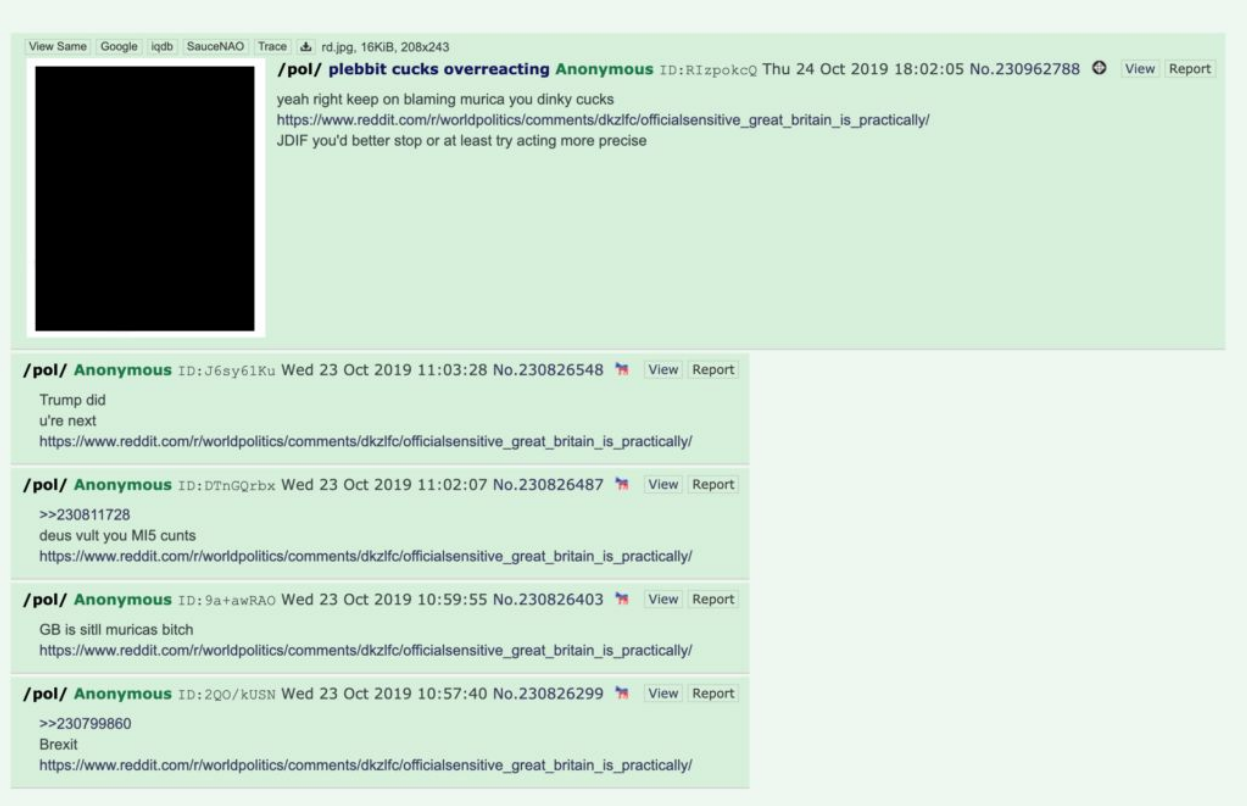
Other appearances of the leaks:

After Graphika's publication, investigative journalist Henry Dyer pointed out that screenshots of the leaked trade documents emerged on image-sharing site Imgur on October 18, three days before the Reddit post.[52] The Imgur post pointed to a file-sharing URL where the full documents could be downloaded.[53] This was the same URL as that shared by u/gregoratior on Reddit three days later. The Imgur post did not provide any information on the user who uploaded the image; as such, it shows that the leaks were already online by October 18, but does not provide an immediate route to attribution.

Dyer also highlighted a number of posts on 4chan's /pol/ board which amplified the leaks. These were posted on October 23, the same day as the German-language posts and @gregoratior's first tweets. They were posted anonymously from five different user IDs, using language typical of 4chan, and pointed users back to the original Reddit post. Open-source evidence cannot determine whether these accounts were linked to the operation or the work of independent actors; 4chan's anonymized system of posting means that these assets, too, are unlikely to lead to a reinforced attribution by open sources.

[52] Henry Dyer, "Telegraph published same leaked trade documents as Corbyn, now claims it's "Russian disinformation"", Scram News, December 3, 2019, https://scramnews.com/telegraph-published-same-leaked-trade-documents-as-jeremy-corbyn-claims-russian-disinformation/, archived at http://archive.ph/rAOPq.

[53] The Imgur post is online at https://imgur.com/LyQUTYA, archived at http://archive.ph/HeJZP.



rd.jpg, 16KiB, 208x243

[redacted]

/pol/ plebbit cucks overreacting Anonymous ID:RIzpokcQ Thu 24 Oct 2019 18:02:05 No.230962788

yeah right keep on blaming murica you dinky cucks
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/
JDIF you'd better stop or at least try acting more precise

/pol/ Anonymous ID:J6sy61Ku Wed 23 Oct 2019 11:03:28 No.230826548

Trump did
u're next
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:DTnGQrbx Wed 23 Oct 2019 11:02:07 No.230826487

>>230811728
deus vult you MI5 cunts
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:9a+awRAO Wed 23 Oct 2019 10:59:55 No.230826403

GB is sitll muricas bitch
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

/pol/ Anonymous ID:2QO/kUSN Wed 23 Oct 2019 10:57:40 No.230826299

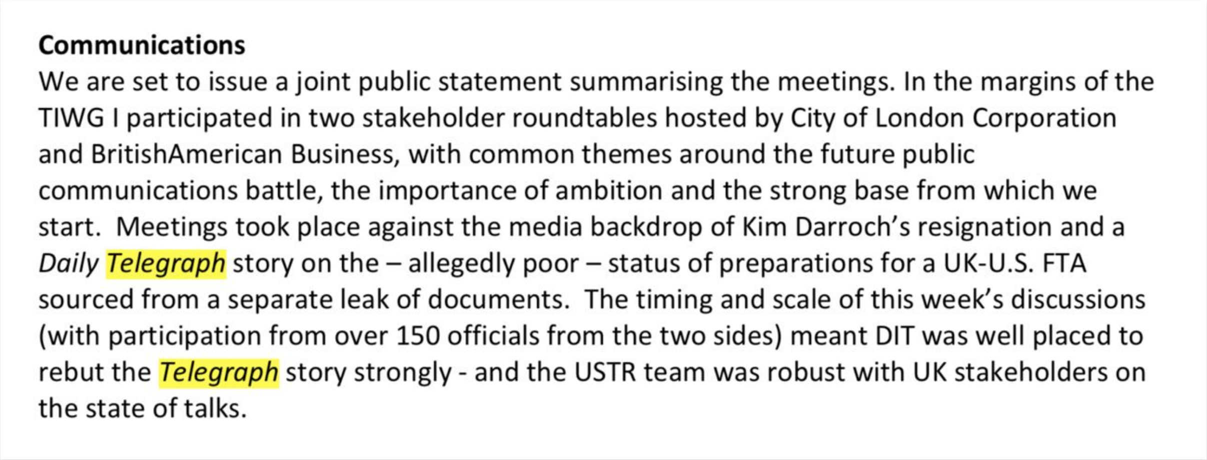
>>230799860
Brexit
https://www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/dkzlfc/officialsensitive_great_britain_is_practically/

Screenshot of the 4chan traffic, from Scram News.[54]

A number of researchers also pointed out that the pro-government Daily Telegraph newspaper ran an article on July 10, 2019, that appeared to quote from some of the same documents as were later leaked by u/gregoratior.[55] However, the final round of talks covered in the Gregoratior leaks was held on July 10-11, 2019, after the Telegraph report, and the metadata show that the documents were last modified on July 18, 2019. The leaked readout of the final round of talks even mentioned the Telegraph article.

[54] Henry Dyer, "From an Austrian news site to 4chan: How the leaked Corbyn documents surfaced online over a month ago", Scram News, November 27, 2019, https://scramnews.com/austrian-news-site-4chan-leaked-jeremy-corbyn-us-uk-trade-nhs-documents-surfaced-online-over-month-ago/, archived at http://archive.ph/s2OXH.

[55] Anna Isaac, James Rothwell and Asa Bennett, "Leaked documents expose lack of progress in US-UK trade talks", Daily Telegraph, July 10, 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/07/10/lack-progress-us-uk-trade-talks-laid-bare-cache-leaked-documents/, archived at http://archive.ph/B6hia.



Communications

We are set to issue a joint public statement summarising the meetings. In the margins of the TIWG I participated in two stakeholder roundtables hosted by City of London Corporation and BritishAmerican Business, with common themes around the future public communications battle, the importance of ambition and the strong base from which we start. Meetings took place against the media backdrop of Kim Darroch's resignation and a *Daily Telegraph* story on the – allegedly poor – status of preparations for a UK-U.S. FTA sourced from a separate leak of documents. The timing and scale of this week's discussions (with participation from over 150 officials from the two sides) meant DIT was well placed to rebut the *Telegraph* story strongly - and the USTR team was robust with UK stakeholders on the state of talks.

Extract from the final leaked document, showing the reference to the Daily Telegraph piece.

Given this timing, the leak that led to the Imgur and Reddit posts appears to have constituted a separate and later incident. To date, there is insufficient evidence to conclude whether the two leaks came from the same source.

Graphika is grateful to the open-source community for its collective work in piecing together the history of these leaks, and especially to Professor Martin Innes of Cardiff University, Lisa-Maria Neudert of Oxford University, and Graham Brookie of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, for their review of our initial findings.

As our original report made clear, the most pressing question is how the trade documents made it from the UK government to a Reddit account that appears connected to a known Russian online campaign. Reddit's own disclosure only makes that question more urgent.