Matt Taibbi **@mtaibbi** *Fri Dec 09 23:04:23 +0000 2022*

1. THREAD: The Twitter Files
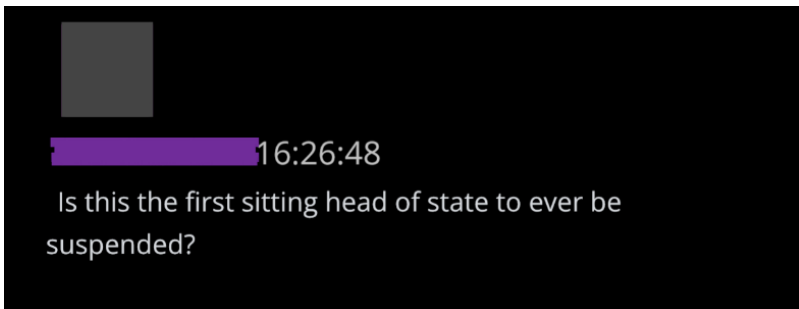
THE REMOVAL OF DONALD TRUMP

Part One: October 2020-January 6th

2. The world knows much of the story of what happened between riots at the Capitol on January 6th, and the removal of President Donald Trump from Twitter on January 8th...

3. We'll show you what hasn't been revealed: the erosion of standards within the company in months before J6, decisions by high-ranking executives to violate their own policies, and more, against the backdrop of ongoing, documented interaction with federal agencies.

4. This first installment covers the period before the election through January 6th. Tomorrow, **@Shellenbergermd** will detail the chaos inside Twitter on January 7th. On Sunday, **@BariWeiss** will reveal the secret internal communications from the key date of January 8th.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 5. Whatever your opinion on the decision to remove Trump that day, the internal communications at Twitter between January 6th-January 8th have clear historical import. Even Twitter's employees understood in the moment it was a landmark moment in the annals of speech. **https://t.co/tQ01n58XFc**

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 6. As soon as they finished banning Trump, Twitter execs started processing new power. They prepared to ban future presidents and White Houses – perhaps even Joe Biden. The "new administration," says one exec, "will not be suspended by Twitter unless absolutely necessary." **https://t.co/lr66YgDIGy**

As stated in our
{https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/ban-evasion|ban evasion policy} , if it is clear that another account is being used for the purposes of evading a ban, it is also subject to suspension. For government accounts, such as @POTUS and @WhiteHouse, we will not suspend those accounts but will take action to limit their use. However, these accounts will be transitioned over to the new administration in due course and will not be suspended by Twitter unless absolutely necessary to alleviate real-world harm.

18:13:10

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 7. Twitter executives removed Trump in part over what one executive called the "context surrounding": actions by Trump and supporters "over the course of the election and frankly last 4+ years." In the end, they looked at a broad picture. But that approach can cut both ways. **https://t.co/Trgvq5jmhS**

11:04:11

Hi Vijaya - i'm working with ▇▇▇▇▇▇ on my team to put together a doc to share with you with a POV from research (ours, academics with whom we have been working, etc.) on DJT's language as coded incitement to further violence
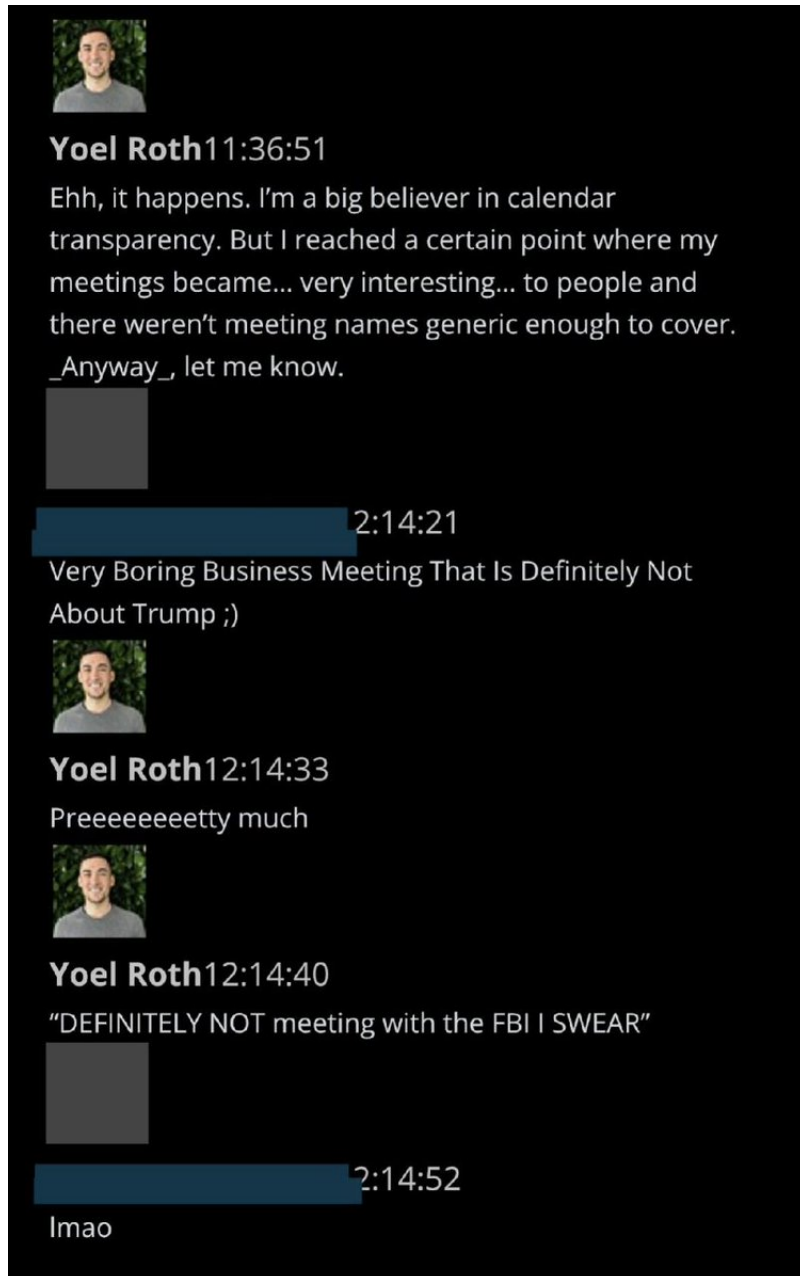
11:05:57

In the mean time, here is our quick take: the decision on whether to pull that particular tweet or use that as a last straw for trump depends on many factors including: (1) the overall context and narrative in which that tweet lives - we currently analyze tweets and consider them at a tweet-by-tweet basis which does not appropriately take into account the context surrounding - you can use the yelling fire into a crowded theater example - context matters and the narrative that trump and his friends have pursued over the course of this election and frankly last 4+ years must be taken into account when interpreting and analyzing that tweet (2) the larger question is around our moral imperative and decision as a company, which user sentiment should not drive based on #1, ▇▇▇▇ and I believe that his tweet does violate our rules when taking that historical context + current climate into account

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 8. The bulk of the internal debate leading to Trump's ban took place in those three January days. However, the intellectual framework was laid in the months preceding the Capitol riots.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 9. Before J6, Twitter was a unique mix of automated, rules-based enforcement, and more subjective moderation by senior executives. As **@BariWeiss** reported, the firm had a vast array of tools for manipulating visibility, most all of which were thrown at Trump (and others) pre-J6.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 10. As the election approached, senior executives – perhaps under pressure from federal agencies, with whom they met more as time progressed – increasingly struggled with rules, and began to speak of "vios" as pretexts to do what they'd likely have done anyway.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 11. After J6, internal Slacks show Twitter executives getting a kick out of intensified relationships with federal agencies. Here's Trust and Safety head Yoel Roth, lamenting a lack of "generic enough" calendar descriptions to concealing his "very interesting" meeting partners. **https://t.co/kgC4eGykcO**

Yoel Roth 11:36:51
Ehh, it happens. I'm a big believer in calendar transparency. But I reached a certain point where my meetings became... very interesting... to people and there weren't meeting names generic enough to cover. _Anyway_, let me know.

2:14:21
Very Boring Business Meeting That Is Definitely Not About Trump ;)

Yoel Roth 12:14:33
Preeeeeeeetty much

Yoel Roth 12:14:40
"DEFINITELY NOT meeting with the FBI I SWEAR"

2:14:52
lmao

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 12. These initial reports are based on searches for docs linked to prominent executives, whose names are already public. They include Roth, former trust and policy chief Vijaya Gadde, and recently plank-walked Deputy General Counsel (and former top FBI lawyer) Jim Baker.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 13. One particular slack channel offers an unique window into the evolving thinking of top officials in late 2020 and early 2021.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 14. On October 8th, 2020, executives opened a channel called "us2020_xfn_enforcement." Through J6, this would be home for discussions about election-related removals, especially ones that involved "high-profile" accounts (often called "VITs" or "Very Important Tweeters"). **https://t.co/xH29h4cYt9**

03:47:47

Hey Everyone (<!here>), Starting t*omorrow (October 9th)* until November 15th this channel will be used for the following reasons related to the US 2020 Elections. • Trends Identified that require scaled investigations • High Profile Accounts Escalations that potentially require PII/Soft Interventions • Scalable Solutions required. • Edge cases for XFN consultation • _Highlight tech issues (bugs, tools outage, Jira tickets)_ This is an enforcement channel between T&S and TwS to help speed up our response related to election issues over the coming few weeks. GET will start providing a hand over starting APAC shift tomorrow *Friday, October 9th* using the following template *Handover* • *Next shift: EMEA/APAC/NA - Thursday, Oct 8, 2020* • (GET) • (SP) • (SI) • *Open escalations:* • None • *Notes from the shift:* *Ask:* Can you please make sure everyone on your team is within the channel? The teams that we included are as follows: • Site Integrity • Safety Policy • Product Trust • Safety Operations • Media Ops • Global Escalation Team If you have any questions or concerns let me know,

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 15. There was at least some tension between Safety Operations – a larger department whose staffers used a more rules-based process for addressing issues like porn, scams, and threats – and a smaller, more powerful cadre of senior policy execs like Roth and Gadde.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 16. The latter group were a high-speed Supreme Court of moderation, issuing content rulings on the fly, often in minutes and based on guesses, gut calls, even Google searches, even in cases involving the President. **https://t.co/5ihsPCVo62**

12:12:03
hi everyone: received this escalation just now:
{https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1314637928883
159040?s=19}

Donald J. Trump @
@realDonaldTrump

Breaking News: 50,000 OHIO VOTERS getting
WRONG ABSENTEE BALLOTS. Out of control. A
Rigged Election!!!

11:44 AM · Oct 9, 2020

43.9K Retweets   6,374 Quote Tweets   198.2K Likes

Friday, October 9th 2020 12.12.50 by
"a rigged election" would be enough to be in violation
right?

Friday, October 9th 2020 12.12.59 by Yoel Roth
If the claim of fact were inaccurate, yes.

Friday, October 9th 2020 12.13.02 by Yoel Roth
But it looks like that's true -
{https://www.npr.org/2020/10/09/922305790/50-000-ohio-vo
ters-to-receive-new-absentee-ballots-after-error-found}

50,000 Ohio Voters To Receive New
Absentee Ballots After Error Found
October 9, 2020 · 2:34 PM ET
GABE ROSENBERG   FROM WOSU

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 17. During this time, executives were also clearly liaising with federal enforcement and intelligence agencies about moderation of election-related content. While we're still at the start of reviewing the #TwitterFiles, we're finding out more about these interactions every day.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 18. Policy Director Nick Pickles is asked if they should say Twitter detects "misinfo" through "ML, human review, and **partnerships with outside experts?*" The employee asks, "I know that's been a slippery process… not sure if you want our public explanation to hang on that." https://t.co/JEICGRTyz7

14:19:31

npickles are you comfortable with Marketing talking about misinfo by saying that we detect it through ML, human review and **partnerships with outside experts?*

14:19:57

I know that's been a slippery process, so not sure if you want our public explanation to hang our hat on that

Nick Pickles 14:33:08

can we just say "partnerships"

Nick Pickles 14:33:34

eg not sure we'd describe the FBI/DHS as experts, or some NGOs that aren't academic

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 19. Pickles quickly asks if they could "just say "partnerships." After a pause, he says, "e.g. not sure we'd describe the FBI/DHS as experts." **https://t.co/d3EaYJb5eR**

Nick Pickles 14:33:08

can we just say "partnerships"

Nick Pickles 14:33:34

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@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 20. This post about the Hunter Biden laptop situation shows that Roth not only met weekly with the FBI and DHS, but with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI): **https://t.co/s5IiUjQqIY**

Bot Application B01AXN4KL0M 16:19:26

yoelr has checked in! Here's what they said. *What's new for you since our last check-in?* - Hacked Materials exploded. We blocked the NYP story, then we unblocked it (but said the opposite), then said we unblocked it... and now we're in a messy situation where our policy is in shambles, comms is angry, reporters think we're idiots, and we're refactoring an exceedingly complex policy 18 days out from the election. In short, FML. - Weekly sync with FBI/DHS/DNI re: election security. The meeting happened about 15 minutes after the aforementioned Hacked Materials implosion; the government declined to share anything useful when asked. - Monthly meeting with FBI FITF. Briefed on several ongoing investigations

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 21. Roth's report to FBI/DHS/DNI is almost farcical in its self-flagellating tone: "We blocked the NYP story, then unblocked it (but said the opposite)… comms is angry, reporters think we're idiots… in short, FML" (fuck my life). **https://t.co/sTaWgIhaJt**

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@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 23. Some of Roth's later Slacks indicate his weekly confabs with federal law enforcement involved separate meetings. Here, he ghosts the FBI and DHS, respectively, to go first to an "Aspen Institute thing," then take a call with Apple. **https://t.co/i771hD8aCD**

Yoel Roth 08:03:33

Hey there - I have to miss the FBI and DHS meetings today, unfortunately. I saw you're on the invites for both (as are Site Policy). Can you give me a quick readout if there's anything interesting that comes up?

Patrick Conlon 08:04:00

Sure thing! I hope that everything's OK.

Yoel Roth 08:04:27

Yeah - just have conflicts at both times. An Aspen Institute thing this morning on vaccines that I have to present at, and then a call with Apple to avoid us getting kicked out of the App Store during the DHS one.

Patrick Conlon 08:04:58

Ah. Those both seem very important.

Yoel Roth 08:06:13

Indeed.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss 24. Here, the FBI sends reports about a pair of tweets, the second of which involves a former Tippecanoe County, Indiana Councilor and Republican named **@JohnBasham** claiming "Between 2% and 25% of Ballots by Mail are Being Rejected for Errors." **https://t.co/KtigHOiEwF**

07:04:23

\<!here\> we just got a report from the FBI concerning 2 tweets, 1. 1314479095401521154 related to the "shredding" of mail in ballot's, this is proven to be false via this: {https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/oct/08/blog-posting/social-posters-spread-election-misinformation-abou/} do we have a moment ready for this one?

2. 1314328227423420416, I believe was deemed no vio on numerous occasions

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss @JohnBasham The FBI's second report concerned this tweet by **@JohnBasham**:
https://t.co/8J8j5GlUVx

John Basham 🇺🇸
@JohnBasham

EDITORIAL: @TheDemocrats Are In Complete Panic As Their Massive Push For #VoteByMail Is Backfiring On Them!
Two Things Are Unfolding:
1) An Unexpected Number Of Registered #Republicans Are Returning Ballots.
2) Between 2% & 25% Of Ballots By Mail Are Being REJECTED For Errors!

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss @JohnBasham 25. The FBI-flagged tweet then got circulated in the enforcement Slack. Twitter cited Politifact to say the first story was "proven to be false," then noted the second was already deemed "no vio on numerous occasions." **https://t.co/LyyZ1opWAh**

07:04:23
<!here> we just got a report from the FBI concerning 2 tweets, 1. 1314479095401521154 related to the "shredding" of mail in ballot's, this is proven to be false via this: {https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/oct/08/blog-posting/social-posters-spread-election-misinformation-abou/} do we have a moment ready for this one?

2. 1314328227423420416, I believe was deemed no vio on numerous occasions

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss @JohnBasham 26. The group then decides to apply a "Learn how voting is safe and secure" label because one commenter says, "it's totally normal to have a 2% error rate." Roth then gives the final go-ahead to the process initiated by the FBI: **https://t.co/lyZm4gmT19**

Monday, October 19th 2020 07.06.58 by Yoel Roth
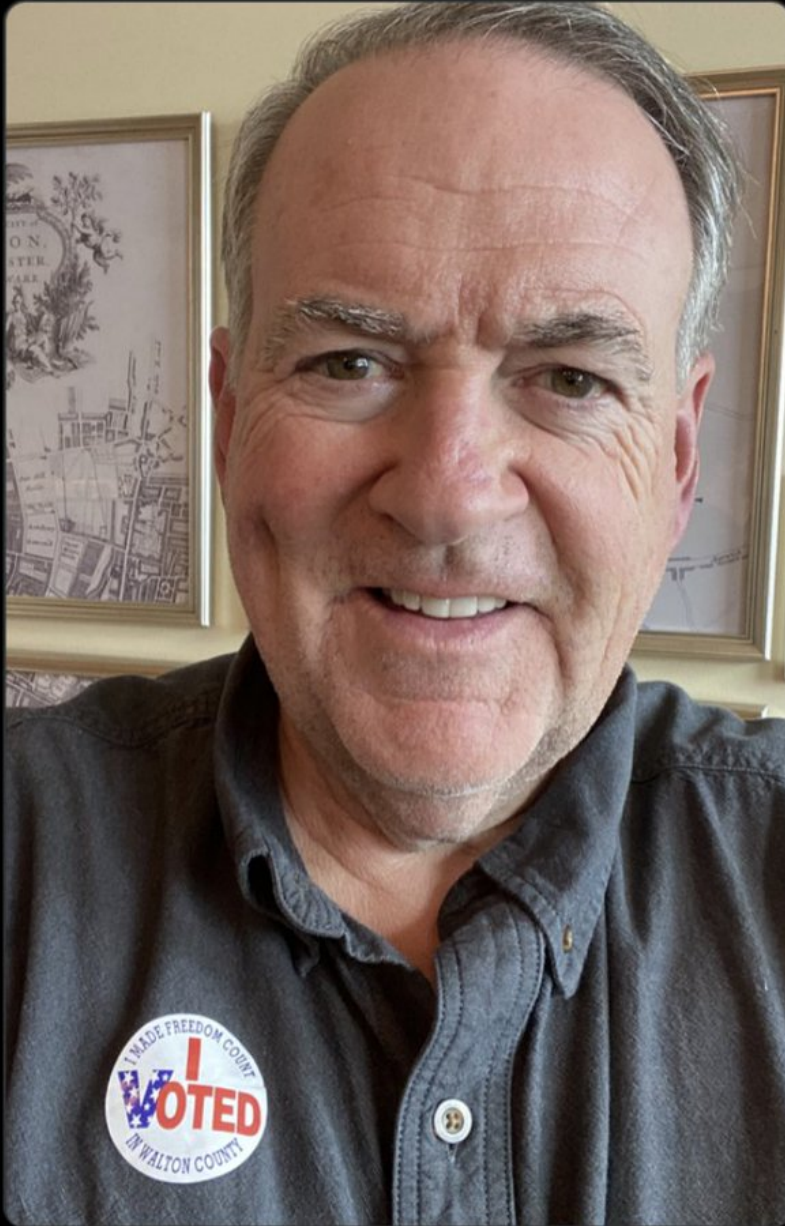I think we can use the mail in voting label for this one as is

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss @JohnBasham 27. Examining the entire election enforcement Slack, we didn't see one reference to moderation requests from the Trump campaign, the Trump White House, or Republicans generally. We looked. They may exist: we were told they do. However, they were absent here.

@ShellenbergerMD @bariweiss @JohnBasham 31. In one case, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee joke-tweets about mailing in ballots for his "deceased parents and grandparents." **https://t.co/ZRpmwJa7K1**

Gov. Mike Huckabee ✔
@GovMikeHuckabee

Stood in rain for hour to early vote today. When I got home I filled in my stack of mail-in ballots and then voted the ballots of my deceased parents and grandparents. They vote just like me! #Trump2020

1:45 PM · Oct 24, 2020

2,009 Retweets   **11.5K** Quote Tweets   **14.6K** Likes