

# Elon Musk Puts Brakes on CISA Censorship

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › On July 1, 2023, Elon Musk announced new limits to the number of Twitter posts users could view in a day
- › While much pushback has ensued from users, this move is actually a major win for your privacy and online freedom
- › Musk stated the view limits were applied “to address extreme levels of data scraping & system manipulation”
- › The lack of viewing limits on Twitter allowed censorship entities to scrape massive numbers of tweets so they could quickly and comprehensively control public conversations online
- › The limits cut off intelligence agencies’ “censorship death star” — AI — at the knees

July 1, 2023, Elon Musk announced new limits to the number of Twitter posts users could view in a day. The number varied by user, with verified accounts initially able to read 6,000 posts a day, unverified accounts 600 posts a day and new unverified accounts 300 per day.<sup>1</sup>

The number has fluctuated since, increasing to 10,000, 1,000 and 500, respectively,<sup>2</sup> but the sentiment is the same. Gone are the days where unlimited post viewing was possible — at least temporarily. While much pushback has ensued from users, there’s a reason why this move is actually a major win for your privacy and online freedom. It’s stopped mega censorship operatives in their tracks.

## Twitter Viewing Limits Address 'Extreme' Data Scraping

We don't know why Musk instituted limits to the number of tweets users could view. It could simply be a business move, one aimed at boosting verified accounts. He also tweeted at one point, "The reason I set a 'View Limit' is because we are all Twitter addicts and need to go outside. I'm doing a good deed for the world here. Also, that's another view you just used."<sup>3</sup>

But in his official tweet about the change, Musk stated the limits were applied "to address extreme levels of data scraping & system manipulation."<sup>4</sup> In a video posted to Twitter, Mike Benz, a former State Department diplomat responsible for formulating and negotiating U.S. foreign policy on international communications and information technology matters,<sup>5</sup> stated, "Musk has no idea the DARPA rattlesnake he just stepped on by ... doing this."<sup>6</sup>

Benz also shared what he believes will be wide-reaching implications for the science of censorship, since Musk's view limit cuts off intelligence agencies' "censorship death star" — AI — at the knees.

"AI censorship is where all of the magic happens," he explains,<sup>7</sup> referencing Elon Musk's Twitter Files, which exposed the many ways social media platforms censored Americans at the behest of the U.S. government. Benz says:<sup>8</sup>

*"The Twitter Files showed how the FBI might come in and get 22 tweets censored. But AI was how EIP [Election Integrity Partnership] and other third-party censorship groups were able to get 22 million tweets censored ... It's a completely different animal. You could not censor the internet before 2016 at the kind of scale you do now, because you have AI censorship models."*

## The 'AI Censorship Death Star'

Benz says there's an AI censorship death star that's been under near-constant construction, innovation and renovation for six or seven years now. And Twitter's

unlimited views were a necessary part of this censorship strategy:<sup>9</sup>

*"It all relies on massive scraping of data in order to build these models and databases to track trending narratives, to systematically surveil and build intelligence dossiers, and to track and turn down all at once communities online – political communities, social or public health communities, climate communities, you name it.*

*Whatever the sensitive policy issue of the day is, you can use this massive Twitter scraping capacity to ingest everyone's tweets and then disambiguate out the words that they're using, the hashtags, the themes, the memes to build this ... code book of online communities that can then be used for mass censorship – that is used for mass censorship."*

## **This Is How DHS Labeled 22 Million Tweets 'Misinformation'**

The policing of "wrongthink" on social media has deep roots that stem from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Elon Musk previously called CISA a "propaganda platform,"<sup>10</sup> and this is accurate. CISA is partnered with the EIP, a censorship consortium made up of four organizations:

1. The Stanford Internet Observatory (SIO)
2. The University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public
3. The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab
4. Graphika (a social media analytics company)

During the 2020 election cycle, the EIP and CISA worked with the State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) and the DHS-backed Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) to police social media for "misinformation."

The Foundation for Freedom Online (FFO), which Benz founded, produced a report detailing how the government worked to control the narrative during the 2020 election and beyond.<sup>11</sup> Based on the Foundation of Freedom Online's investigation, the DHS and its partners targeted dozens of "misinformation narratives," all of which were suppressed.

They labeled 22 million tweets as "misinformation," along with hundreds of millions of Facebook posts, YouTube videos and TikToks. So, how did they manage to dig through 22 million tweets? AI. Benz says:<sup>12</sup>

"How did EIP end up getting 22 million tweets classified as misinformation? They didn't flag 22 million by hand ... What happened was they used AI to designate 22 million because they scraped 859 million tweets to build their AI model, of which they said 22 million constituted misinformation."

So, the lack of viewing limits on Twitter allowed these censorship entities to scrape massive numbers of tweets so they could control public conversations online. Because they were also controlling the enforcement arms at Twitter, it was also easy for them to have the accounts behind those 22 million tweets automatically shut down.

Benz says that Twitter is far and away the preferred platform to gather intel for intelligence agencies, the state department, defense departments and NGOs. Part of this is because every user on Twitter is a content creator, and as people reshare tweets, it's easy to "map real-time emergent" on the platform in a way that can't be done via Facebook, YouTube and other social media outlets.

However, all of this depends on having the ability to scrape hundreds of millions of tweets. Benz explains:<sup>13</sup>

*"What Musk is doing here is very interesting, because on the one hand ... you are limiting the openness of the internet by doing this.*

*But on the other hand, you are actually, potentially, preserving the openness of the internet by preventing the construction of this censorship death star that is*

*getting more and more refined every day, and is being funded by your tax dollars to the tunes of tens of millions from DARPA and the National Science Foundation ...*

*Whether he [Musk] knows it or not, there are going to be hundreds of censorship operatives ... howling at the moon that this is an attack on democracy for Musk to limit their access ... if they lose access to the underlying data on which their AI censorship models are built, then they will not be able to do their jobs ... as social media censors."*

## **CISA Colluded With Big Tech to Censor Americans**

Meanwhile, in June 2023, the House Judiciary Committee released a report detailing how CISA "colluded with Big Tech and 'disinformation' partners to censor Americans."<sup>14</sup> "The 36-page report raises three familiar issues," the Brownstone Institute reported.

"First, government actors worked with third parties to overturn the First Amendment; second, censors prioritized political narratives over truthfulness; and third, an unaccountable bureaucracy hijacked American society."<sup>15</sup>

The report highlights a process known as "switchboarding," a "resource intensive" strategy CISA used in their censorship activities. CISA's "Mis-, Dis- and Malinformation" (MDM) team head, Brian Scully, described switchboarding as a "process whereby CISA officials received alleged "misinformation" reports from election officials and forwarded those reports to social media companies so that they could take enforcement measures against the reported content."<sup>16</sup>

While CISA has claimed that it didn't interfere with social media's content moderation decisions, the report states, "when deposed as part of ongoing federal litigation, Scully admitted that CISA was aware that its outreach to social media companies about alleged disinformation would trigger content moderation."<sup>17</sup>

## **The 'Nerve Center' of Government Surveillance and Censorship**

One real-life example includes former New York Times reporter Alex Berenson, who was also a victim of the censorship hysteria; his Twitter account was suspended when he posted this scientifically accurate information about COVID-19 shots:<sup>18</sup>

*"It doesn't stop infection. Or transmission. Don't think of it as a vaccine. Think of it – at best – as a therapeutic with a limited window of efficacy and terrible side effect profile that must be dosed IN ADVANCE OF ILLNESS. And we want to mandate it? Insanity."*

Berenson filed a lawsuit against Twitter for labeling the tweet as misleading and cancelling his account. The case was resolved, with Twitter acknowledging that the tweets should not have led to a suspension.

The Brownstone Institute explained, "Alex Berenson gained access to thousands of Twitter communications that uncovered concrete evidence that government actors – including White House Covid Adviser Andy Slavitt – worked to censor him for criticizing Biden's Covid policies."<sup>19</sup> The House Judiciary Committee report goes much deeper into the weaponization of CISA and how it directly facilitated censorship via multiple avenues. According to the report:<sup>20</sup>

*"Founded in 2018, CISA was originally intended to be an ancillary agency designed to protect "critical infrastructure" and guard against cybersecurity threats. In the years since its creation, however, CISA metastasized into the nerve center of the federal government's domestic surveillance and censorship operations on social media.*

*By 2020, CISA routinely reported social media posts that allegedly spread "disinformation" to social media platforms. By 2021, CISA had a formal "Mis-, Dis-, and Malinformation" (MDM) team. In 2022 and 2023, in response to growing public and private criticism of CISA's unconstitutional behavior, CISA attempted to camouflage its activities, duplicitously claiming it serves a purely "informational" role."*

# Will Truth Ultimately Prevail?

The truth is getting out about the U.S. government's unconstitutional and Orwellian attempts to control free speech at any cost. Even CISA knew it had likely gone too far and blown its cover. The report stated, "Members of CISA's advisory committee agonized that it was "only a matter of time before someone realizes we exist and starts asking about our work.""<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps Musk is only looking out for his business interests, but it's also possible that Twitter's viewing limits will abruptly halt one major avenue of censorship that's threatening sovereignty for Americans. Only time will tell if this one act of limiting the free flow of information will ultimately allow more truth to be heard. As Benz put it:<sup>22</sup>

*"He [Musk] has stepped on a rattlesnake and we'll see how it plays out. I am very curious to see how the rattlesnake reacts to this new boot. And in a weird way, even though the boot may be cutting off some amount of openness on Twitter, it may also represent, in some way, the boot of freedom."*

## Sources and References

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- <sup>3</sup> [NBC News July 3, 2022](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [Foundation for Freedom Online, Meet Our Founder](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [Twitter, Mike Benz July 1, 2023](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [Twitter, Mike Benz July 1, 2023, video, 0:49](#)
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- <sup>16</sup> [U.S. House of Representatives, The Weaponization of CISA June 26, 2023, Page 12](#)
- <sup>18</sup> [Substack, The Disinformation Chronicle July 12, 2022](#)
- <sup>20</sup> [U.S. House of Representatives, The Weaponization of CISA June 26, 2023, Page 1](#)

- <sup>21</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, The Weaponization of CISA June 26, 2023, Page 2
- <sup>22</sup> Twitter, Mike Benz July 1, 2023, video, 8:30