

# USEFUL IDIOT NETWORKS, NOW FEATURING ELON MUSK AND DON JR.

As I noted in my piece in The New Republic the other day and as I have before, there's a figure in the Twitter DM lists presented at the Douglass Mackey trial, using the moniker P0TUSTrump and referred to by others as "Donald," who pushed the group to spread the PodestaFiles hashtags WikiLeaks had adopted on the same day that WikiLeaks had directly encouraged Don Jr to promote those hashtags.

[I]n an interview with Mackey last year, Donald Trump Jr. admitted that he had been added to the chat rooms. There's even a persona on the lists who used the moniker "P0TUSTrump," whom others called Donald, who pushed the John Podesta leaks in the same days that WikiLeaks encouraged Don Jr. to disseminate them. That user aimed to use the same trolling method to "Make #PodestaEmails4 Trend" so that "CNN [a]nd liberal news forced to cover it."

Yeah but of those people who see your tweets, majority are already voting Trump

P0TUSTrump 3:09pm

Im saying we need CNN wnd liberal news forced to cover it

P0TUSTrump 3:10pm

For Dems and Independents to see

P0TUSTrump 3:10pm

yep, im using the top tag now

WDFx2EU7 3:10pm

Operation Make #PodestaEmails4 Trend

P0TUSTrump 3:17pm

If we all focus on making it trend and telling our followers to make it trend, its cake from there

P0TUSTrump 3:17pm

If P0TUSTrump is Don Jr, it means that WikiLeaks piggybacked on the trusted network of this trolling group by getting Don Jr, a trusted member *of it*, to suggest pushing WikiLeaks. The

trolls were otherwise occupied doing things that more directly impugned Hillary Clinton, but when P0TUSTrump suggested they push the Podesta hashtags, they all turned to doing that.

That may not have been an accident. There are many ways via which that group could have been discovered by WikiLeaks supporters and/or Russia. If they had, Don Jr's since-admitted inclusion in it would be one of the most lucrative features of the group, a really dumb member of Trump's family who commanded a lot of trust from the group. Don Jr was (and remains) really easy to manipulate, and by manipulating him, you can direct entire groups.

These networks matter not just for the work they do and the memes they put out. These networks matter because they can be mapped and exploited. Don Jr is going to be a ready point of weakness in any network because, well, he's Don Jr.

The same is true of Elon Musk.

In my piece arguing that people were overstating what a comment in the Doppelgänger affidavit about the project identifying 2,800 influencers and 1,900 anti-influencers meant, I noted that there had already been signs that those behind the effort were exploiting the way that Musk very publicly acts on Xitter (public behavior documented through a whole lot of journalism about how Musk has ordered Xitter engineers to make it work this way).

Even if SDA were doing more, it would in no way signal full "collaboration." An earlier report on Doppelgänger's work (one I'm still looking for, to link), for example, described how Doppelgänger would exploit the way Elon Musk uses his Xitter account to piggyback on his visibility to magnify pro-Russian content with no involvement from him. Elmo is so predictable and so stupid with his Xitter account it requires no payment or even witting involvement to be exploited in such a way.

Like Don Jr, Elon Musk is very important, very trusted among a key network, and painfully easy to dupe. And in his case, the algorithms deliberately magnify any network effects of his influence.

You would not necessarily have to recruit Elon Musk to be a Russian stooge (though some of his close advisors might make that easier to do). You would only need to recruit those whom he trusted to exploit him as a useful idiot.

Keep that in mind as you read this analysis of how much content from Tenet Media Musk shared.

Musk has frequently replied to or reposted content from three conservative pundits formerly paid by Tenet: Tim Pool, Dave Rubin and Benny Johnson. From the public launch of Tenet Media in November 2023 until the release of the indictment, Musk interacted with Pool's account at least 32 times, Rubin's at least 11 times and Johnson's at least nine times, according to searches of X's archives. He did so on a wide array of subjects including immigration, presidential politics and homelessness.

[snip]

In August, Musk replied "!!" to a Tenet post on X criticizing diversity training at NASA. That post by Tenet received 1.9 million views, far more than Tenet's typical posts, although it's impossible to determine how much Musk helped. In April, Musk replied with the monocle emoji to a Tenet video about "eco-terrorism."

Musk has used his influence to spotlight some of Tenet's individual creators, too. In mid-August, Musk had a back-and-forth with then-Tenet Media pundit Lauren Southern, which began with her saying most people misunderstand Musk and Trump.

"Anyone who thinks the media is real is an idiot," Musk responded, getting more than 647,000 views.

"Much work to do in reversing this brain rot," Southern wrote back.

"Much work indeed. And it's far worse in Europe. People really believe the media there!" Musk replied.

Lauren Chen didn't pick Dave Rubin and Tim Pool to recruit because they were her buddies or because they would be profitable (though the fact that they were her buddies made her more useful). Rather, they were on a list that her handler gave her. The project *was built around* people like them.

Beginning in or about February 2023, Founder-1 solicited Commentator-I and Commentator-2 to perform work on behalf of "Eduard Grigoriann." For example:

a. On or about February 6, 2023, Persona-1 emailed Founder-1 a "shortlist of candidates" for the YouTube channel, including Commentator-1 and Commentator-2. In the same email, Persona-1 attached a receipt for an \$8,000 money transfer from an entity in the Czech Republic ("Czech Shell Entity-I") to Founder-1 's Canadian company, Canadian Company-1. Persona-I requested that Founder-I submit an invoice for Founder-1 's "consultation services" to Czech Shell Entity-I, which Persona-I described as "our Czech sister company." Czech Shell Entity-I has a website purporting to sell automobile parts, but also listing unrelated services (e.g., "CyberAmor Suite, Fortifying Your Digital Defenses"). The website makes no mention of "Eduard Grigoriann," Persona-I, Persona-2, Persona-3, Viewpoint Productions, or Hungarian Shell Entity-I.

[snip]

c. On or about February 8, 2023, Founder-1 reported to Persona-I on Founder1 's outreach to Commentator-I and Commentator-2. Founder-I advised that Commentator-I said "it would need to be closer to 5 million yearly for him to be interested," and that Commentator-2 said "it would take 100k per weekly episode to make it worth his while." Founder-I cautioned that "from a profitability standpoint, it would be very hard for Viewpoint [i.e., the initial publicfacing name of the new venture] to recoup the costs for the likes of [Commentator-I] and [Commentator-2] based on ad revenue from web traffic or sponsors alone." Despite Founder-1 's warning that Commentator-I and Commentator-2 would not be profitable to employ, on or about February 14, 2023, Persona-I informed Founder-I that "[w]e would love to move forward with [Commentator-I and Commentator-2]."

And one reason you pick someone like Tim Pool is because you know that Elon Musk will promote his idiotic commentary, which not only ensures the widest possible dissemination, but uses Musk's credibility to gain credibility for the project itself.

You piggyback on Pool's credibility with Musk to piggyback on Musk's credibility and reach.

The thing about these networks of right wing influencers is they offer a cascade effect. You pay off or persuade one or six useful idiots and the entire network becomes your useful idiot.

Update: In related news, the Guardian has a close focus on what George Papadoupoulos and his spouse, Simona Mangiante, have been up to, building a network around the Hunter Biden laptop.

Amid the recent crackdown on Russian influence in American media, a group of former Trump advisers and operatives have quietly helped build a pro-Russian website that frequently spreads debunked conspiracy theories about the war in Ukraine, election fraud and vaccines.

Working alongside contributors for Kremlin state media, the former Donald Trump policy aide George Papadopoulos, his wife, Simona Mangiante, and others have become editorial board members of the website *Intelligencer*, which is increasingly becoming a source of news for those in the rightwing ecosystem.

[snip]

*Intelligencer* appears to be gaining in popularity. It recently had its best month for internet traffic, with an increase of nearly 300% during August, according to data from Similarweb, and its articles have been shared on social media by the conspiracist Alex Jones, former Trump White House staffer Garrett Ziegler and former Trump aide Roger Stone.

[snip]

Three other editorial board members also have close connections to the Trump campaigns. Leah Hoopes and Greg Stenstrom, both from Pennsylvania, have written a book falsely alleging the 2020 election was stolen. Both of them have been litigants in court cases challenging the results of the election in Pennsylvania, and Hoopes was one of Pennsylvania's fake electors, who falsely signed paperwork saying that Trump had won the election.

Tyler Nixon, Roger Stone's personal attorney, also serves on the board and hosts his own show on TNT Radio. The former Radio Sputnik journalist Lee

Stranahan is also involved.

Nixon, Hoopes, Stenstrom and Stranahan  
did not respond to requests for comment.

Simona met with Andrii Derkach, the Russian spy who cultivated Rudy Giuliani, earlier this year and did a big roll-out of the efforts to return to Hunter Biden disinformation.

I have long believed that one reason Trump was so sad that Biden dropped out is that there were plans for shit like this that now have limited value.