

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) for the past few weeks has been embroiled in a controversy about the use of so-called cyberarmies.

An accusation first surfaced on June 2, when Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Taipei City Councilor Wang Min-sheng (王敏盛) said in a council hearing that the account "LoveError" had been using the Professional Technology Temple online bulletin board system to disseminate false information and attack the party.

"LoveError" is reported to have said that Taiwanese had to show the "correct" political affiliation to obtain COVID-19 medicine. Along with "going70" and "going9," the account used IP addresses inside the Taipei City Government and were found to belong to one user, an employee from the Taipei Expo Foundation. Several city councilors investigated the incident, revealing that six other employees were also using the platform during work hours in attempts to manipulate public opinion, including Lin Yu-sheng (林育生), a section head in the Taipei Department of Transportation.

During a question-and-answer session, Social Democratic Party Taipei City Councilor Miao Po-ya (苗博雅) asked Lin to read the posts out loud and confirm their details. Ko had initially brushed off the incident, saying the employees "had too much time on their hands," but after the council session, he was indignant toward Miao, saying that civil servants are not political pawns, and that councilors have no right to question civil servants or humiliate them in public. The incident and his reaction have revealed several aspects about Ko's double standards and his administration in general.

Ko is incorrect to say that councilors have no right to question civil servants. It is a city councilor's duty to supervise a local government and ensure that public funds go where they should. Councilors would be derelict in their duties if they turned a blind eye to these civil servants, who should remain politically neutral, but who apparently used public expenses to disseminate false information to Ko's benefit.

By asking Lin to read the posts into the public record, Miao was confirming authorship, avoiding potential excuses from being given down the road, such as an account being hacked. As the session was livestreamed and accessible to the public, citizens and the media would not have hesitated to criticize Miao had there been any inappropriate humiliation.

## Ko and his 'cyberarmies'

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Further, Ko has been applying a double standard toward the issue of cyberarmies. Given that he famously coined the term “1450” to refer to online advocates paid by the DPP to disparage him on the Internet, it is ironic that his employees were exposed committing the same act.

Ko's indignation has also shown that he does not think that there was misconduct with his administration or that he should be held accountable. Famous for using unsavory language when criticizing people — especially when he said “Whose dog is that?” in reference to Lin Shu-hui (林書惠) during a committee meeting in April — Ko has again betrayed his emperor complex.

As a politician who has insulted civil servants on multiple occasions in the past, Ko is showing that he believes that the only one who can judge his subordinates is him, while others, not even city councilors with the duty to supervise, can offer an opinion.

Ko is also leaving the false impression that he stands behind the civil servants, when in reality he is afraid of losing face, as the incident demonstrates his double standards and acquiescence of misconduct when it is in his favor.

Ko should surrender his emperor complex and help investigate the truth regarding the controversy, instead of creating a diversion with his furious comments.

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