

## PRC targets Taiwan with new disinformation ploy

Written by Taiwan Tati Cultural & Educational Foundation  
Monday, 24 January 2022 06:44 -

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An illustration shows computer code and a Chinese national flag on July 12, 2017.

**Photo: REUTERS**

China is conducting disinformation campaigns that involve more than 400 fake accounts targeting Taiwanese on social media, the Investigation Bureau said on Friday.

China is trying to infiltrate social media, Internet forums and online chatrooms that are popular among Taiwanese to subvert the public's trust in the government, destabilize society and meddle in elections, the bureau said.

Since it started tracing fake accounts and disinformation to Chinese content farms in April last year, the Information and Communication Security Division investigated 2,773 such cases, the bureau said.

It has forwarded 174 cases to prosecutors, who have listed 234 people as suspects, the bureau added.

An official involved in the investigations said that China had planted 20 accounts on CK101.com (痞客邦), a popular forum among Taiwanese, using mobile phone numbers registered outside Taiwan and e-mail addresses with foreign providers.

“These accounts are specializing in posting fake news and disinformation to undermine the COVID-19 measures implemented by Taiwan’s health authorities, create confusion and circulate politically charged messages to generate disputes and conflicts,” said the official, who declined to be named. “These are clearly products of China’s content farms.”

The bureau also uncovered that Chinese accounts had altered posts on the People’s Technology Temple (PTT) — Taiwan’s most popular online bulletin board system.

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Such posts were additionally disseminated through Facebook and Chinese microblogging sites, the official said.

“This is the first level of their cyberattack operation,” they said.

The second level of the content farms’ operations involves targeting Taiwanese Facebook users with 400 fake accounts, the official said.

Those accounts target Taiwanese by reposting fake news and disinformation, focusing on topics such as entertainment, daily issues and religion, they said.

The third level of their operations involves convincing Taiwanese to repost the content or share it with friends and family, the official said, adding that such fake news might spread to “every corner of society.”

The official said that fake news tailored to Taiwanese social media users is part of a coordinated campaign.

“Through cognitive warfare, the Chinese cyberarmy is attempting to stir conflict and hatred between social groups, undermining Taiwan’s national security,” the official said.

The bureau said that a dedicated task force would be launched to counter Chinese cyberwarfare ahead of local elections in November.

Social media users should be aware of the danger of fake news and disinformation, the bureau said, urging people to try to verify content they access online, especially before sharing it, as they might contravene the law by spreading fake news without due diligence.

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Additional reporting by Jason Pan

Source: [Taipei Times - 2022/01/24](#)