

VIPS Asks Twitter to Restore Van Buren's Account

The Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity in a memo to the Twitter board of directors questions its decision to suspend the account of one of its members without due process.

August 8, 2018

TO: Twitter Board of Directors

FROM: Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

SUBJECT: Suspension of VIPS Associate Peter Van Buren's Twitter Account

We at Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) are greatly disturbed by the recent decision of your management to permanently suspend the Twitter account @WeMeantWell of our colleague Peter Van Buren. Peter is a highly respected former Foreign Service Officer possessing impeccable credentials for critiquing current developments that might lead to a new war in Eastern Europe or Asia, something which we Americans presumably all would like to avoid.

In 2011 our colleague Peter published a book, *We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People*, about the poor decision-making by both civilians and military that led to the disastrous occupation and faux-democracy development in Iraq. It is Peter's concern that our country may well be proceeding down that same path again – possibly with Iran, Syria and other countries in the Middle East region.

It is our understanding that Peter became involved in an acrimonious Twitter exchange with several mainstream journalists over the theme of government lying. One of the parties to the exchange, reported to be Jonathan Katz of @KatzOnEarth – possibly joined by some of his associates – complained. Subsequently, and without any serious investigation or chance for rebuttal regarding the charges, Peter was suspended by you for “harass[ing], intimidate[ing], or us[ing] fear to silence someone else's voice.” Peter absolutely denies that anything like that took place.

We have also learned that Daniel McAdams, Executive Director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and a highly respected former Congressional staffer, weighed in to defend Peter and was also suspended by you. And Scott Horton, editorial director of Antiwar.com Radio, was suspended for use of “improper language” against Katz. Horton and McAdams cannot add new tweets while under suspension, but Peter's “permanent” suspension included deletion of all of

his seven years' archive of tweets, so the actual exchanges leading up to his punishment cannot currently be examined.

Your action suggests three possibilities – all of which are quite plausible given that your system for punishing users is far from transparent. First, you may be engaged in systematic manipulation if some of your users are able to complain and have their friends do likewise in order to sully the reputation of a Twitter user who is doing little more than engaging in heated debate over issues that concern all of us.

Second, there is a distinct possibility that you are responding to either deep pocketed or particularly strident advocacy groups that may themselves have agendas to silence opposition voices. We note that Google is currently working with some powerful foundations to censor content they object to which comes up in search engine results.

Finally – third – we also suspect a possible government hand in that companies like yours, to include Facebook, have become very sensitive to alleged “subversive” content, deleting accounts and blocking users. Kowtowing to government suggestions to silence critics of administration policies may well be considered a desirable proactive step by your management as well as by other social media companies, but censorship is censorship, no matter how you dress it up.

We Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity believe that systematic and/or institutionalized censorship of tweets and account users is fundamentally the wrong way to go unless there are very explicit and sustained threats of violence or other criminal behavior. The internet should be free, to include most particularly the ability to post commentary that is not mainstream or acceptable to the Establishment. That is what Peter has been doing and we applaud him for it. We respectfully request that you examine the facts in the case with the objective of reconsidering and possibly restoring the suspension of Peter Van Buren's twitter account. Thank you.

For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity:

William Binney, former Technical Director, World Geopolitical & Military Analysis, NSA; co-founder, SIGINT Automation Research Center (ret.)

Richard H. Black, Senator of Virginia, 13th District; Colonel US Army (ret); former chief, Criminal Law Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General, the Pentagon (associate VIPS) (@SenRichardBlack)

Marshall Carter-Tripp, Foreign Service Officer (ret.) and Division

Director, State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Bogdan Dzakovic, former team leader of Federal Air Marshals and Red Team, FAA Security (ret.) (associate VIPS)

Philip Giraldi, CIA, Operations Officer (ret.) (@infangenetheof)

Larry C. Johnson, former CIA and State Department Counterterrorism Officer (ret.)

Michael S. Kearns, Captain, USAF (ret.); Wing Commander, RAAF (ret.); former intelligence officer and master SERE instructor (@msk6793)

John Kiriakou, former CIA Counterterrorism Officer and former senior investigator, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (@johnkiriakou)

Karen Kwiatkowski, former Lt. Col., US Air Force (ret.), at Office of Secretary of Defense watching the manufacture of lies on Iraq, 2001-2003

Linda Lewis, WMD preparedness policy analyst, USDA (ret.) (associate VIPS) (@usalinda)

Edward Loomis, NSA, cryptologic computer scientist (ret.)

David MacMichael, National Intelligence Council (ret.)

Ray McGovern, former US Army infantry/intelligence officer & CIA analyst (ret.) (@raymcgovern)

Annie Machon, former intelligence officer in the UK's MI5 domestic security service (affiliate VIPS) (@anniemachon)

Elizabeth Murray, Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East, CIA and National Intelligence Council (ret.) (@elizabethmurra)

Todd E. Pierce, Maj, US Army Judge Advocate (ret.) (@ToddEPierce)

Scott Ritter, former Maj., USMC; former UN weapons inspector, Iraq (@RealScottRitter)

Coleen Rowley, FBI Special Agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel (ret.) (@coleenrowley)

J. Kirk Wiebe, former Senior Analyst, SIGINT Automation Research Center, NSA (ret.) (@kirkwiebe)

Sarah Wilton, Commander, US Naval Reserve (ret.) and Defense Intelligence Agency (ret.)

Robert Wing, former Foreign Service Officer (associate VIPS)

Ann Wright, US Army Reserve Colonel (Ret) and former US Diplomat

Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) is made up of former intelligence officers, diplomats, military officers and congressional staffers. The organization, founded in 2002, was among the first critics of Washington's justifications for launching a war against Iraq. VIPS advocates a US foreign and national security policy based on genuine national interests rather than contrived threats promoted for largely political reasons. An archive of VIPS memoranda is available at Consortiumnews.com.
