

Twitter dumps Trump for good, sparks cyber storm

10/01/2021 18:56 by admin

"After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," Twitter's official "Safety" account tweeted.

President Donald Trump at a rally in Duluth, Minn., on Sept. 30, 2020.

Twitter yanked the plug on Donald Trump's account permanently on Friday, in a move described as 'long overdue' by many and 'an attack on free speech' by others. Trump, predictably, didn't go quietly, promising that he'd be "building out our own platform in the near future. We will not be SILENCED!"

The provocative handle was given birth by a New York real estate tycoon who used it to help him become the 45th US president. It began with a May 4, 2009, tweet promoting Donald Trump's upcoming appearance on David Letterman's show.

It died more than 57,000 tweets later, with Trump using some of his final postings on the powerful platform to commiserate with a mob that besieged the halls of Congress in a deadly assault as lawmakers were set to certify his defeat.

"After close review of recent tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them – specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter – we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," Twitter said in a statement on Friday.

At the time of permanent suspension, Trump had 88.7 million followers and followed 51 people.

In the Trump tweets cited by Twitter, Trump stated that he would not be attending the inauguration and referred to his supporters as "American Patriots," who will have "a GIANT VOICE long into the future." Twitter said these statements "are likely to inspire others to replicate the violent acts that took place on January 6, 2021, and that there are multiple indicators that they are being received and understood as encouragement to do so."

Plans for future armed protests have already begun proliferating on and off-Twitter, including a proposed secondary attack on the US Capitol and state Capitol buildings on January 17, it said.

Twitter also permanently banned two Trump loyalists -- former national security adviser Michael Flynn and attorney Sidney Powell -- as part of a broader purge of accounts promoting the QAnon conspiracy theory.

In a statement hours after he was banned, Trump said: "I predicted this would happen. We have been negotiating with various other sites, and will have a big announcement soon, while we also look at the possibilities of building out our own platform in the near future. We will not be SILENCED!"

"Twitter is not about FREE SPEECH. They are all about promoting a Radical Left platform where some of the most vicious people in the world are allowed to speak freely. "STAY TUNED!" he said, indicating some announcements in this regard is forthcoming.

Several Republican leaders, including popular Indian-American politician Nikki Haley, also condemned Twitter.

"Silencing people, not to mention the President of the US, is what happens in China not our country," tweeted Haley.

Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr, took to Twitter to note that it continues to allow Iran's supreme leader "and numerous other dictatorial regimes" to use the platform, but cannot abide his father. "Mao would be proud," Trump Jr. scoffed.

Shannon McGregor, an assistant professor of journalism and media at the University of North Carolina, said the move lets Twitter try to curry favor with the incoming Biden administration. Trump "only has two weeks left in power, and that certainly makes it easier to deplatform the president," she said.

Others saw a more ominous portent in Twitter's action. "Big Tech is not going to stop with the president of the United States," Kay James, president of the conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation, wrote in a tweet. "They can ban you next and everyone reading this."

But Jonathan Greenblatt, who heads the Anti-Defamation League, said that banning Trump was an "excellent step" and "a fitting end to a legacy of spewing hate and vitriol". The ADL was part of a coalition of civil rights and advocacy groups on Friday calling for Twitter to ban Trump's account.

Democratic Rep Bennie Thompson, chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, said in a statement Friday that Facebook and YouTube should also ban Trump.

Twitter, long accused of treating the president with kid gloves, began policing Trump more aggressively starting in the early days of the general presidential campaign, when the company began aggressively labeling his false tweets about supposedly widespread election fraud as disputed.

In May, after Trump tweeted the phrase "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" in response to protests in Minneapolis, Twitter added a warning label to his post for the first time. Tensions between Trump and Twitter only escalated from there.

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