

# Exposed: Labour's plot to silence migrant hotel critics

From the [Telegraph](#)

A secretive Whitehall “spy” unit has been used by the Government to target [social media posts criticising migrant hotels](#) and “two-tier policing”.

The Telegraph can reveal that officials working for Peter Kyle, the Technology Secretary, have flagged videos with “concerning narratives” to social media giants including TikTok, warning that they were “exacerbating tensions” [on the streets](#).



Emails recovered by a US congressional committee show that civil servants have complained to tech firms about content mentioning asylum seekers, immigration and two-tier policing.

The dossier has emerged as ministers battle claims that the UK is censoring social media with the Online Safety Act, including from [allies of Donald Trump, the US president](#).

The disclosure reveals that members of the Government's National Security and Online Information Team (NSOIT) complained about a series of posts that were critical of mass migration and asylum hotels in August last year [during the Southport riots](#).

[The team](#), based in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, was previously known as the Counter Disinformation Unit and was used during the Covid pandemic to monitor anti-lockdown campaigners.

...one post flagged by the government unit with "urgency" included a photograph of a rejected Freedom of Information request about the location of asylum hotels, and a reference to asylum seekers as "undocumented fighting-age males".

On Sun, 4 Aug 2024 at 16:38, [REDACTED] @dsit.gov.uk> wrote

Hi [REDACTED]!

Thanks very much for the update and we will share police reports/factual cues wherever we can.

We wanted to draw your Trust and Safety team's attention to this [piece of content](#). It shows scrolling of a freedom of information request posted on this webpage\_ here, and refers to asylum seekers as "undocumented fighting age males". Just to flag the context: hotels for asylum seekers have already seen targeted protests and there are significant risks of these becoming violent.

Home Office colleagues have been in touch with us about concerns surrounding this type of content.

Please could this be assessed by the Trust and Safety team? There is a definite sense of urgency from here. We'd really appreciate any insights you are able to share about how your terms of service might apply.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

An unnamed civil servant warned there were "significant risks" of protests [at migrant hotels](#) becoming violent because of the posts and there was a "definite sense of urgency" about them in Whitehall.

The emails were sent on Aug 3 and 4 last year, the worst weekend [of the riots](#), when protesters attacked asylum hotels across the UK. The violence spiralled after false claims circulated that the perpetrator of the Southport attack, in which three little girls were killed, was a Muslim asylum seeker. *When the truth was that he was a second generation immigrant, the son of suspect parents, in possession of ricin poison and Al Quada terror materials and a possible convert to Islam. Totally different kettle of fish altogether. Not.*

The Government's private exchange with TikTok came days before Elon Musk, the tech billionaire owner of X and a former ally

of Mr Trump, criticised “two-tier Keir”. The phrase was echoed by Nigel Farage, who warned that police had created a “sense of injustice”.

In another email the same weekend, officials warned TikTok that users were posting about “two-tier” policing at Southport rallies, amid accusations that white protesters had been treated more harshly by the police than ethnic minorities. . . . Officials requested that TikTok explain “any measures you have taken in response...as soon as you are able to”.



On Sat, 3 Aug 2024 at 13:05, [REDACTED] @dsit.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for your ongoing help in relation to Southport and for confirming your proactive efforts to support local law enforcement. Given the number of protests, and potential for the online environment to continue exacerbating tensions, we wanted to check whether you are still designating this as an incident and if you have raised the severity of that in any way?

I am sure you will not be surprised at the significant volumes of anti-immigrant content directed at Muslim and Jewish communities as well as concerning narratives about the police and a 'two-tier' system that we are seeing across the online environment.

As would be expected, this is manifesting in different ways across platforms but we are sharing some content here ([Example 1](#), [Example 2](#), [Example 3](#)) to illustrate the nature of what we've seen. The first includes a warning about blades being hidden in stickers - the text in this example is warning the public to avoid them but we have seen this image used in a range of contexts. The second takes a traditional ceremony and presents it as a show of weapons. The third misleads the reader about the nature of the protest in Leeds, we have seen this narrative appear in other content which misrepresent the government's response to further a sense of division.

These are not specific to TikTok as we wanted to give you a sense of the different narratives; we realise that terms of service will vary across these examples and across platforms themselves.

Given the serious risk of misleading and false claims in relation to this incident fueling community tensions on a local level and the potential for further physical harm, we are keen to understand a) what content you are seeing across your platform; and b) any measures you have taken in response (particularly those we might not observe because they are automatically/swiftly catching issues).

We'd be grateful if you could come back to us on those two points as soon as you are able to.

All the best,  
[REDACTED]

A third example of "concerning content" flagged by the team was a video of Pakistani men celebrating on a street, posted on Aug 5 and captioned: "Looks like Islamabad but it's

Manchester". The team claimed it had been shared "in order to incite fear of the Muslim community".

Labour was recently criticised over the "cover-up" of a secret resettlement programme for Afghans affected by a data leak in 2022. Officials were worried that the announcement would create a ["risk of disorder"](#).

A spokesman for the Big Brother Watch campaign group called for an immediate investigation into the team, warning that an "unaccountable and secretive Government unit is spying on speech that is critical of the police and Government policies".

The emails were revealed by Jim Jordan, chairman of the US House of Representatives' judiciary committee, which issued a subpoena to TikTok to hand over messages "regarding the company's compliance with foreign censorship laws".

Mr Jordan said Labour ministers had censored posts that were critical of the Government's policy on asylum, warning critics of Sir Keir to "watch out". He said: "In recent years, UK citizens have become increasingly fed up with the double standard in the UK. Mean tweets get you a longer prison sentence than many violent offences."

It is understood that Mr Jordan, a Trump ally, raised the TikTok emails directly with Mr Kyle on Wednesday. It is understood TikTok is one of several companies contacted by officials during the riots.

Government sources said Mr Jordan's committee had misunderstood the role of NS0IT, which they said was to find out whether tech companies were taking action on harmful content, not to order them to remove it.

"However we make no apologies for flagging to platforms content which is contrary to their own terms of service and which can result in violent disorder on our streets, as we saw

in the wake of the horrific Southport attack.”