

Trump takes on Google in complaints about social media

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump lashed out at tech companies Tuesday, accusing Google and others of “suppressing” conservative voices and “hiding information” and good news. He cited no evidence for the claim, which echoes both his own attacks on the press and a conservative talking point.

Google, operator of a popular search engine, responded by saying: “We never rank search results to manipulate political sentiment.”

Trump tweeted before dawn: “This is a very serious situation-will be addressed!” Hours later, Larry Kudlow, the president’s top economic adviser, said the White House is “taking a look” at whether Google searches should be subject to some regulation.

Trump has made similar complaints before, but he carried it a step further Tuesday by targeting Google.

“Google search results for ‘Trump News’ shows only the viewing/reporting of Fake New Media. In other words, they have it RIGGED, for me & others, so that almost all stories & news is BAD. Fake CNN is prominent. Republican/Conservative & Fair Media is shut out. Illegal?”

He added, without offering evidence, that “96% of results on “Trump News” are from National Left-Wing Media, very dangerous.”

“Google & others are suppressing voices of Conservatives and hiding information and news that is good. They are controlling what we can & cannot see,” Trump said.

In response, Google said its goal is to make sure users of its search engine get the most relevant answers quickly.

“Search is not used to set a political agenda and we don’t bias our results toward any political ideology,” the Mountain View, California-based company said. “Every year, we issue hundreds of improvements to our algorithms to ensure they surface high-quality content in response to users’ queries.”

“We continually work to improve Google Search and we never rank search results to manipulate political sentiment.”

Trump began complaining about the issue earlier this month as social media companies moved to ban right-wing “Infowars” conspiracy theorist Alex Jones from their platforms. He also argues regularly — and falsely — that the news media avoids writing positive stories about him or the administration.

Apple, YouTube and Spotify have permanently removed some of Jones’ content, Facebook has suspended him for 30 days and removed some of his pages, and Twitter gave Jones a weeklong timeout and was mulling deeper changes to try to limit the spread of fake news, misinformation and hate speech.

Trump has not named Jones, who is being sued for saying the 2012 shooting massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School was staged, in any tweets on the issue. Jones has since said he believes the shooting did occur but has argued that the case should be dismissed because he was acting as a journalist.

Trump has praised Jones’ “amazing” reputation.

The issue is also of concern on Capitol Hill, where the House Energy and Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., recently announced that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey will testify before the panel on Sept. 5 about the platform's algorithms and content monitoring.

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