

# UK Government ‘Had Secret Unit to Monitor Online COVID Lockdown Critics’

The Counter-Disinformation Unit (CDU) was set up by ministers in 2019

By [Joe Middleton](#)

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*The government had a secret unit that worked with social media companies to monitor and prevent speech that was critical of [Covid](#) lockdown policies, it has been revealed.*

The Counter-Disinformation Unit (CDU) was set up by ministers to deal with individuals or groups who criticised policies such as the mass vaccination of children or lockdowns during the pandemic.

Critics of government policies were routinely monitored and an AI firm was used to search social media posts, according to FOI and data protection requests reported by [The Daily Telegraph](#).

Campaigners have described the revelations as “truly chilling” and Jacob Rees-Mogg has called for the Covid inquiry to investigate the claims, the newspaper said.

“The inquiry clearly ought to investigate the oppressive methods used to override dissent,” he said.

Silkie Carlo, director of Big Brother Watch, said: “The very concept of ‘wrong information’ dictated by a central authority is open to abuse and should be considered far more critically, lest we mirror Chinese-style censorship.”

Large parts of the government’s work on disinformation during Covid is still redacted but the papers do reveal that Professor Carl Heneghan, an Oxford epidemiologist who has advised Boris Johnson, was monitored by disinformation units.

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