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**DHS Actions Related to  
an I&A Intelligence  
Product Deviated from  
Standard Procedures  
(REDACTED)**

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April 26, 2022  
OIG-22-41



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Washington, DC 20528 / [www.oig.dhs.gov](http://www.oig.dhs.gov)

April 26, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Melissa Smislova  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under  
Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis  
Office of Intelligence and Analysis

FROM: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.  
Inspector General

JOSEPH V. CUFFARI  
Digitally signed by  
JOSEPH V CUFFARI  
Date: 2022.04.26  
11:22:36 -04'00'

SUBJECT: *DHS Actions Related to an I&A Intelligence  
Product Deviated from Standard Procedures  
REDACTED*

Attached for your information is our final report, *DHS Actions Related to an I&A Intelligence Product Deviated from Standard Procedures*. We incorporated the formal comments from the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) in the final report.

The report contains one recommendation to improve the review and dissemination process for election related intelligence products. Your office concurred with this recommendation. Based on information provided in I&A's response to the draft report, we consider the recommendation open and resolved. Once your office has fully implemented the recommendations, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendations. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions. Please send your response or closure request to [OIGISPFollowup@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:OIGISPFollowup@oig.dhs.gov).

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post a redacted version of the report on our website.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Thomas Kait, Deputy Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 981-6000.

Attachment

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# DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

## *DHS Actions Related to an I&A Intelligence Product Deviated from Standard Procedures*

April 26, 2022

### Why We Did This Evaluation

Our objective was to determine whether DHS followed its standard process when it drafted, edited, and disseminated an I&A intelligence product regarding Russian interference in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election.

### What We Recommend

I&A, working with relevant external offices as appropriate, should identify and implement changes to the review and dissemination process for I&A's election-related intelligence products to ensure they are in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines.

**For Further Information:**

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 981-6000, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov)

### What We Found

The Department of Homeland Security did not adequately follow its internal processes and comply with applicable Intelligence Community policy standards and requirements when editing and disseminating an Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) intelligence product regarding Russian interference in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. For example, I&A employees during the review and clearance process changed the product's scope by making changes that appear to be based in part on political considerations, potentially impacting I&A's compliance with Intelligence Community policy. Additionally, the Acting Secretary participated in the review process multiple times despite lacking any formal role in reviewing the product, resulting in the delay of its dissemination on at least one occasion.

The delays and deviation from I&A's standard process and requirements put I&A at risk of creating a perception of politicization. This conclusion is supported by I&A's own tradecraft assessment, which determined that the product might be viewed as politicized.

### I&A Response

I&A concurred with our recommendation. We consider the recommendation resolved and open.



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## Table of Contents

Background ..... 2

Results of Evaluation ..... 6

I&A Followed Its Internal Process for Drafting the Initial Intelligence Product but Later Added Content that Changed the Product’s Scope..... 7

Dissemination Did Not Follow I&A’s Standard Process ..... 9

I&A Did Not Promptly Disseminate the Product..... 16

I&A’s Own Assessment of the Intelligence Product Determined It Risked Appearing Politicized ..... 18

Conclusion..... 19

Recommendation ..... 19

Management Comments and OIG Analysis ..... 19

## Appendixes

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology ..... 21

Appendix B: I&A Comments to the Draft Report..... 22

Appendix C: June 8, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20..... 25

Appendix D: July 7, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20..... 28

Appendix E: August 10, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20 ..... 30

Appendix F: September 4, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20 ..... 33

Appendix G: Office of Inspections and Evaluations Major Contributors to This Report..... 37

Appendix H: Report Distribution..... 38

## Abbreviations

AS1	Acting Secretary
CRCL	Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
CYMC	Cyber Mission Center
HSIN	Homeland Security Information Network
I&A	Office of Intelligence and Analysis
IC	Intelligence Community
ICD	Intelligence Community Directive
ILD	Intelligence Law Division
IOO	Intelligence Oversight Office
PRIV	Office of Privacy
USIA	Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis



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## Background

The Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) is a member of the Intelligence Community<sup>1</sup> (IC) and is authorized to access, receive, and analyze law enforcement information, intelligence information, and other information from Federal, state, and local government agencies, and private sector entities, and to disseminate such information to those partners.<sup>2</sup>

I&A is led by the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis (USIA) and Principal Deputy Under Secretary.<sup>3</sup> I&A’s Intelligence Enterprise Operations is led by a Deputy Under Secretary, who oversees eight offices, including five mission centers, which are each overseen by a mission manager at the GS-15 or Senior Executive Service level. The Cyber Mission Center (CYMC) is responsible for facilitating DHS’ mission of ensuring cybersecurity and resilience for government partners. Within CYMC, the Foreign Influence and Interference Branch focuses its analysis on nation-state threats from influence campaigns targeting national and economic security, political stability, social cohesion, and democratic institutions. These threats include media manipulation and other hostile efforts by foreign countries aimed at elections. Figure 1 depicts an abridged I&A organizational chart of relevant offices.

**Figure 1. I&A Organizational Chart of Relevant Offices**



*Source:* DHS Office of Inspector General analysis of I&A information

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.intelligence.gov/how-the-ic-works>.

<sup>2</sup> 6 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 121(d)(1).

<sup>3</sup> The USIA is a position requiring nomination by the President of the United States and confirmation by the United States Senate; the Principal Deputy Under Secretary is a career position within the civil service.



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One way CYMC accomplishes its mission is by producing and disseminating finished intelligence products<sup>4</sup> to its partners at the lowest classification level possible. Finished intelligence products can take a variety of forms, depending on the audience, the classification level, and the type of analysis, and include products such as Intelligence in Brief, Intelligence in Focus, and Intelligence in Depth.

I&A's intelligence products are governed by IC-specific laws and directives. For example, under Section 1019 of the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, intelligence should be timely, objective, independent of political considerations, and based upon all sources available to the IC and other appropriate entities.<sup>5</sup> These requirements are also reflected in Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 203,<sup>6</sup> which describes five Analytic Standards to guide production and evaluation of intelligence products. The five standards require intelligence products to be objective, independent of political consideration, timely, based on all available sources of intelligence information, and to exhibit analytic tradecraft standards.<sup>7</sup> Regarding independence from political consideration, ICD 203 specifically states that “[a]nalytic assessments must not be distorted by, nor shaped for, advocacy of a particular audience, agenda, or policy viewpoint.”<sup>8</sup>

I&A products are also governed by I&A internal standards. I&A's *Policy Instruction for the Production of Finished Intelligence* (IA-901) establishes the responsibilities and procedures within I&A for the production, review, approval, and dissemination of I&A finished intelligence products.<sup>9</sup> Intelligence products must be reviewed for content and tradecraft by at least two qualified reviewers within the originating mission center. These reviews are performed first by a team lead and then by a senior intelligence officer. Concurrent with the senior intelligence officer's review, I&A's domestic disclosure officer reviews the product primarily for classification issues and sourcing. Under IA-901, the

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<sup>4</sup> I&A defines finished intelligence products as “the physical manifestation, regardless of form or format, of analytic efforts conducted in furtherance of the I&A mission, which represent the analytic assessment, judgment, or other analytic input of I&A or intelligence personnel, and which are to be disseminated outside the Department.” Policy Instruction: IA-901, *Production of Finished Intelligence*, May 7, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 50 U.S.C. § 3024(a)(2); Pub. L. 108–458, title I, § 1019, Dec. 17, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Intelligence Community Directive 203, *Analytic Standards*, January 2, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* These analytical tradecraft standards include expectations such as proper description of credibility of sources, proper distinguishing between underlying intelligence and analysts' assumptions, and use of clear and logical argumentation.

<sup>8</sup> Intelligence Community Directive 203, *Analytic Standards*, January 2, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> The May 2020 version of IA-901 indicated that I&A would release standard operating procedures to further implement IA-901. I&A released these procedures in June 2021.



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USIA is considered the final authority for approving the dissemination of finished intelligence products. Specifically, IA-901 states:

The [USIA is] the final intelligence authority, and is responsible for the content, publication, and dissemination of all I&A products and is the final authority for approving the dissemination of Finished Intelligence Products....

In practice, the USIA does not review and approve every intelligence product that I&A creates. The relevant mission manager is the USIA's designated senior accountable official responsible for conducting, on USIA's behalf, final review and approval of finished intelligence products in accordance with IA-901. That official must ensure the product has completed the appropriate review processes and complies with all analytic tradecraft standards, legal requirements, policies for the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, and oversight and compliance guidelines. In contrast, IA-901 does not mention or describe the role of anyone in the DHS Office of the Secretary, such as the Secretary or Deputy Secretary, in reviewing and approving any I&A intelligence products.

IA-901 requires that products meeting at least one of seven criteria also undergo a more formal oversight review. This includes content that “[names] elected US Government officials, candidates for elected federal office, or US political parties.”<sup>10</sup> These types of intelligence products must be reviewed by DHS' Office of General Counsel's Intelligence Law Division (ILD) and I&A's Intelligence Oversight Office (IOO). These products must also be reviewed by personnel in DHS' Office of Privacy (PRIV) and DHS' Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL).<sup>11</sup> Collectively, I&A refers to PRIV, CRCL, ILD, and IOO frequently as the “group of four.”

During the oversight review, each of the “group of four” can request edits to products for certain reasons. In particular:

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<sup>10</sup> Policy Instruction: IA-901, *Production of Finished Intelligence*, May 7, 2020, p. 7. The other six types of products that must undergo oversight review include ones that specifically address or describe populations discernible by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, country of origin, or nationality; reference or describe the activities of minors (under 18) individually or as a discernible population; include Sensitive Personally Identifiable Information (SPII); reflect analysis based upon or derived from a “Bulk Data Collection” containing U.S. Person information; reference or describe the political, religious, ideological, or other constitutionally-protected speech or activity of a U.S. Person (or person in the United States) when not directly linked to violence or threat of violence; and any other criteria promulgated in writing by the Deputy Under Secretary.

<sup>11</sup> An I&A employee may be certified to perform reviews to ensure compliance with PRIV and CRCL oversight principles.



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- ILD may request revisions when they are legally required or when the product is otherwise legally objectionable;
- IOO may request revisions when required by I&A’s oversight procedures;
- PRIV may request revisions when required to protect the privacy of individuals; and
- CRCL may request revisions when required to protect the civil rights or civil liberties of particular individuals.

In these instances, the product’s author and the oversight office work together to revise the product.

Once an intelligence product is approved for dissemination and clears the “group of four,”<sup>12</sup> the mission manager gives final approval. I&A then provides advanced notification of the product by emailing it to DHS’ Offices of Public Affairs and Legislative Affairs, as well as the DHS Office of the Secretary, 48 hours before it is disseminated. This advanced notification process ensures these three DHS offices are aware of the products and gives them time to prepare for possible inquiries related to the products. Unclassified products generally are then disseminated via posting to the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), a web-based information sharing platform operated by DHS. Figure 2 depicts the process flow for I&A’s finished intelligence products.

**Figure 2. Process Flow for Finished Intelligence**



Source: DHS OIG analysis of I&A information

In July 2020, I&A adopted a policy ceasing dissemination of unclassified products on foreign influence threats to elections 60 days prior to election day—in this case, September 4, 2020. Its reason for doing so was to safeguard

<sup>12</sup> I&A may also disseminate products to DHS’ intelligence offices as well as other IC members for additional review. Within DHS, I&A and the United States Coast Guard are IC members. Other DHS components have intelligence offices that are not IC members.





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“the Department’s role as a fair, neutral, and nonpartisan institution when it comes to US elections.... [Politics should not] play a role in the decisions of Intelligence Community leaders and officers regarding collection activities or analytic assessments.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Whistleblower Complaint**

In August 2020, the DHS Secretary announced in an email to all staff that he had temporarily reassigned the Acting USIA based on allegations that I&A had gathered and disseminated intelligence reports identifying reporters and other members of the press.<sup>14</sup> In September 2020, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence published a whistleblower complaint from [REDACTED]. The complaint included several allegations, including one alleging “Improper Administration of an Intelligence Program and Abuse of Authority regarding Russian Influence.” This allegation included a number of specific examples, including one alleging that during a July 8, 2020 meeting, the Acting DHS Secretary told the Acting USIA an intelligence product should be “‘held’ because it ‘made the President look bad.’” The complaint also alleged the product was updated without the Acting USIA’s input, and the updated product equated actions of China and Iran with the actions of Russia, and therefore was misleading and inconsistent with intelligence information. In November 2021, pursuant to an agreement with DHS, the [REDACTED] withdrew his whistleblower complaint.

Our objective was to determine whether DHS followed its standard process when it drafted, edited, and disseminated the intelligence product described above. Our scope was limited to the single product.

### **Results of Evaluation**

We found that DHS did not adequately follow its internal processes and comply with applicable IC policy standards and requirements when editing and disseminating an I&A intelligence product regarding Russian interference with the 2020 U.S. Presidential election.

For example, I&A employees during the review and clearance process changed the product’s scope by making changes that appear to be based in part on political considerations, raising objectivity concerns and potentially impacting

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<sup>13</sup> Memorandum for the Record, *Election Year Intelligence Activities and Sensitivities*, July 14, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> On August 1, 2020, the Acting USIA was moved to another position within DHS but outside of I&A. The Acting USIA subsequently left DHS in September 2021.



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I&A's compliance with Intelligence Community policy. Additionally, the Acting Secretary participated in the review process multiple times despite lacking any formal role in reviewing the product, resulting in the delay of its dissemination on at least one occasion. In one of these instances, the Acting Secretary asked for the product to be "held" from its pending release on HSIN during a July 8, 2020 meeting. We determined that the Acting Secretary's involvement led to the rare occurrence of I&A ceasing dissemination of a product after it had already been approved by the mission manager and circulated via advanced notification. Once I&A officials started revising the product, they took additional time to come to an agreement on what revisions would be made.

The delays and deviation from I&A's standard process and requirements put I&A at risk of creating a perception of politicization. This conclusion is supported by I&A's own tradecraft assessment, which determined that the product might be viewed as politicized.

### **I&A Followed Its Internal Process for Drafting the Initial Intelligence Product but Later Added Content that Changed the Product's Scope**

In April 2020, CYMC started drafting an intelligence product titled "Russia Likely to Denigrate Health of US Candidates to Influence 2020 Electoral Dynamics," IA-44399-20 (the product).<sup>15</sup> The intelligence analyst who authored the product told us after Super Tuesday,<sup>16</sup> he noticed an uptick in Russian state media efforts to question candidate Joseph Biden's mental health. He said he discussed the issue with CYMC's mission manager, who mentioned similar actions occurring during the 2016 election. The analyst believed foreign efforts questioning a candidate's health were worth exploring because they could impact voters' willingness to vote for that candidate and began drafting the product. In its initial form, the product was approximately two pages in length and included information relating to one "current Democratic presidential candidate" and to Russian activities to influence the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. This version did not contain any information about other countries' influence efforts. Based on our analysis, the intelligence product initially followed I&A's internal drafting and editing process — the product was reviewed by CYMC's team lead, senior intelligence officer, and I&A's domestic disclosure officer, and oversight offices as described in IA-901 and CYMC policy.

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<sup>15</sup> Appendixes C, D, E, and F include various versions of the product described in the report.

<sup>16</sup> Super Tuesday refers to the Tuesday in a presidential election year when the largest number of states and territories hold a presidential primary or caucus event. In 2020, Super Tuesday was on March 3.



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However, at a later date, I&A edited the intelligence product and added content outside of its scope based on comments received during the external oversight review process. Specifically, on June 8, 2020, I&A disseminated the draft version of the product, as seen in Appendix C, for review to the “group of four.” An official from PRIV who initially reviewed the product expressed concerns, saying:

This product is quite problematic. Although the title refers to “candidates,” there is only one candidate mentioned throughout the document.... The product also refers to candidates on the down-ballot without giving any examples.

It is likely a problem that despite the title the product only addresses the candidate of one of the political parties. As the product is intended for release to [state, local, tribal, and territorial partners], it is quite likely that some recipients will view the product as a disingenuous attempt to further the message. This could possibly be averted if examples were included from both parties. If that is not possible, it may be better to limit the number of examples given. The repetition of the same basic information could be seen as unnecessary and subtle support for the message.

PRIV would like to hear the opinions of the other offices before going further. There is a privacy issue to the extent that an individual is being singled out for attention and it might be that this falls more squarely within the strictures of a TTP-type product.

We interviewed the PRIV official, who told us his concern was that DHS would be seen as supporting one particular view.

In an internal I&A email, the I&A official who authored the product described why providing examples of influence efforts targeting candidates from both major political parties might be difficult, because:





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Despite reservations by the author, I&A added a tone box<sup>17</sup> describing overt efforts by Chinese and Iranian influence actors to promote unsubstantiated narratives questioning the mental health of then-President Donald Trump. The tone box is the only part of the product where Iran and China, as well as President Trump, are discussed. This version, titled “Russia Likely to Denigrate Health of US Candidates to Influence 2020 Election,” was shortened to approximately one page. Appendix D contains the revised version of the intelligence product.

We interviewed the CYMC mission manager, who directed the addition of the tone box, and he provided varying reasons for its addition. He told us it was a feature intended to draw a contrast between the actions of Russia and those of Iran and China, but also described the tone box as a “blunting feature” meant to balance the product. When asked whether intelligence products require balancing, he said the addition of the tone box was not politicization, yet also said it showed I&A’s political savviness, as the state and local customers of their products tended to be political. His suggestion contradicts our assessment of ICD 203, which states that analytic assessments must be independent of political consideration and must not be distorted by, nor shaped for, advocacy of a particular audience, agenda, or policy viewpoint.

Further, the addition of the tone box served an unclear intelligence purpose. As the product approached finalization, the official who added the tone box noted in an email that although the product mentions China and Iran, it “remains ... Russia focused.” The fact that the product specifically related to Russia was reinforced by the product’s scope note, which mentions only Russia, both before and after the addition of the tone box relating to Iran and China. A senior I&A official said a product’s scope is important in allowing I&A to respond when a customer asks why I&A did not discuss additional topics. Ultimately, the tone box remained in the final version of the product.

### **Dissemination Did Not Follow I&A’s Standard Process**

The Acting Secretary participated in the review process multiple times despite lacking any formal role in reviewing or approving the product. In at least one instance, I&A pulled the product from dissemination after the Acting Secretary’s input. This is despite I&A’s own internal guidance, which does not

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<sup>17</sup> A tone box is similar in appearance and function to a text box or callout. According to I&A guidance, a tone box should be used “for related, ancillary information that is not essential to [the] main story but enriches the understanding of the reader.” A tone box is distinguished from other text by a blue border and background.



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describe any role or responsibility of the DHS Secretary in reviewing or approving intelligence products. The Acting Secretary's involvement in I&A's process caused a delay in the product's release and potentially furthered the perception of politicization surrounding the product.

**The DHS Acting Secretary Asked that the Intelligence Product Be Held from Its Pending Release during a July 8, 2020 Meeting**

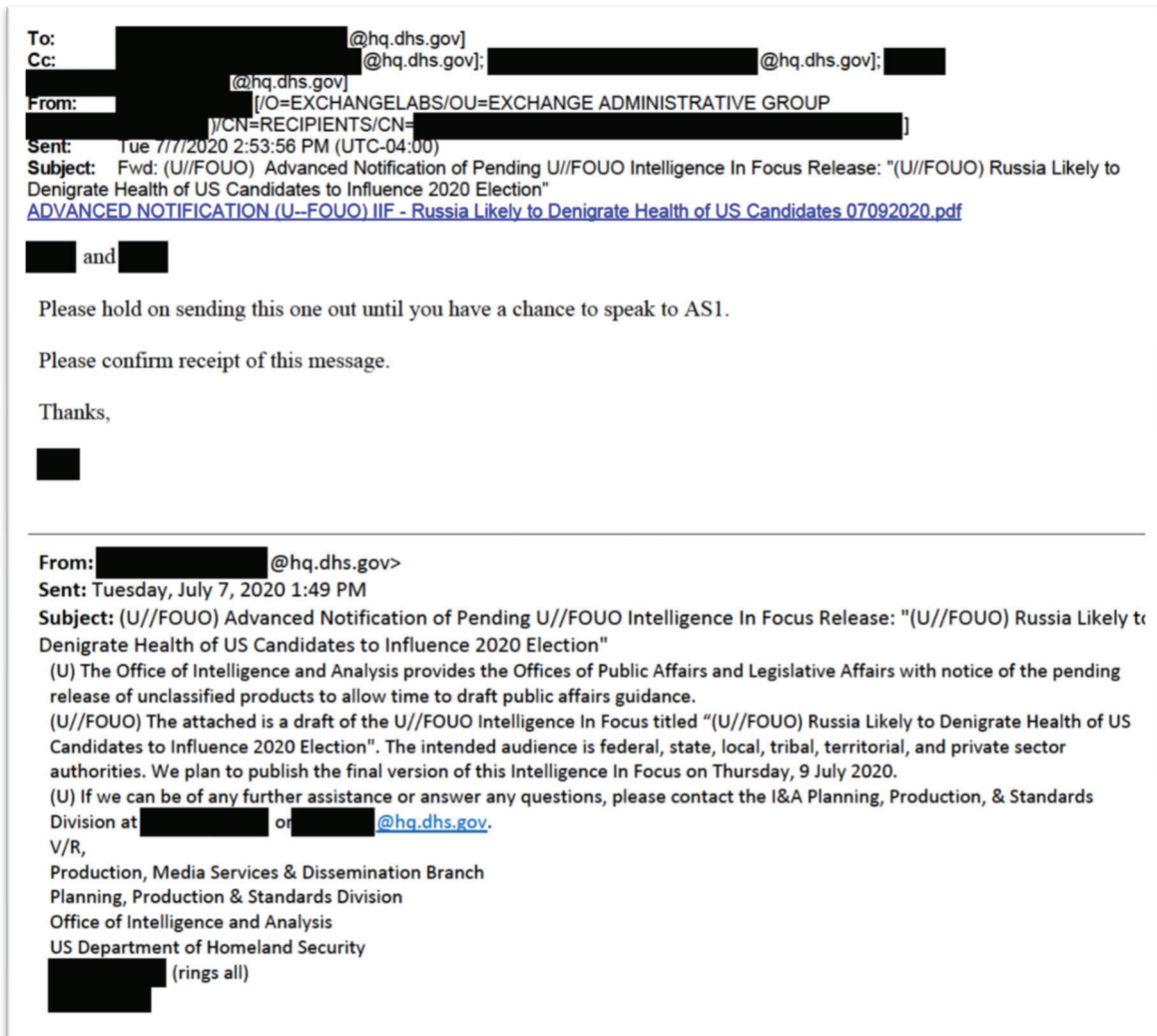
On July 7, 2020, I&A disseminated the approved product, now including a tone box and, as seen in Appendix D, through the advanced notification process after the review by the "group of four." The purpose of the advanced notification, according to the email accompanying the product, was to "[provide] the [DHS] Offices of Public Affairs and Legislative Affairs with notice of the pending release ... to allow time to draft public affairs guidance." The notice does not request further reviews or edits; one senior I&A official described the advanced notification as a courtesy and the product at that point is considered final, having been approved by an authorized senior official. According to the email, I&A planned final dissemination of the product on July 9, 2020.

As depicted in Figure 3, upon receiving this notice, the DHS Acting Chief of Staff instructed the Acting USIA to delay further dissemination of the product until the Acting USIA talked to the DHS Acting Secretary (referred to as AS1 in Figure 3). This is despite IA-901, which states I&A mission managers are responsible specifically for reviewing and approving finished intelligence within their mission area and does not reference any approval authority outside of I&A, including that of the DHS Secretary. More specifically, IA-901 does not mention or describe the role of anyone in the DHS Office of the Secretary in reviewing and approving intelligence products. The discussion, which is the subject of the whistleblower's complaint, took place during a meeting on July 8, 2020. As a result of the July 8 meeting, the I&A product was not disseminated as planned on July 9, 2020.



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**Figure 3. July 7 Email Instructing I&A to Hold Product**



Source: DHS (with OIG redactions)

Because the whistleblower alleged that the Acting Secretary asked during the July 8 meeting that the intelligence product be “held’ because it ‘made the President look bad,’” we made a specific effort to understand what occurred during the meeting. Although there is agreement on some content discussed in the meeting, we were unable to conclude whether political considerations played a role in the meeting due to disagreement regarding key facts.

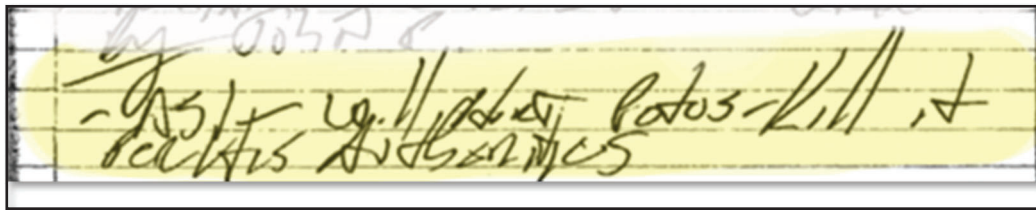
Based on our interviews with relevant officials, as well as our document review, it is clear the Acting Secretary asked the Acting USIA to hold the product from its pending release. We interviewed the Acting USIA, who told us the Acting Secretary asked the product be held because it made President Trump look bad



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and hurt President Trump’s campaign — the concept that Russia was denigrating candidate Biden would be used against President Trump. The Acting USIA also told us he took contemporaneous notes of the meeting, a copy of which we obtained. The notes, depicted in Figure 4, read “AS1 – will hurt POTUS – kill it per his authorities.” The Acting USIA told us these notes meant that the Acting Secretary told him to hold the product because it would hurt President Trump; he also believed the Acting Secretary was referring to authorities possessed by the DHS Secretary.



**Figure 4. Partial Copy of Acting USIA's Notes for July 8**

*Source: DHS*

We also interviewed the Acting Secretary, the DHS Acting Chief of Staff, the DHS Deputy Chief of Staff, and the Counselor to the Secretary about what occurred during the July 8 meeting,<sup>18</sup> as the Acting USIA indicated to us that either they attended the meeting or were aware of the meeting. Not all of these officials recalled attending the meeting, and those who did recalled some details differently than the Acting USIA. Those who recalled attending the meeting all indicated the Acting Secretary did not make the alleged request to hold the product based on political considerations. More specifically, the Acting Secretary stated that he did not say the product would make the President look bad or would hurt the President’s campaign, and did not claim during the meeting that he had the authority to prevent the dissemination of the product. The Acting Secretary also stated that the meeting “conversation focused around the quality of the work and the apparent problem that I&A lacked any quality control review. I asked simply for it to be improved.” He further described the reasons why he asked to hold the product:

I tried to put myself in the position of one of our state and local partners who would be reading this and I could not see where the product, as written on July 8, would have added any value or given them any knowledge they could use.... The product was not well written. This is a Cabinet Department staffed by over 240,000 people and the product I saw in July was written at the Fifth-

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<sup>18</sup> At their request, we submitted written questions to the Acting Secretary and the DHS Acting Chief of Staff, who provided written responses to our questions.



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Grade level. I expect more out of our component leaders. There were sentences that did not make sense. There was no cohesive argument. It lacked citations and context. It simply did not meet the standards of work product that I expect when we put the DHS name on something.

When asked about his role in reviewing and approving I&A intelligence products, the Acting Secretary stated, "I play no part in approving I&A intelligence products. I am also not part of the review chain with respect to intelligence products."

The DHS Acting Chief of Staff stated the Acting Secretary instructed him to send the July 7 email to hold the product because the product was poorly written, did not flow logically, and did not provide adequate support citations. He also told us the Acting Secretary reiterated his concerns about the product to the Acting USIA during the July 8 meeting. Finally, he said he did not recall the Acting Secretary referring to the product's effect on the President or the President's campaign, noting he "would have remembered such an outrageous comment." Nonetheless, the Acting Chief of Staff also told us he could not recall another instance when the Acting Secretary was involved with other intelligence-related products to the same extent he was with the product, even though officials from the Office of the Secretary had previously voiced concerns over other I&A products. He stated, "During my tenure as Acting Chief of Staff, this is the only product I recall rising to the Secretary's level..." The Acting Chief of Staff also stated that, other than the intelligence product in question, he could not recall any other instances in which the Acting Secretary had requested a meeting with I&A leadership related to pre-release distributions of I&A intelligence products.

The DHS Deputy Chief of Staff told us he remembered the Acting Secretary telling the Acting USIA the product was not very good and the Acting USIA agreeing. The DHS Deputy Chief of Staff said he did not remember the Acting Secretary making a comment that the product would hurt the President or the President's campaign. After the meeting, the Acting USIA sent at least a partial meeting summary to the Deputy Chief of Staff. Although this email did not mention the intelligence product or the Acting Secretary's alleged request relating to it, the meeting covered more topics than just the intelligence product, and the email appears only to describe action items relating to a different topic.

We also interviewed four I&A officials with whom the Acting USIA told us he spoke after the July 8 meeting. None of these officials remembered the Acting USIA describing the Acting Secretary's alleged request to hold the product





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based on political considerations. Moreover, despite the Acting USIA describing to us a detailed conversation he had with one of these officials, that official could not recall any conversation with the Acting USIA about the product. Another official told us the Acting USIA went out of his way to say the Acting Secretary's concerns with the product were not based on political considerations. However, the Acting USIA indicated to us he intentionally did not tell others in I&A about the Acting Secretary's specific reasons to hold the product in order to protect them. He told us he instead discussed only the substance of changes to be made to the product. The officials we spoke with who discussed the meeting with the Acting USIA agreed this was the nature of the discussion.

In addition to disagreement over whether the Acting Secretary held the intelligence product from release for political reasons, there also was disagreement over more basic details, such as who attended the meeting. For example, both the Acting USIA and DHS Deputy Chief of Staff told us that the latter attended the meeting. We also identified an email exchange on July 8 and July 9, 2020, between the Acting USIA and the DHS Deputy Chief of Staff. In this exchange, the Acting USIA asked, "Let me know if I captured what I believed AS1 directed at the 1130," providing a list of items. The DHS Deputy Chief of Staff responded, "[t]his seems to capture what was discussed." Although this exchange supports the DHS Deputy Chief of Staff's presence at the meeting, it conflicts with the recollection of both the Acting Secretary and DHS Acting Chief of Staff, who did not indicate the DHS Deputy Chief of Staff was present. It also conflicts with the meeting invitation, which lists as attendees only the Acting USIA, the Acting Secretary, and the Acting Chief of Staff.

### **The Intelligence Product Was Held Again after a Second Advanced Notification on August 10, 2020**

Within 2 days of the July 8 meeting, I&A revised the product. The revisions were minimal, mostly consisting of adding and defining the words "covert" and "overt." Despite making these revisions within 2 days of the July 8 meeting, I&A did not disseminate the intelligence product again via advanced notification until August 10.<sup>19</sup> This version of the intelligence product is included in Appendix E. As with the July advanced notification, the August advanced notification did not request further review by anyone.

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<sup>19</sup> We asked an I&A official about the lack of substantial changes after that amount of time had passed. He said officials were rotating in and out of the office, as I&A employees alternated weeks in the office and teleworking due to COVID-19, and attributed it to confusion and miscommunication.



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At this point, the Acting USIA had already been moved to another position within DHS, but outside of I&A. The Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence Enterprise Operations told us that after receiving the advanced notification, the Acting Secretary reached out and spoke with her and the new Acting USIA to express concern because the Acting Secretary did not think the product changed and he did not understand the value it added. The Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence Enterprise Operations told us she agreed with the Acting Secretary's assessment that the product was not improved.

I&A pulled the product from dissemination again on August 12, 2020. An additional 20 days passed before I&A created a draft reflecting changes identified after the second advanced notification. An I&A official attributed these additional delays to effort being split among various products. Multiple I&A officials we spoke to considered the product's review timeframe to be abnormal; one said the product had more visibility from I&A leadership than most products and said it suffered from trying to please everyone. I&A ultimately approved the product for dissemination on September 4.

We determined that I&A holding a product at the point of advanced notification is rare, yet I&A delayed the product twice at this stage. Our document review indicated products were held at this stage between one to six times in a year; in fiscal year 2020 alone, I&A released roughly 280 intelligence products at the same classification level as the intelligence product in question. According to documentation, when products have been held, it is to allow for a specific action to occur, such as correcting a typographical error or to allow for additional coordination with partners.

**I&A Shared the Intelligence Product with the DHS Acting Secretary Once More before Its Final Dissemination**

The Acting Secretary received notice about the intelligence product once more before its final dissemination. As I&A prepared the finalized product for dissemination on September 4, 2020, the new Acting USIA emailed the Acting Secretary to inform him about changes to the product's content and dissemination process, and shared a draft of the product.<sup>20</sup> The Acting Secretary did not respond to I&A, and we have no evidence that he made any further comments or requests to I&A relating to the product. However, in an email to his staff on the same day about the product, he focused on messaging the benefits of the involvement of the Office of the Secretary in the intelligence process, writing: "we need to turn this into a good news story. Key point is that I&A produced a better, clearer document because they were not left on their

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<sup>20</sup> We were unable to interview the I&A official to ask why he believed this was necessary.



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own.” Others in the Office of the Secretary received the I&A email, including the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Acting Deputy Secretary, who responded to the I&A official to express his belief the product had been improved.

We concluded that the repeated involvement in the review process of the Acting Secretary, as well as of others in the Office of the Secretary, was unusual and created the risk of appearing to politicize the product.

### **I&A Did Not Promptly Disseminate the Product**

On September 4, 2020, I&A finalized the product,<sup>21</sup> now titled “Malign Foreign Influence Actors Denigrating Health of US Presidential Candidates.” Appendix F contains the final version of the intelligence product. It included an assessment that “Russian malign influence actors” were spreading unsubstantiated allegations relating to the health of then-candidate Biden to reduce voters’ confidence in him as a candidate. The product said Russia was using both overt and covert channels and linked the current activities to similar efforts during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election to question the health of a candidate. The September 4 version of the product also included a tone box including information similar to the tone box in the July 7 version.

Even after I&A approved the product on September 4, additional delays occurred in its dissemination. I&A’s July 2020 policy ceasing dissemination of unclassified products on foreign influence threats to elections 60 days prior to election day meant the product should have been disseminated on the same day it was approved — September 4, 2020. However, I&A disseminated the product after September 4, 2020, and not through its typical distribution channels. Specifically, the product was originally intended to be posted on HSIN, which is the normal process for I&A’s unclassified products. However, based on discussions with the “group of four” and a desire to limit distribution of election-related products to relevant election officials, such as Secretaries of State, and not to the wider audience on HSIN that could not act on the information, I&A decided to disseminate the product through other channels. First, on behalf of I&A, DHS’ Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency disseminated the product to the National Association of Secretaries of State and the National Association of State Election Directors on September 8, 2020. I&A’s Field Operations Division dissemination occurred even later. As a result, I&A does not appear to have completed its dissemination until October 15, 2020. An I&A official told us this was the result of confusion within Field Operations Division. According to the same official, I&A’s dissemination of the

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<sup>21</sup> As described later, the product was not disseminated on this date.



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product was limited to a briefing, and stakeholders were not given a copy of the product. An I&A official told us this was not a normal practice. Figure 5 describes the timeline of I&A’s dissemination of the product.

**Figure 5. Timeline of Actions Related to Intelligence Product**

Date	Actions Related to Intelligence Product
March / April	Intelligence analyst initially conceptualizes product
June 8	Senior Intelligence Officer approves product and sends to “group of four”
June 9	I&A acknowledges clearance by the “group of four”
June 30	CYMC mission manager approves product
July 7	I&A sends product out via advanced notification
July 8	Acting Secretary, Acting USIA, and others meet regarding the product and other matters
July 10	CYMC mission manager receives updated draft with minimal revisions for review
August 7	CYMC mission manager moves the product toward dissemination
August 10	I&A sends advanced notification of the product, which is nearly identical to the July 10 version  In response to the advanced notification, Acting Secretary calls I&A senior official about the product. The senior official emails “Why is this going out? I thought we agreed per [the Acting Secretary’s] comments to hold” to the CYMC mission manager and others.
August 11	I&A senior official identifies three issues in the product
August 12	I&S pulls product from dissemination a second time
August 14	CYMC receives feedback from I&A leadership on the product
August 31	I&A senior official learns of leak of the product to media  Four minutes later, I&A senior official confirms product has not been released and directs production to not release until instructed  I&A senior official sets up meeting to discuss the product with CYMC mission manager and subsequently receives updated draft
September 1	I&A senior official returns product to CYMC and says the product is getting close
September 2	I&A sends product to “group of four” for review with request for clearance the same day
September 4	I&A approves product
October 15	Date of last scheduled activity to complete dissemination

Source: DHS OIG analysis of I&A information

ICD 203 specifies that intelligence should be disseminated in time to be actionable by customers. I&A’s initial assessment in the July version of the product was that foreign efforts to influence the 2020 U.S. Presidential election were occurring and would continue occurring. Therefore, under the timeliness standard, it would have been appropriate to disseminate information about specific foreign influence attempts as early as possible. I&A did not promptly



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disseminate the product; it was not disseminated until less than 1 month before the election, approximately 3 months after its original scheduled dissemination date.

### **I&A’s Own Assessment of the Intelligence Product Determined It Risked Appearing Politicized**

I&A conducted a tradecraft assessment<sup>22</sup> of various versions of the product through its Analytic Ombudsman, who reviews I&A intelligence products based on analytic tradecraft and quality standards. Specifically, I&A conducted tradecraft reviews on two versions of the product: the version reviewed by the Acting Secretary in July and the final version from September. Neither version fared particularly well, but the September version fared worse than the July version despite its dissemination being delayed to allow for improvements. The Analytic Ombudsman noted various problems with the product, including that it was confusing, did not fully provide customers with the implications of its analysis, and included unsupported assessments.

However, one of the larger issues that the Analytic Ombudsman noted was that “problems with the piece undermine[d] the original message and g[a]ve the perception of a lack of objectivity or an attempt at political influence.” The assessment noted in full that:

Given the structure, vagueness, and use of a “balancing” tone box, there are some questions about objectivity and freedom from political consideration. Papers on topics related to the 2020 election, especially discussing particular candidates, require particular care to ensure that they are objective and not distorted by, nor shaped for, advocacy of a particular audience, agenda, or policy viewpoint. In particular, the piece seems to almost avoid the main message that is made explicit in the key judgment — that Russian influence actors are targeting the Democratic candidates in 2020 .... the exclusion of ‘Democratic’ in the title, lack of discussion about reporting (or lack of it) on Russian posts denigrating the President, an implied implication about influencing the election, lack of alternative analysis, and inclusion of a tone box on Iran/China seemingly unrelated to the main message are

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<sup>22</sup> IA-901 requires I&A to conduct tradecraft assessments, which are “a process for conducting post publication evaluations, audits, and reviews of I&A products to evaluate ... analytic tradecraft and quality.” I&A tradecraft assessments generally consider how well a product meets standards set forth in ICD 203 and ICD 206, which relates to sourcing.



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all areas that could be seen as ‘being political,’ whether intentional or not.

Ultimately, I&A’s tradecraft assessment of the final version of the product supports our assessment that the product risked appearing politicized.

### **Conclusion**

DHS did not follow its standard process and requirements when editing and disseminating an I&A intelligence product regarding Russian interference with the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. The Acting Secretary disrupted dissemination of the product when he asked for the product to be “held” during the July 8 meeting. This resulted in a delay in the dissemination of an intelligence product intended to inform stakeholders about foreign influence efforts relating to the 2020 U.S. Presidential election. I&A added to the delay by not expeditiously editing and disseminating the product. The repeated interaction with the product by those with no formal role in its review, as well as the addition of specific content in the product, put I&A at risk of creating the perception of politicization. This conclusion is supported by I&A’s own tradecraft assessment of the product. In the future, I&A should ensure uniform and consistent compliance with I&A and IC procedures and requirements.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis:

**Recommendation 1:** Working with the Office of the Secretary and “group of four” oversight entities as appropriate, identify and implement changes to the review and dissemination process for I&A’s election-related intelligence products to ensure they are in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines.

### **Management Comments and OIG Analysis**

I&A concurred with our recommendation and described corrective actions it will take to address the issues identified in this report. Appendix B contains I&A’s management comments in their entirety. We also received technical comments to the draft report and revised the report as appropriate. We



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consider this recommendation resolved and open. I&A's response to our recommendation and our analysis follows.

**Recommendation 1:** Working with the Office of the Secretary and “group of four” oversight entities as appropriate, identify and implement changes to the review and dissemination process for I&A's election-related intelligence products to ensure they are in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines.

**I&A's Response to Recommendation 1:** Concur. I&A's Research Director, on behalf of the Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence Enterprise Operations, leads I&A's corporate analytic program, which includes analytic tradecraft and production processes. The Research Director, in coordination with leadership; I&A's Strategy, Policy, and Plans Branch; and with appropriate legal, privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties oversight entities, will review and adjust or issue policies and procedures, as needed, to ensure the following: (1) safeguarding intelligence products from inappropriate interference; (2) preventing distortions and/or delays to intelligence products; and (3) mitigating the perception of politicization of any I&A intelligence products, including those related to elections. I&A will also develop training for all I&A personnel, DHS oversight entities, and DHS leadership regarding policies and procedures designed to prevent politicization of intelligence and intelligence processes. Estimated Completion Date: December 30, 2022.

**OIG Analysis:** We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when we receive evidence that I&A has completed the actions described in its response.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

We initiated this review in response to a congressional request and performed fieldwork between December 2020 and April 2021. Our objective was to determine whether DHS followed its standard process when it drafted, edited, and prepared to disseminate an intelligence product. Our review was limited to a single product, IA-44399-20. Although we collected and reviewed information relating to additional I&A intelligence products, our assessment of these products was limited to facilitating our understanding of I&A's general process and how the creation, review, and dissemination process used for IA-44399-20 compared to other products.

To assess the product's review and dissemination process, we reviewed relevant policies and procedures, interviewed pertinent officials, and conducted a review of I&A and DHS officials' emails dated between May 1 and September 10, 2020.

To help us understand the discussions that took place during the July 8 meeting, we attempted to interview all persons that we identified as potentially being present at the meeting. We first asked the Acting USIA who attended the meeting. We then interviewed those individuals, as described below. Those individuals did not identify any additional attendees.

The former Acting USIA, a then DHS Deputy Chief of Staff, and a then Advisor/Senior Counselor to the DHS Secretary agreed to oral interviews. The then Acting Secretary, then DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary, and the DHS Acting Chief of Staff requested to be interviewed in writing rather than orally. The DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary did not provide any responses despite agreeing to do so. In addition, we conducted oral interviews with other officials from I&A who we identified as not attending the meeting but potentially discussing the subject matter with a meeting attendee. We also reviewed emails from relevant officials in I&A and the Office of the Secretary.

We conducted this evaluation under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.





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**Appendix B**  
**I&A Comments to the Draft Report**

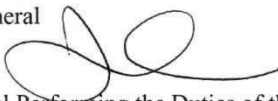
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

April 5, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph V. Cuffari  
Inspector General

FROM: John Cohen   
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary  
Office of Intelligence and Analysis

SUBJECT: Management Response to Draft Report: "DHS Actions Related  
to an I&A Intelligence Product Deviated from Standard  
Procedures" (Project No. 21-011-SRE-I&A)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in conducting its review and issuing this report.

This review addresses one of the most important aspects of the intelligence profession—ensuring the integrity, objectivity, and independence of intelligence products. It is essential that I&A ensure every measure is taken to prevent – whether intentional or unintentional – any distortion or delay of analytic judgments. Any actual or perceived distortion or delay of these judgments erodes our credibility, undermines our mission, and is a disservice to the I&A workforce, the Department, and those we serve.

The Intelligence Community's analytic judgments inform the decisions of policy makers and those involved in operational activities. As OIG's draft report indicates, all members of the Intelligence Community, including I&A, must (1) develop analytic judgments based on an objective evaluation of data, and (2) ensure that protocols and procedures are in place to prevent inappropriate interference in the intelligence process.

While the OIG's review was focused on one election influence-related intelligence product, the underlying issue of ensuring protocols and procedures are in place to preserve the integrity, objectivity, and independence of intelligence applies to all I&A intelligence products. Therefore, I&A concurs with the draft report's one recommendation and commits to addressing that recommendation by continuing to



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ensure that all I&A intelligence products, including those related to elections, are drafted, edited, and disseminated in accordance with applicable policies, guidelines, and laws.

Since January 2021, I&A has renewed its commitment to continually assess the policies, guidelines, and processes that govern the review and dissemination of its finished intelligence products, including to identify and implement any necessary improvements. I&A is currently revising our policy governing finished intelligence production, for example, to ensure I&A can continue to preserve analytic objectivity and independence, while protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

We have enclosed our detailed response to the OIG's recommendation. I&A previously submitted technical comments addressing accuracy, context, sensitivity, and other concerns for the OIG's consideration, as appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Enclosure



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**Enclosure: Management Response to Recommendation  
Contained in 21-011-SRE-I&A**

OIG recommended that the Under Secretary for I&A:

**Recommendation 1:** Working with the Office of the Secretary and the Group of Four oversight entities as appropriate, identify and implement changes to the review and dissemination process for I&A's election-related intelligence products to ensure they are in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines.

**Response:** Concur. I&A's Research Director, on behalf of the Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence Enterprise Operations, leads I&A's corporate analytic program, which includes analytic tradecraft and production processes. The Research Director in coordination with leadership; I&A's Strategy, Policy, and Plans Branch; and with appropriate legal, privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties oversight entities, will review and adjust or issue policies and procedures, as needed, to ensure the following: (1) safeguarding intelligence products from inappropriate interference; (2) preventing distortions and/or delays to intelligence products; and (3) mitigating the perception of politicization of any I&A intelligence products, including those related to elections. I&A will also develop training for all I&A personnel, DHS oversight entities, and DHS leadership regarding policies and procedures designed to prevent politicization of intelligence and intelligence processes. Estimated Completion Date: December 30, 2022.



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**Appendix C**  
**June 8, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20**





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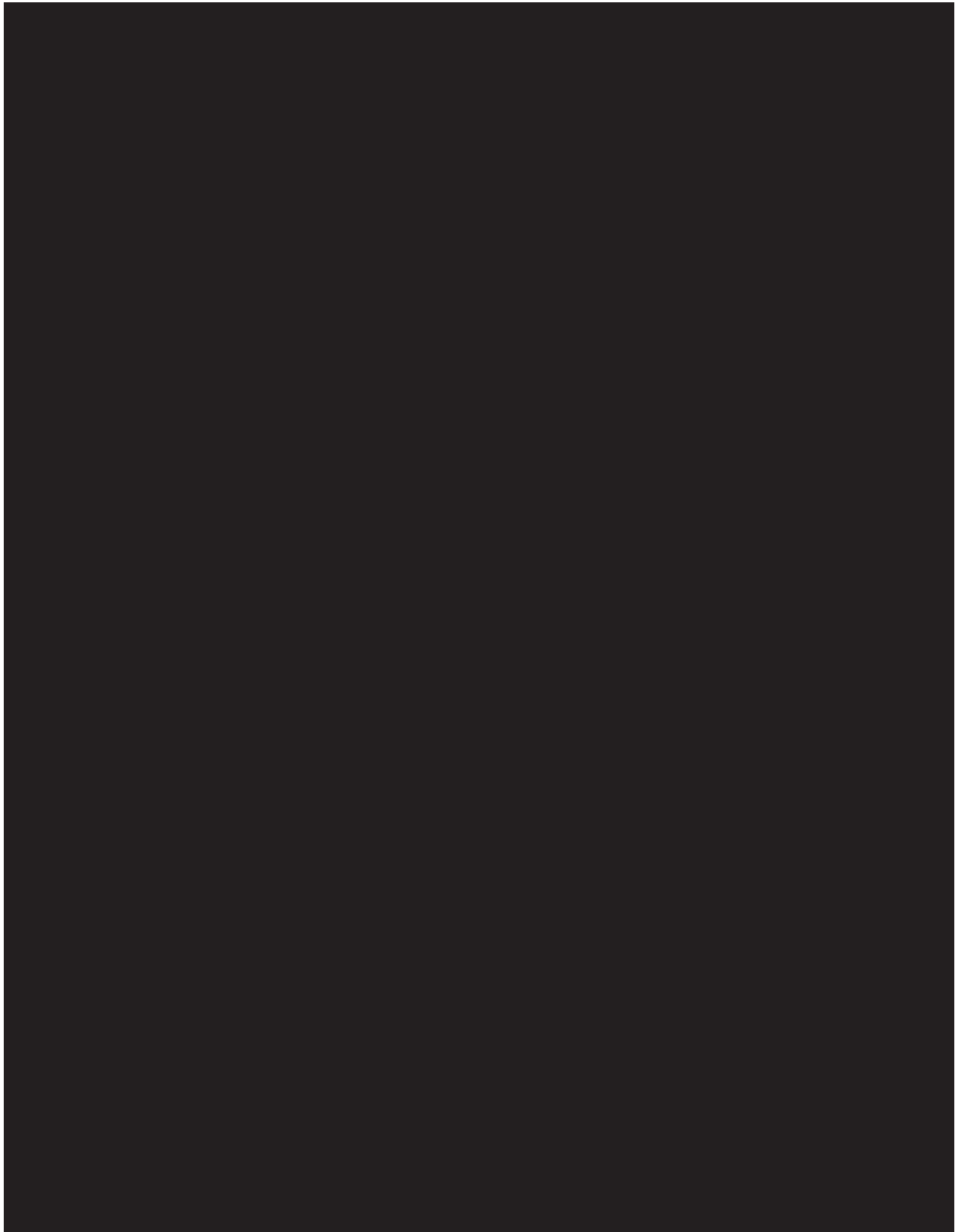
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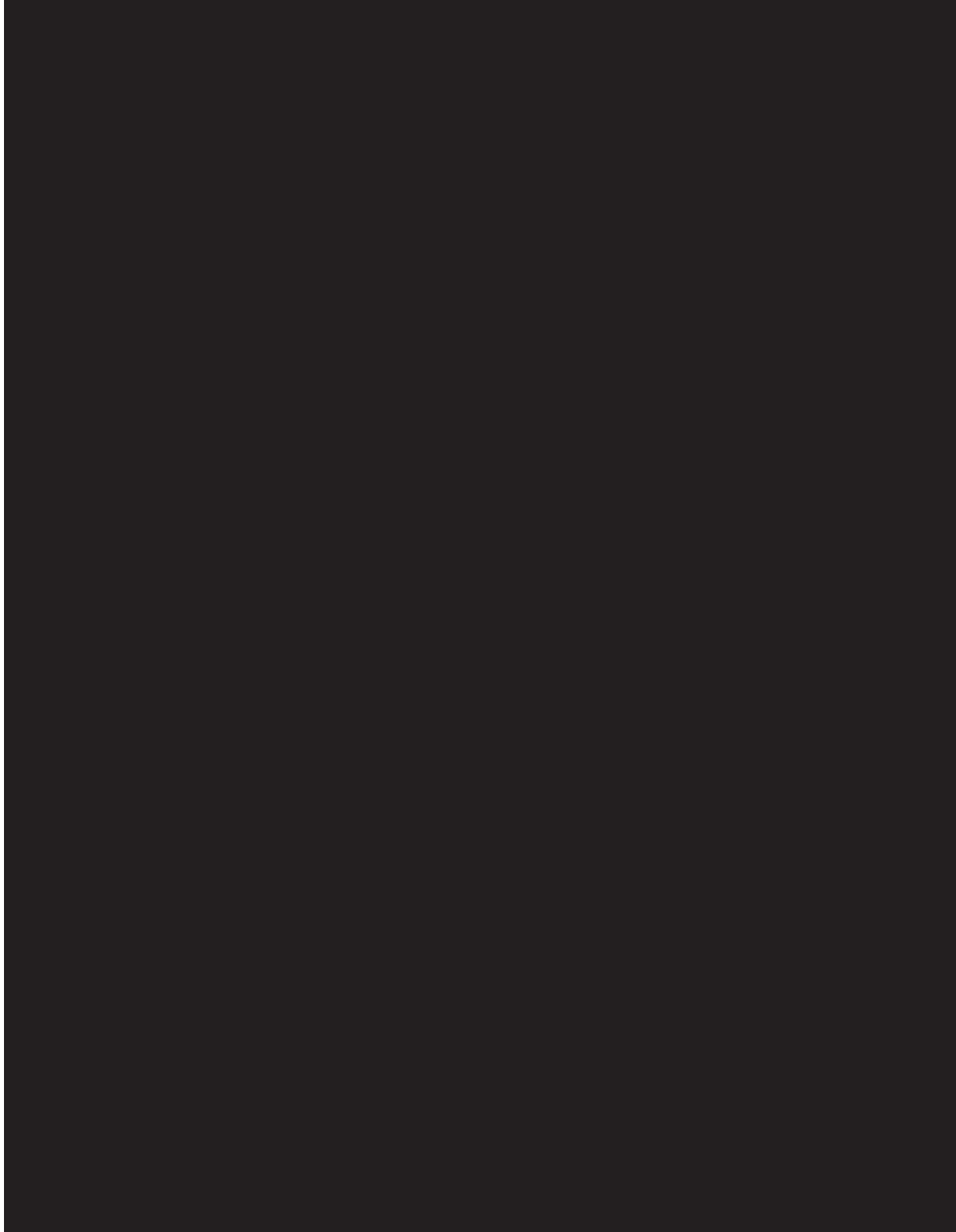




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**Appendix D**  
**July 7, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20**





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**Appendix E**  
**August 10, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20**





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## Appendix F

### September 4, 2020 Version of IA-44399-20

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OFFICE of INTELLIGENCE and ANALYSIS  
 INTELLIGENCE IN FOCUS

4 SEPTEMBER 2020

IA-44399-20

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Malign Foreign Influence Actors Denigrating Health of US Presidential Candidates**

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Scope.** This *Intelligence In Focus* provides an assessment of Russian malign influence efforts to undermine Presidential Candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden<sup>USPER</sup>. It is intended primarily for federal, state, and local government officials whom DHS assesses have roles and functions that are uniquely targeted by foreign misinformation, disinformation, and narratives.<sup>a</sup> This product is being disseminated to increase awareness of these malign efforts and no actions should be taken based on this product alone against individuals or online accounts engaging in speech similar to the themes presented.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ DHS assesses that one of the best countermeasures to malign foreign influence activities is increasing stakeholder awareness of the threat and intentions of those operations. This includes sharing specific tactics, techniques, and themes of foreign misinformation, disinformation, and narratives, particularly when such sharing can help protect targets from these malign messaging efforts. DHS regularly engages with partners to increase transparency and national resilience to malign foreign influence operations.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ US persons linking, citing, quoting, or voicing the same arguments raised by these influence activities likely are engaging in First Amendment-protected activity, unless they are acting in concert with a threat actor. Variants of the topics covered in this product should not be assumed to reflect foreign influence or malign activity absent information specifically attributing the content to malign foreign actors. This information should be considered in the context of all applicable legal and policy authorities to use open source information while protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ *We assess Russian malign influence actors are spreading unsubstantiated allegations that former Vice President Joe Biden<sup>USPER</sup> is of ill-health because they judge this narrative will resonate with some American voters and reduce their confidence in him as a candidate.* Russia is using both covert proxy websites and overt state media to amplify these allegations, often in conjunction with other election-related malign influence narratives, which is consistent with their tactics used in 2016 to undermine a former presidential candidate.<sup>b</sup> Russia's malign influence efforts focus on propagating divisive narratives—often deliberately blending in with the US domestic media environment—to sow division, undermine democratic values and institutions, and advance strategic interests.

<sup>a</sup> ~~(U//FOUO)~~ For additional DHS analysis on how foreign adversaries are engaging in malign foreign influence efforts, see *Adversary Malign Foreign Influence Operation Themes in the United States (August 2020)*; *Foreign Influence Actors Amplify Criticism of the United States Related to Recent Events (June 2020)*; and *Russia May Try to Discourage Voter Turnout and Suppress Votes in 2020 (October 2019)*.

<sup>b</sup> (U) Russian influence proxies are websites with obfuscated ties to the Russian Government that regularly produce disinformation and narratives aligned with Russian interests.

(U) Prepared by the Cyber Mission Center. Coordinated within the DHS Intelligence Enterprise (CETC, CIMC, CWMD, ICE, TOCMC, TSA, and USCG). For questions, contact [REDACTED]

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- \* (U) Since September 2019—sustained and repeated throughout 2020—[REDACTED] [REDACTED] posted negative commentary and made unsubstantiated allegations about the poor mental health of Biden. For example, proxy websites have claimed that the candidate’s gaffes are symptoms of dementia, that he is mentally unfit for the presidency, and that he is unlikely to serve his full term due to his age.
  
- \* (U) In September 2016, Russian influence actors made unsupported claims about the health of one of the Presidential candidates, named specific maladies, and questioned the candidate’s ability to serve as president.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **China and Iran Also Using Health-Related Narratives to Influence Public**

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Iranian and Chinese overt influence actors have promoted unsubstantiated narratives that question the mental health of President Trump. However, these efforts probably fall short of Russia’s more sustained, coordinated malign influence operations across multiple overt and covert platforms to undermine other US politicians.

- \* ~~(U//FOUO)~~ [REDACTED] have publicly raised unsupported questions about the President’s mental health and amplified public discussion by medical professionals, alleging that he suffered from psychosis and narcissistic personality disorder and that his mental instability was enough to invoke the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment and remove him from office.
  
- \* ~~(U//FOUO)~~ [REDACTED] have also raised unsubstantiated questions about the President’s mental health and suggested that a debate about the mental health of a US president is indicative of deeper problems with democracy and the electoral system in the United States. A [REDACTED] also highlighted public appearances by the President where he allegedly demonstrated signs of health issues.



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**Source, Reference, and Dissemination Information**

**Source Summary Statement** ~~(U//FOUO)~~—We assess Russian malign influence actors are likely to continue denigrating presidential candidates through allegations of poor mental or physical health to influence the outcome of the 2020 election. We have [REDACTED] in this assessment

[REDACTED]

**Definitions** ~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Foreign Influence** - Any covert, fraudulent, deceptive, or unlawful activity of foreign governments – or persons acting on their behalf – undertaken with the purpose or effect of influencing, undermining confidence in, or adversely affecting US democratic processes or institutions or otherwise affecting socio-political sentiment or public discourse to achieve malign objectives.

\* ~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Covert Influence** - Activities in which a foreign government hides its involvement, including the use of agents of influence, covert media relationships, cyber influence activities, front organizations, organized crime groups, or clandestine funds for political action.

\* ~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Overt Influence** - Activities that a foreign government conducts openly or has clear ties to, including the use of strategic communications, public diplomacy, financial support, and some forms of propaganda.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Disinformation** - A foreign government’s deliberate use of false or misleading information intentionally directed at another government’s decisionmakers and decision-making processes to mislead the target, force it to waste resources, or influence a decision in favor of a foreign government’s interests.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ **Misinformation**. Use of false or misleading information. Misinformation overlaps with some elements of propaganda; it is broader than disinformation because it targets a wide audience rather than a specific group.

**Foreign Malign Influence Collection and Analysis Methodology**

[REDACTED]

**Dissemination** ~~(U//FOUO)~~—Federal officials, governors, lieutenant governors, secretaries of state, homeland security advisors, fusion center directors and their staff.



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**Warning Notices & Handling Caveats**

(U) ~~Warning:~~ This document is ~~UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (U//FOUO)~~. It contains information that may be exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (5U.S.C. 552). It is to be controlled, stored, handled, transmitted, distributed, and disposed of in accordance with DHS policy relating to FOUO information and is not to be released to the public, the media, or other personnel who do not have a valid need to know without prior approval of an authorized DHS official. State and local homeland security officials **may share** this document with authorized critical infrastructure and key resource personnel and private sector security officials without further approval from DHS.

(U) This product contains US person information that has been deemed necessary for the intended recipient to understand, assess, or act on the information provided. It has been highlighted in this document with the label USPER and should be handled in accordance with the recipient's intelligence oversight and/or information handling procedures. Other US person information has been minimized. Should you require the minimized US person information on weekends or after normal weekday hours during exigent and time sensitive circumstances, contact the Current and Emerging Threat Watch Office at [REDACTED]. For all other inquiries, please contact the Homeland Security Single Point of Service, Request for Information Office at [REDACTED].

~~(U//FOUO)~~—US persons linking, citing, quoting, or voicing the same arguments raised by these influence activities likely are engaging in First Amendment-protected activity, unless they are acting in concert with a threat actor. Furthermore, variants of the topics covered in this product, even those that include divisive terms, should not be assumed to reflect foreign influence or malign activity absent information specifically attributing the content to malign foreign actors. This information should be considered in the context of all applicable legal and policy authorities to use open source information while protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.



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**Appendix G**  
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