

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20032

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Avril Haines
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Drive
McLean, VA 22102

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20535

General Paul M. Nakasone
Director, National Security Agency
Commander, U.S. Cyber Command
4409 Llewellyn Ave
Fort Meade, MD 20755

Dear Secretary Austin, Secretary Mayorkas, Director Haines, Director Wray, and General Nakasone:

We write to you as leaders of agencies charged with combating foreign influence operations and cyberattacks regarding the security of our elections during the 2022 federal election cycle. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to an increase in Russian disinformation and warnings of potential cyberattacks, we urge you to ensure that your agencies are prepared to quickly and effectively counter Russian influence campaigns targeting the 2022 elections.

In the weeks leading up to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, intelligence officials and disinformation experts began warning about an increase in Russian disinformation and the potential for cyberattacks against targets in the United States. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Federal Bureau of Investigation, and National Security Agency issued an advisory regarding Russian cyberthreats to critical infrastructure – which includes election infrastructure – and CISA issued a warning that the private sector should be prepared to defend against Russian cyberattacks.¹ Additionally, the Department of State warned “the spread of disinformation and propaganda attempting to paint Ukraine and Ukrainian government officials as the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine relationship” are intended to sway Western opinion of the conflict.²

¹ CISA, FBI, NSA, *Understanding and Mitigating Russian State-Sponsored Cyber Threats to U.S. Critical Infrastructure*, Cybersecurity Advisory (January 11, 2022) <https://www.cisa.gov/uscert/ncas/current-activity/2022/01/11/cisa-fbi-and-nsa-release-cybersecurity-advisory-russian-cyber>; CISA, *Shields Up*, <https://www.cisa.gov/shields-up>

² Dep't. of State, *Fact vs. Fiction: Russian Disinformation on Ukraine*, Fact Sheet (January 20, 2022) <https://www.state.gov/fact-vs-fiction-russian-disinformation-on-ukraine/>

Experts have warned that the increase in Russian disinformation and cyber threats creates a security concern for U.S. elections and that Russia will likely view the 2022 elections as a “ripe target” for influence operations.³

Russia’s history of interfering in our last three federal election cycles underscores the urgency of the current warnings. The intelligence community has confirmed that Russia interfered in previous U.S. elections through influence operations and cyber espionage and that our elections remain a target.⁴ In 2016, Russia conducted disinformation campaigns that reached tens of millions of Americans and were designed to divide and mislead voters.⁵ Following the 2018 midterm elections, analysis of Russian influence operations indicated that Russia was trying to “aggravate” and divide Americans.⁶ During the 2020 election cycle the intelligence community had to counter influence operations authorized by President Putin aimed at undermining candidates and the election, according to intelligence declassified and released in March 2021.⁷ Officials from both parties, including Director Haines and former Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, have warned about Russia’s ongoing efforts to influence and weaken our democratic institutions, and the *2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community* concluded that Russia “views U.S. elections as opportunities for malign influence as part of its larger foreign policy strategy.”⁸

In the lead-up to and since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, government officials have worked to quickly and appropriately declassify and disseminate intelligence on Russian influence operations in an effort to unite Ukraine’s allies and prevent Russia’s disinformation from taking hold. Disinformation experts have reported that this strategy has been effective in countering Russian influence operations, and Congress as well as federal agencies have also supported this strategy for countering election-related threats.⁹ It is for these reasons that we urge your agencies to prepare to respond to likely Russian efforts in the 2022 elections quickly and effectively.

³ Natasha Bertrand, Zachary Cohen, Katie Bo Lillis, Sean Lyngaas, *US assesses Putin may increase efforts to interfere with US elections* (April 11, 2022) <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/11/politics/us-russia-election-interference/index.html>

Sonam Sheth, Grace Panetta, *Putin's Botched War in Ukraine Could Supercharge his Efforts to Meddle in Future US Elections*, Business Insider (March 14, 2022) <https://www.businessinsider.com/putin-ukraine-failure-could-supercharge-russia-election-interference-2022-3>; see also Joseph Marks, *Russian Hacking Threats aren't Over, Congress Was Warned Last*, Washington Post, Cyber 202 (March 9, 2022) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/09/russian-hacking-threats-arent-over-congress-was-warned-last-night/>

⁴ See Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (February, 2022) <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2022-Unclassified-Report.pdf>

⁵ See U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election, Volume 2: Russian Efforts Against Election Infrastructure with Additional Views* (116th Congress, 1st Session)

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, *United States of America versus Elena Alekseevna Khusyaynova*, Eastern District of Virginia, Case No. 1 :18-MJ-464 (October 19, 2018) <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/press-release/file/1102591/download>

⁷ National Intelligence Council, *Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections*, Intelligence Community Assessment (March 10, 2021) <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/2021-intelligence-community-election-interference-assessment/abd0346ebdd93e1e/full.pdf>

⁸ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (February, 2022) <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2022-Unclassified-Report.pdf>; see also Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (January 29, 2020) <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>

⁹ Joseph Marks, *The U.S. Could Publicize any Russian Election Hacking Plans Much Faster*, Washington Post, Cyber 202 (March 15, 2022) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/15/us-intel-ops-ukraine-could-be-model-protecting-elections/>; see also Gavin Wilde and Justin Sherman, *Targeting Ukraine through Washington: Russian election interference, Ukraine, and the 2024 US election*, Atlantic Council (March 14, 2022) <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/targeting-ukraine-through-washington>; US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Russian Active Measures*

Our democracy has been a shining beacon for the world and as we continue to assist Ukraine and our European allies, we must also be vigilant in guarding against threats to our own system of government. With primaries underway for the 2022 midterm election cycle and ongoing preparations for the November general election, it is vital that the federal government does everything in its power to ensure the integrity of our elections against foreign threats. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

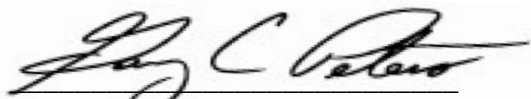
Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Christopher Van Hollen
United States Senator

Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election Report, Volume 3: U.S. Government Response to Russian Activities (116th Congress, 2nd Session) https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report_Volume3.pdf; Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security, *Foreign Interference Targeting Election Infrastructure or Political Organization, Campaign, or Candidate Infrastructure Related to the 2020 US Federal Elections* (March 2021) https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/21_0311_key-findings-and-recommendations-related-to-2020-elections_1.pdf



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



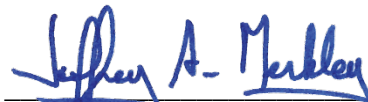
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator




Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator