



Public Service Announcement

FBI & CISA



1 October 2020

The FBI and CISA are issuing this PSA as a part of a series on threats to the 2020 election to enable the American public to be prepared, patient, and participating voters.

Foreign Actors Likely to Use Online Journals to Spread Disinformation Regarding 2020 Elections

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) are issuing this announcement to raise awareness of the potential threat posed by foreign-backed online journals that spread disinformation regarding the 2020 elections. Foreign intelligence services have been known to use websites, including pseudo-academic online journals, to disseminate articles with misleading or unsubstantiated information. Such sites could be employed during the 2020 election season in an attempt to manipulate public opinion, sow discord, increase societal divisions, cause widespread confusion, discredit the electoral process, and undermine confidence in U.S. democratic institutions.

Foreign intelligence services have used online journals, including some with a global reach, to exacerbate disunity and dysfunction in the United States while also misinforming or misleading readers. These journals have been used to complement foreign governments' disinformation and overt propaganda campaigns. Foreign intelligence services have also used other online platforms to amplify the journals' messages and increase their global reach.

As foreign actors intensify their efforts to influence the outcome of the 2020 U.S. elections, they could use online journals to advance and launder misinformation and disinformation to denigrate or support specific candidates or political parties. Foreign actors could also use online journals to target the U.S. elections by making claims of voter suppression, amplifying reports of real or alleged cyberattacks on election infrastructure, asserting voter or ballot fraud, and spreading other information intended to convince the public of the elections' illegitimacy.

Recommendations

- Seek out information from trustworthy sources, verify who produced the content, and consider their intent.
- Rely on state and local election officials as the authoritative sources of information about how elections are conducted in their jurisdictions.
- Verify through multiple reliable sources any reports about problems in voting or election results, and consider searching for other reliable

sources before sharing such information via social media or other avenues.

- Report potential election crimes—such as disinformation about the manner, time, or place of voting—to the FBI.
- If appropriate, make use of in-platform tools offered by social media companies for reporting suspicious posts that appear to be spreading false or inconsistent information about election-related problems or results.

The FBI and CISA urge the American public to critically evaluate the sources of the information they consume and to seek out reliable and verified information. The FBI is responsible for investigating malign foreign influence operations and malicious cyber activity targeting election infrastructure and other U.S. democratic institutions. CISA is responsible for protecting the nation's critical infrastructure from physical and cyber threats. The FBI and CISA provide services and information to uphold the security, integrity, and resiliency of the U.S. electoral processes.

Victim Reporting and Additional Information

The FBI encourages the public to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to their local field office (www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field). For additional assistance and best practices, such as media literacy, please visit the following websites:

- Protected Voices: www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/foreign-influence/protected-voices
- Election Crimes and Security: www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes/election-crimes-and-security
- #Protect2020: www.cisa.gov/protect2020