



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**LARISSA L. KNAPP
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMERCE ON INTELLIGENCE
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**AT A HEARING ENTITLED
“AN UPDATE ON FOREIGN THREATS TO THE 2024 ELECTIONS”**

**PRESENTED
MAY 15, 2024**

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Good afternoon, Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Today, I am honored to be here representing the employees of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”), who tackle some of the most complex and grave threats we face every day with perseverance, professionalism, and integrity. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and speak about the FBI’s current posture for the 2024 election cycle.

CURRENT THREAT OVERVIEW

Protecting the American people and upholding citizens’ constitutional right to participate in a free and fair election is fundamental to the FBI’s mission and remains a top priority for our agency. Securing the election cycle is a whole-of-government effort, and the FBI plays a key role in safeguarding Americans from threat actors who seek to undermine our democratic processes. However, our adversaries remain determined to influence the election process and sow seeds of discord through a variety of means, to include foreign malign influence (“FMI”), cyber operations, and criminal threats, as we saw in 2020, 2022, and continue to see heading into the 2024 election cycle. The subversive, covert, coercive, and/or criminal nature of these activities exacerbates divisions within American society and destabilizes the processes and institutions established to protect our democracy.

The FBI’s election-related work is not limited to countering efforts by our adversaries to sow discord and undermine our democratic processes. The FBI also works every day across our 56 field offices to detect and mitigate a range of election-related threats, including cyber and physical threats to election workers, election infrastructure, and campaigns.

As to foreign threats, we view China, Russia, and Iran as our most determined adversaries. These actors conduct persistent influence activities targeting the whole of U.S. society. While these malign actors do not focus solely on elections, their efforts during an election cycle can

have a more detrimental impact on U.S. national security and accelerate achievement of their goals. While China, Russia, and Iran may have different individual objectives, the target of their methods is the same: American democracy. We have seen this carried out through a variety of ways, including exploiting the inherent differences in American society to propagate discord.

Advancement in cyber capabilities and technology presents new challenges for the FBI in combating the threats to election security. Generative artificial intelligence (“AI”) has lowered the threshold for foreign adversaries to create fake accounts and media that can be used to amplify false narratives. This increases the capability of our less sophisticated adversaries and provides our already sophisticated adversaries a powerful tool to increase the scale and efficiency of their election influence operations.

At the same time, the threat to our election security from more traditional and domestic criminal actors persists, with some of those actors seeking to disrupt the election process by threatening election workers and polling sites. We are not far enough along in the 2024 election cycle to see the full impact of these threats, but the FBI is prepared and remains vigilant, along with our partners, to combat those threats. We are poised to investigate any violation of federal criminal law associated with election security.

FBI’S ACTIONS TO COMBAT THREATS

The FBI recognizes the threats to our elections, and we are successfully leveraging our unique intelligence and law enforcement authorities to detect, identify, and counter all election security threats. As we discuss these issues today, I want to be clear: the FBI remains ahead of these threats to election security; we have existing strategic partnerships in place to help counter these threats; and we are already working to ensure we and our state, local, and federal partners are prepared for this election cycle.

Staying Ahead of the Threat

Combating the threat of FMI is a 365-day a year effort for the FBI, but in an election year we increase our efforts. For example, the FBI regularly works with other agencies within the Office of the Director of Intelligence (“ODNI”)-led notification framework to ensure that foreign intelligence regarding FMI and interference operations targeting U.S. elections is shared appropriately with government officials, the private sector, and the public to protect U.S. national security, including the integrity of our election processes.

To respond to election-related threats the FBI has also positioned Election Crimes Coordinators (“ECCs”), as well as Cyber and Counterintelligence points of contact, in each of our 56 field offices. The ECCs serve as the designated points of contact throughout the country to assist the election community. The goal of the FBI is to have routine engagement with our state and local partners through our ECCs to build durable relationships and expertise that are crucial throughout the election cycle.

Some of our ECCs have been in position for years and have long-established relationships with our state and local partners and secretaries of state. We have two ECCs in every one of our 56 field offices, with two additional points of contact for cyber and counterintelligence threats. The ECCs conduct training with their partners and regularly meet and report potential threats to the rest of the cadre to ensure information sharing and connectivity.

Strategic Partnerships & Information Sharing

Establishing strategic partnerships with federal, state, and local points of contact and sharing accurate, timely information are crucial to combating threats to election security. Election security is a whole-of-government effort. The FBI has robust engagement with our federal partners to identify and expose the hidden hand of foreign adversaries, and we work with our federal, state, and local partners to ensure the safety of election workers and the security of polling sites and election infrastructure. The FBI looks at all the facets of election security and uses teams of agents from our counterintelligence, cyber, and criminal divisions to address election security threats.

For example, in the cyber context, we partner with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (“CISA”) and state and local election officials on network security measures to protect against network intrusion. On the counterintelligence front, the FBI functions within the ODNI-led notification framework and consistently engages with our Intelligence Community (“IC”) partners to identify, disrupt, and counter FMI. Finally, with respect to the enforcement of federal criminal law prohibiting unlawful threats of violence against election workers, the FBI is a critical member of the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) Election Threats Task Force.

Established in 2021, the Election Threats Task Force is charged with investigating and prosecuting threats to election workers. As of May 2024, the Election Threats Task Force’s efforts have resulted in 17 charged cases and 13 convictions for acts of violence and threats of violence toward election officials, in violation of federal law.

Training with our Partners

The FBI is not only engaging with our federal, state, and local partners to remain ahead of the persistent threat from foreign adversaries and others who would interfere in U.S. elections; we are also creating trust and strength within the election security community, including by executing tabletop exercises to simulate how foreign adversaries or other malign actors may attempt to interfere in U.S. elections. Our key state and local stakeholders are getting real-time assistance from the FBI, and they are receiving tailored training so they too can identify potential violations of law.

The FBI’s first priority is to protect the American people, whether by warning targets of foreign influence operations; exposing the efforts of our adversaries to sow discord in the electorate; or safeguarding our voting processes and the brave people who support them. Every day the FBI strives to combat threats to our elections by exercising our authorities, leveraging our

partnerships and sharing information, and ensuring our federal, state, and local partners are also prepared to counter the threats. And when we identify potential federal crimes, we will vigorously investigate them using every legally available tool, mindful of our duty to protect the rights and freedoms of the American people.

I, and the entire FBI, hold sacred the mission to uphold the Constitution and protect the American people. We remain vigilant in our efforts to safeguard our democratic processes and ensure safe and fair elections.

Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer your questions.