

# Closed Session

Notes

# Background

- Our team has submitted a first “report” with a set of recommendations (which we’ll go over here and in the open session)
- We finished our initial draft about six weeks ago
- Since then, we have been working to address concerns about releasing this amidst the outcry about the Disinformation Governance Board — that outcry included good faith criticism (re: about the board’s mandate, potential partisanship, freedom of speech issues); it also featured bad faith attacks (by some who benefit from MDM ... and meant to reduce our collective response to MDM)
- This has complicated our work (in our subcommittee)... leaving a potential vulnerability around drawing attention to CISA’s work in this area at this time.

# Local election officials **NEED** support to address MDM

Stephen Richer:

“Responding to misinformation about elections is my day job. Running elections is my night job.”

# Report

- Goal 1: Articulate CISA's role in this space (scoping)
  - Primarily a role of informing, communicating around MDM threats to critical infrastructure (elections, judiciary, financial system, emergency/disaster response)
    - Informing primarily = pointing to first-hand sources including local election officials and Secretaries of State
- Four parts of CISA's MDM mission:
  - Building general resilience (civic media literacy)
  - Proactively address anticipated MDM threats (specific narratives)
  - Rapid response to emergent MDM threats
  - Actor-based threat detection/mitigation (foreign, criminal)

# Report

- Goal 2: Make some initial, specific recommendations
  - Convene “what to expect on election day” (MDM) workshop for election officials to support
  - Providing infrastructural support to local elections officials in creating an “election day” plan
  - Develop metrics and plan for measuring impact
  - *Rapid response teams for local officials (late breaking)*

# Future work

- Goal 3: Provide guidance on “monitoring” for CISA
  - In-house? Through collaboration?
  - Putting meetings in place to get started on this in July
- Goal 4: Flesh out the “rapid response teams” recommendation

# Questions

- Should we make this public right now?
- What's our communication plan?
- As we look into the “monitoring” piece, who else should be involved in those discussions?

# Open Session

Notes

# Introduction

- Thank you, Mr Chairman. My name is Kate Starbird and I'm an associate professor at the University of Washington and it's my pleasure to submit recommendations from the Subcommittee on Protecting Critical Infrastructure from Misinformation and Disinformation.
- I first want to thank the members of this subcommittee, Alicia Tate-Nadeau, Vijaya Gadde, and Suzanne Spaulding. This subcommittee was given a difficult task, and I appreciate the thought and care my colleagues have put into this effort.

# Background

- CISA's mission is to strengthen the security and resilience of the nation's critical functions. The spread of false information can have a significant impact on CISA's ability to perform that mission. We recommend that CISA take a similar risk management approach to these risks that it takes to cybersecurity risks.
- Specifically, mis- and disinformation threaten our election infrastructure, our judiciary, our financial systems, and our ability to respond to disasters and mass emergency events.
- Of particular focus right now, pervasive misinformation about threats to election integrity can make it difficult to recognize and mitigate actual threats.
- Our report today provides recommendations about the scope and focus of CISA's mission and offers three specific recommendations for the short term regarding informational threats to our elections infrastructure.

# Freedom of Speech

- We have crafted these recommendations with particular focus on commitments to Freedom of Speech.
- The First Amendment of the Constitution limits the government's ability to abridge or interfere with the free speech rights of American citizens. The First Amendment and freedom of speech are critical underpinnings to our society and democracy. These recommendations are specifically designed to protect critical functions from the risks of mis- and disinformation, while being sensitive to and appreciating the government's limited role with respect to the regulation or restriction of speech.

## Local election officials **NEED** support to address MDM

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“Responding to misinformation about elections is my day job right now.  
Running elections is my night job.”

# Recommendations

- CISA work on mis- and disinformation should be focused, primarily, on informing the public about MDM threats and working with local officials (and other first-line responders) to support their efforts to mitigate the impacts of MDM
  - This should be a mission of **informing** = pointing to first-hand sources including first hand sources (e.g. local election officials and Secretaries of State)
- CISA MDM mission has four parts:

# #1

- First is **Building Society Resilience**. CISA should continue serving a mission of building resilience through broad public awareness campaigns about the challenges of mis- and disinformation and strategies for the public and other specific audiences (e.g. election officials, journalists, etc.) to use to build individual and collective resilience. Here, the focus should be both on enhancing information literacy and on supporting and integrating civics education into those efforts. Information literacy should include understanding the dynamics of the modern information space (social networks, influencers, and algorithms), understanding and identifying tactics of manipulation, and just generally becoming savvier participants in interactive information spaces. The goal should be to both teach people the skills (*how* to identify mis- and disinformation) and provide motivation for using those skills (*why* they might not want to spread mis- and disinformation). This dimension aligns with the CISA's "Cyber Hygiene" mission.

# #2

- Second part of the mission is **Proactively Addressing Anticipated MD Threats through education and communication**. This requires applying knowledge learned from responding to past mis- and disinformation to anticipated, future events. Where possible CISA should assist partners, such as election officials, in providing informational resources to address anticipated threats. This work should also include identifying and supporting trusted, authoritative sources in specific communities, e.g. in the elections context, local media and election officials. CISA should support these efforts by creating and sharing materials; by providing education and frameworks for others to produce their own materials; and through funding to local election officials and external organizations to assist in this work.

# #3

- Third dimension of CISA's mission should be **Rapidly Responding to Emergent and/or Persistent Informational Threats**. CISA should also work to rapidly respond — through transparency and communication — to emergent informational threats to critical infrastructure. This will require a system of rapid identification, analysis, and applying best practices to develop and disseminate communicative products. In this work, CISA should prioritize, where possible, boosting first-hand, trustworthy, and authoritative sources (e.g. election officials).

# #4

- Fourth dimension is **Countering Actor-Based Threats**. CISA should work collaboratively with other governmental organizations to identify, communicate, and address actor-based MDM threats — in particular, foreign and/or criminal actors.

- Across this work, we recommend that CISA continue to keep a broad view in terms of the channels and formats of MDM — across the broad information ecosystem.

# Three initial recommendations

- Three specific recommendations today:
  - **CISA should support local election officials in producing a “What to Expect on Election Day” plan** to proactively address — through education and communication — misleading narratives that may arise due to the specific contours of their election materials and procedures. This work could include direct collaboration or building educational materials and templates that election officials can use to generate their own plans and resources.
  - **CISA should convene a 2022 “What to Expect on Election Day” workshop**, bringing together representatives from government agencies and social media platforms, legacy media including local journalists, researchers, and election officials to map out, plan for, and stage resources to address informational threats to upcoming elections.
  - Relatedly, **CISA should develop metrics and a plan for measuring impact of CISA’s efforts to address MDM**

- We plan to continue to work through some of the more challenging questions about what CISA's mission and focus should be in this space
- Thank you. I believe that some of our remote subcommittee members may want to comment here.