

UNCLASSIFIED



100 Days Until Election 2024

Election Security Update as of Late-July 2024

The IC continues to observe a range of foreign actors conducting or planning influence operations targeting U.S. elections this November. These actors are closely monitoring U.S. political developments, and we expect them to adjust to this month's developments to promote influence narratives seeking to undermine democratic institutions, foment discord, and/or change public opinion. In general, these foreign actors are conducting broader influence campaigns focused on their core interests and to undermine the United States' global role, so they are likely to continue to calibrate their efforts to any shift during this election cycle to achieve those objectives. Of note for this cycle, we have observed foreign influence actors refining their tactics to better hide their hand.

RECENT TACTICS

Foreign actors are turning to **commercial firms**, such as marketing and public relations companies, to leverage these firms' expertise in communications, technical sophistication, and to complicate attribution. These firms offer foreign states and other political actors an array of potential services and are often able to operate more nimbly and with fewer bureaucratic hurdles than government entities.

- Moscow is leveraging Russia-based influence-for-hire firms to shape public opinion in the United States, including with election-related operations. These firms have created influence platforms, directly and discreetly engaged Americans, and used improved tools to tailor content for U.S. audiences, while hiding Russia's hand.
- PRC Government entities have collaborated with a China-based technology company to enhance the PRC's covert online influence operations, including to more efficiently create content that also connects with local audiences.

Foreign actors continue to rely on **witting and unwitting Americans** to seed, promote, and add credibility to narratives that serve the foreign actors' interests. These foreign actors seek to take advantage of these Americans to spread messaging through their channels and engagements.

- Russian influence actors have undertaken distinct efforts during this election cycle to build and use networks of U.S. and other Western personalities to create and disseminate Russian-friendly narratives. These personalities post content on social media, write for various websites with overt and covert ties to the Russian Government, and conduct other media efforts.

FOREIGN ACTORS

The IC remains focused on Russia, China, and Iran, whose influence activities this cycle are seeking to influence the politics and policies of the United States to benefit their interests and undermine U.S. democracy and Washington's standing in the world.

- **Russia** remains the predominant threat to U.S. elections. Moscow continues to use a broad stable of influence actors and tactics and is working to better hide its hand, enhance its reach, and create content that resonates more with U.S. audiences. These actors are seeking to back a presidential candidate in addition to influencing congressional electoral outcomes, undermine public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbate sociopolitical divisions.
- **China** probably does not plan to influence the outcome of the US presidential election. The IC is monitoring the possibility, though, that actors linked to Beijing will seek to denigrate down-ballot candidates it sees as threatening its core interests, as they did in a handful of midterm races in 2022 involving members of both political parties. The IC is also aware that PRC influence actors are using social media to sow divisions in the United States and portray democracies as chaotic.
- **Iran** is continuing efforts to fuel distrust in U.S. political institutions and increase social discord. Since our last update, the IC has observed Tehran working to influence the presidential election, probably because Iranian leaders want to avoid an outcome they perceive would increase tensions with the United States. Tehran relies on vast webs of online personas and propaganda mills to spread disinformation and have notably been active in exacerbating tensions over the Israel-Gaza conflict.

NCTC-OV-2024-20752

UNCLASSIFIED