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FBI Director Christopher Wray's Statement at Press Briefing on Election Security

FBI Director Christopher Wray issued the following statement during a press briefing at the White House with National Security Advisor John Bolton, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen, and Director of the National Security Agency General Paul Nakasone. (Remarks prepared for delivery.)

Good afternoon.

Last fall, shortly after I became Director, we established a new Foreign Influence Task Force to identify and counteract the full range of malign foreign influence operations targeting our democratic institutions and our values. The task force now brings together the FBI's expertise across the waterfront—counterintelligence, cyber, criminal, and even counterterrorism—to root out and respond to foreign influence operations.

For their part, our adversaries' influence operations have encompassed a wide range of activities. A few examples include:

- Targeting U.S. officials and other U.S. persons through traditional intelligence tradecraft
- Criminal efforts to suppress voting and provide illegal campaign financing
- Cyber attacks against voting infrastructure, along with computer intrusions targeting elected officials and others
- And a whole slew of other kinds of influence, like both overtly and covertly manipulating news stories, spreading disinformation, leveraging economic resources, and escalating divisive issues.

But this isn't just an election-cycle threat. Our adversaries are trying to undermine our country on a persistent and regular basis, whether it's election season or not.

There's a clear distinction between activities that threaten the security and integrity of our election systems, and the broader threat from influence operations designed to influence voters.

With our partners, we're working to counter both threats. We have three pillars to our operational strategy.

The first pillar is our investigations and operations.

I can't describe the full extent of our efforts because of important operational sensitivities. But our Foreign Influence Task Force works with FBI personnel in all 56 of our field offices. And, even as we speak, we've got open investigations with a foreign influence nexus spanning FBI field offices across the country. Make no mistake—the scope of this foreign influence threat is both broad and deep.

Second, we're focused on information and intelligence-sharing.

We're working closely with our partners in the Intelligence Community and in the federal government, as well as with our state and local partners, to establish a common operating picture.

Last week, just as an example, we disseminated a list of foreign influence indicators—things like malicious cyber activity, social media abnormalities, and foreign propaganda activities—to our state and local law enforcement partners across the country.

We'll continue marshaling additional eyes and ears in this fight. And we're also working with our international partners to exchange intelligence and strategies for combating what is a shared threat.

The third pillar of our approach is based on our strong relationships with the private sector.

Technology companies have a front-line responsibility to secure their own networks, products, and platforms. But we're doing our part by providing actionable intelligence to better enable them to address abuse of their platforms by foreign actors. This year, we've met with top social media and technology companies several times. We've given them classified briefings, and we've shared specific threat indicators and account information, so they can better monitor their own platforms.

It's going to take all of us working together to hold the field, because this threat is not going away.

As I've said consistently, Russia attempted to interfere with the last election, and it continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day. This is a threat we need to take extremely seriously and respond to with fierce determination and focus. And together, I'm confident we can protect the integrity of our democratic institutions and maintain public confidence in our electoral process.