



Protecting Critical Infrastructure from Misinformation & Disinformation Subcommittee Meeting March 29, 2022

Purpose of Meeting

- The purpose of the CISA Cybersecurity Advisory Committee (CSAC) Protecting Critical Infrastructure from Misinformation & Disinformation (MDM) Subcommittee meeting was to hear a brief from Mr. Stephen Richer, County Recorder in Maricopa, AZ, on current election processes and needs among elections officials and to discuss CISA's role in the MDM space. Subcommittee members also heard a brief from Ms. Kim Wyman, Senior Election Security Lead, CISA, on CISA's current election-specific actions to combat MDM.

Discussion

- Ms. Megan Tsuyi, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the CSAC and the MDM Subcommittee brought the meeting to order and turned the meeting over to the Chair, Dr. Kate Starbird and Ms. Kim Wyman.
- Dr. Kate Starbird, Associate Professor, Human Centered Design & Engineering, University of Washington, MDM Subcommittee Chair and Ms. Kim Wyman, Senior Election Security Lead, CISA, introduced Mr. Stephen Richer, County Recorder in Maricopa, AZ.
- Mr. Richer thanked the subcommittee for their partnership to ensure safe, secure, and reliable elections across the country by fighting current and emerging misinformation and disinformation threats, and provided an overview of his background. Mr. Richer was elected in November 2020 and is responsible for the recording of election documents, a voter registration database of 2.6 million registered voters—the second largest county voter database in the nation—, and the administration of elections. He identified a shift in public interest in how elections are administered in 2016 and outlined how his office has refined their messaging to stay on pace with the public's increased interest. One way his office has met the demand of increased public interest is through media engagement. He stated that the 2020 elections provided media the opportunity to learn about elections and the mechanics behind administering elections. He discussed new and difficult challenges with how the nature of the media landscape has changed considerably. Such changes include that all outlets are not held to the same journalistic standards, many are not open to government feedback, and they are not concerned with releasing correct information.
- Mr. Richer walked the subcommittee through three examples to illustrate situations his office is currently facing to include:
 - Misinformation: A news release by Gateway Pundit provided factually inaccurate reporting announcing that Maricopa County elections officials held an unannounced meeting at the election and tabulation center. This meeting was, in fact, a publicly announced tour with members of the public and legislators from both parties.
 - Disinformation: A doctored image tweet of an election management server room depicted to suggest the server was connected to the internet to manipulate the election results. The server was, in fact, air gapped, only accessible to three people, and hard wired without internet connection. The image was doctored from a photo taken from the live streaming cameras and was easily disproved.



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- Malinformation: Abuse of Arizona's permissive public records process. In 2019, Maricopa County received 30-40 public records requests. In 2021, they received over 350 requests ranging from requests to produce everything related to the 2020 election to all email communications related to elections, to all the rules and processes on how the elections are administered. This example highlights how individuals can use lawful means to burden a system already stretched thin.
- Mr. Richer expressed concern that if the elections landscape continues like this, the pressure on his staff will continue to build and it will become difficult to perform statutory responsibilities needed to establish safe, credible, and fair elections.
- After cautioning the subcommittee on the current and emerging problems among elections officials, Mr. Richer identified opportunities for CISA support. These opportunities include:
 - Educate the public and determine how people are manipulating the public's understanding of the truth;
 - Funding and resources;
 - Intelligence and metrics;
 - Partnership with social media; and
 - Share best practices on pre-bunking
- Mr. Richer shared his current efforts of releasing information on websites, educating poll workers, and calling out MDM posts online. Mr. Richer thanked the subcommittee for their support and opened the meeting to questions.
- Subcommittee members deliberated on what CISA's role and the government's role should be in this space.
 - Ms. Suzanne Spaulding, Senior Advisor for Homeland Security and Director of the Defending Democratic Institutions Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), asked Mr. Richer to evaluate the credibility of the federal government and CISA in rumor control. Mr. Richer notes that CISA's credibility and the credibility of the federal government is lowest with populations most in need of assistance and most in disbelief of the accuracy of the 2020 election results. Mr. Richer suggested that local citizens within the communities remain the most trusted sources of information and upheld the credibility of main media institutions, social media companies such as Twitter and Facebook, and encouraged the business community to mobilize and share information from CISA.
 - Ms. Spaulding identified a potential recommendation to CISA to better consider what audiences they are targeting in their messaging and information campaigns. Mr. Richer suggested that CISA hold bootcamps for media representatives such as FOX News or CNN to enhance media's understanding of how elections are administered, as well as work with members of Congress to reach the information leaders.
 - Dr. Starbird asked how CISA can help Mr. Richer reach constituents directly. Mr. Richer stated that he could benefit from CISA's expertise in identifying and articulating how a more sophisticated deep fake could happen.



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- Mr. Michael Moore, Cybersecurity Director, Maricopa County Records Office, identified public education campaigns as the greatest area for CISA support. He recommended that CISA launch marketing campaigns to better reach wide audiences on misinformation and disinformation.
- Mr. Richer cautioned that the federal government cannot stay silent and identified a void in the immediate aftermath of the 2020 election that allowed false information to circulate unchecked. He encouraged CISA to flood the zone with factual information.
- Ms. Wyman asked if Mr. Richers' office partners with any universities or academic institutions. Mr. Richer noted that they mostly partner with community colleges in Arizona but are currently working with elections projects from MIT and University of Chicago as well as data analysts in Arizona to show the validity of the 2020 election. Mr. Richer identified the judiciary as key components of the 2020 election in upholding the truth and process.
- Subcommittee members discussed challenges of releasing correct information in a landscape of misinformation and disinformation in a timely matter.
 - Ms. Vijaya Gadde, Legal, Public Policy, and Trust and Safety Lead, Twitter, encouraged the elections boards to release credible information which would enable social media companies to redirect misinformation and disinformation claims to accurate information. In the absence of reported factual information, Ms. Gadde explained that social media companies are only able to remove false information without redirecting the public to credible sources.
 - Ms. Gadde shared the effectiveness of pre-bunking on Twitter. She reported a decline in the spread of false information when correct information was shared early and often ahead of an event.
 - Mr. Richer identified the challenge of choosing to act quickly with 95% confidence, or waiting a few days to act with 99% confidence before responding to ensure there is no truth in the perceived falsity and to back up the correct reporting with three additional sources. Ms. Gadde shared that the vast majority of a tweet's impressions occur within the first 24 hours of posting and cautioned that waiting to correct the information leaves consumers to digest false information.
 - Ms. Wyman highlighted the work with the Election Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council (GCC) to create incident response planning guides to encourage jurisdictions to troubleshoot potential attack points in advance to craft a plan.
- Subcommittee members identified pre-bunking as a main recommendation for CISA to encourage state and local elections officials to release accurate information on the administration of elections prior to misinformation and disinformation campaigns.
- Dr. Starbird thanked Mr. Richer and Mr. Moore for attending and turned the meeting over to Ms. Wyman to provide a brief presentation on CISA's election-specific actions within the MDM scope.
- Ms. Wyman shared examples of Geoff Hale's work on CISA's overall approach to MDM and her current efforts to create resources and tools for state and local partners to use, such as the resource guide for MDM planning prior



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to elections. She noted the importance of targeting different age groups and demographics to build societal resilience against MDM in different spaces.

- Ms. Wyman recommended that the subcommittee share their input with groups of CISA staff, elections officials, and researchers in advance of the 2022 elections to map out recommendations on how to combat MDM. Mr. Geoff Hale, CISA, commented that bringing in the research community would be a valuable addition to CISA's work.
- The subcommittee identified the vast size of the election's community as one of the biggest challenges. Dr. Starbird recommended the subcommittee create templates and examples to distribute to election officials. Ms. Spaulding recommended reviewing work already done by the Harvard elections study that included templates.
- Dr. Starbird thanked the subcommittee for their participation. Ms. Megan Tsuyi identified the next meeting date is set for April 12 and adjourned the meeting.

Action Items

- A1: Ms. Suzanne Spaulding is contacting the Brunswick Group and Harvard University for information on the D3P study.



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Attendees*

Participants

Name	Organization
Dr. Kate Starbird, Chair	University of Washington
Ms. Vijaya Gadde	Twitter
Mr. Geoff Hale	CISA
Ms. Suzanne Spaulding	CSIS
Ms. Alicia Tate-Nadeau	Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA)
Ms. Kim Wyman	CISA

Other Meeting Attendees

Name	Organization
Mr. Marcus Milam	Maricopa County Recorder's Office
Mr. Michael Moore	Maricopa County Recorder's Office
Ms. Devi Nair	CSIS
Ms. Abby Raddatz	Maricopa County Recorder's Office
Mr. Stephen Richer	Maricopa County Recorder's Office
Ms. Allison Snell	CISA
Ms. Claire Teitelman	JP Morgan Chase

Government and Contractor Support

Name	Organization
Ms. Megan Tsuyi, DFO	CISA
Mr. Hanny Ayad	MountChor Technologies
Ms. Mariefred Evans	TekSynap
Mr. Maurice Hudson	Arcfield
Mr. Tony Messer	Arcfield
Ms. Dana Ripley	Arcfield

**Meeting was held via Teams/teleconference*