116TH CONGRESS
2nd -
SESSION

SENATE

REPORT
116-XX

(U) REPORT

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON

RUSSIAN ACTIVE MEASURES CAMPAIGNS AND INTERFERENCE IN THE 2016 U.S. ELECTION

VOLUME 3: U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES

[redacted]

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I. (U) INTRODUCTION

(U) Senior U.S. Government officials in both the Executive and Legislative Branches believed they were in uncharted territory in the second half of 2016. They became aware of aspects of Russian interference in U.S. elections over the summer and fall, but these officials had incomplete information on the scope of the threat. In the fall, the Obama administration responded with several warnings to Moscow, but tempered its response over concerns about appearing to act politically on behalf of one candidate, undermining public confidence in the election, and provoking additional Russian actions. Further, administration officials' options were limited by incomplete information about the threat and having a narrow slate of response options from which to draw. After the election, President Obama took action to punish Moscow for its interference, including instituting sanctions, expelling Russian government personnel, and shuttering Russian diplomatic facilities inside the United States.

(U) While this summary will focus on the events above, understanding the broader geopolitical context is important. In 2013, about four years after President Obama gave a speech at Moscow's New Economic School announcing his intent to "reset" relations with Russia, Moscow granted political asylum to Edward Snowden after he illegally stole and disclosed classified U.S. Government information. In 2014, Russia unlawfully invaded and occupied the Crimean Peninsula and parts of eastern Ukraine. In 2015, Russian troops landed on the ground in Syria, propping up a struggling Assad regime that had perpetuated widespread human rights violations and used unconscionable force against its own population. In 2016, Russian security forces harassed numerous U.S. diplomats in Russia, including assaulting an American diplomat in front of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. As the administration was engaging Russia to deescalate the conflict in Syria and calm tensions in Ukraine, Russia was directing its well-honed cyber capabilities and influence operations in a multi-front campaign to interfere in the elections of the United States and a number of allied nations.

(U) With the benefit of hindsight and additional information, the Committee now knows far more about the scope of Russian activity than the administration knew at the time. While it was clear to administration officials the Committee interviewed that Russia was taking steps to interfere in the election, the extent of Russian activity to influence voters, sow discord in U.S. society, and undermine confidence in democratic institutions only emerged later. In addition, while the U.S. Government's understanding of Russian activity against state election infrastructure has improved over time, the extent of Russian cyber activity against state and local election systems was unclear in the fall of 2016.

(U) Senior administration officials told the Committee that they assessed that their warnings to Russia before the election had the desired effect, and that Russia undertook little to no additional action once the warnings were delivered. However, it is now clear that at least some aspects of Russian activity continued through the fall of 2016 and after the election; notably, Russia's use of social media and its attempts to penetrate vulnerable state and local election infrastructure.

(U) The Committee examined the Obama administration's actions and the constraints it faced. From this review, the Committee has made a series of findings and recommendations that are outlined below.

II. (U) FINDINGS

1. (U) The Committee found that the U.S. Government was not well-postured to counter Russian election interference activity with a full range of readily-available policy options. One aspect of the administration's response—high-level warnings of potential retaliation—may or may not have tempered Moscow's activity. The Committee found that after the warnings, Russia continued its cyber activity, to include further public dissemination of stolen emails, clandestine social media-based influence operations, and penetration of state voting infrastructure through Election Day 2016.

2. (U) The Committee found that the administration was constrained in its response to Russian meddling by (1) the heavily politicized environment; (2) the concern that public warnings would themselves undermine public confidence in the election, thereby inadvertently helping the Russian effort; (3) the unknown extent to which the Russians could target and manipulate election systems; (4) the delay in definitive attribution of some efforts to Russia; (5) the time and resources required to compose policy options prior to execution; and (6) challenges in how to address WikiLeaks. These constraints affected the response options available, as well as the timing and sequencing of their implementation.

3. [redacted] The Committee found that policymakers in 2016 were not concerned with Russian electoral interference directly targeting the United States until [redacted] CIA Director John Director Brennan reported [redacted] information through a series of oral briefings to a restricted group of senior policymakers. Intelligence on Russian activity related to the U.S. election before [redacted] was limited, and the Committee saw no evidence that policymakers with access to intelligence reports were focused on the election threat before [redacted].

4. (U) The Committee found that the administration handled the cyber and geopolitical aspects of the Russian active measures campaign as separate issues until August 2016. The Committee believes this bifurcated approach may have prevented the administration from seeing a more complete view of the threat, limiting its ability to respond.

5. (U) The Committee found that decisions to limit and delay the information flow regarding the 2016 Russian active measures campaign, while understandable, inadvertently constrained the administration's ability to respond.

III. (U) AWARENESS OF THE INTRUSION INTO THE DNC NETWORK

A. (U) Policymakers' Awareness

(U) Most administration officials the Committee interviewed recalled first learning about the Russian cyber penetration of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) from the news media. In fact, had the DNC not approached and cooperated with the *Washington Post* to publish a June 14, 2016, article, senior administration leadership probably would not have been aware of the issue until later, in all likelihood when WikiLeaks, Guccifer 2.0, and DCLeaks began to publish emails taken from the DNC's network. Witnesses told the Committee that the initial reaction of administration officials and the Intelligence Community (IC) was that Russia's cyber activity targeting the DNC fell within the bounds of traditional espionage and was not understood immediately to be a precursor to an active measures campaign.

(U) DNC leadership had approached the *Washington Post* to publish the story about the Russian cyber intrusion into the DNC "to make sure that people were aware of what really happened," according to the DNC's Chief Executive Officer, Amy Dacey. The story was released only days after the DNC had remediated its network with the assistance of Crowdstrike, a private cyber security firm.[1] Noting the apparent absence of criminal intent and that "no financial, donor or personal information" appeared to have been accessed or taken, the article summarized the prevailing view that "the breach was traditional espionage" and cited it as "an example of Russia's interest in the U.S. political system and its desire to understand the policies, strengths, and weaknesses of a potential future president—much as American spies gather similar information on foreign candidates and leaders."[2]

[redacted] Ambassador Susan Rice, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, as well as Lisa Monaco, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counter Terrorism, both recalled first learning about the intrusion into the DNC in June 2016, via the news media.[3] [redacted]

(U) According to Michael Daniel, Special Assistant to the President and White House Cybersecurity Coordinator, his first awareness of the intrusion into the DNC similarly came from the *Washington Post* article. Mr. Daniel believed the intrusion was unsurprising, citing previous espionage efforts directed at previous presidential campaigns. Because the intrusion was thought

[1] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Amy Dacey, September 20, 2017, pp. 20-21; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Yared Tamene, January 19, 2018, p. 57.
[2] (U) Ellen Nakashima, "Russian government hackers penetrated DNC, stole opposition research on Trump," *Washington Post,* June 14, 2016.
[3] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 4; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, pp. 5-6.
[4] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 6.

to be espionage-related (i.e., intelligence collection to inform Russia's understanding of the U.S. presidential election), Mr. Daniel believed that the breach was "a[n] [FBI] issue to go work with the campaigns on and not something [the National Security Council] was going to get involved with directly."[5]

B. (U) The U.S. Intelligence Community's Awareness

[redacted]

(U) FBI approached DNC staff numerous times throughout 2015 and 2016 to advise them that a malicious cyber actor was either targeting or had compromised their networks. FBI

[5] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with J. Michael Daniel, August 31, 2017, pp. 18-20. Mr. Daniel stated he confirmed FBI was working with the DNC as a measure of due diligence.

[6] [redacted] SSCI Transcript of the Interview with [redacted], Cyber Branch, Washington Field Office, FBI, May 14, 2018, p. 5. [redacted]

[7] (U) *Ibid.*

[8] [redacted]

[9] (U[redacted]) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with [redacted], Cyber Branch, Washington Field Office, FBI, May 14, 2018, p. 47; Indictment, *United States v. Viktor Borisovich Netyksho, et al.*, Case 1:18-cr-00215-ABJ (D.D.C. July 13, 2018).

attempted to engage the information technology (IT) staff and eventually the leadership of the DNC.[10]

[redacted]

(U) Director of National Intelligence James Clapper publicly alluded to the threat of cyber attacks against presidential campaigns during a May 18, 2016, event at the Bipartisan Policy Center, stating that the IC had seen some indications that hackers had targeted campaign computers, but he did not provide any details.[13] Subsequently, the Director of Public Affairs at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released a statement which said,

[10] (U) SSCI Timeline of FBI-DNC interactions, March 15, 2019; FBI, Cyber Division DNC Notification Summary, April 24, 2019; *see also* Eric Lipton, David E. Sanger, and Scott Shane, "The Perfect Weapon: How Russian Cyberpower Invaded the U.S.," *New York Times*, December 13, 2016. A more comprehensive account of the FBI's engagements with the DNC will be provided in a forthcoming volume of the Committee's review.

[11] (U[redacted]) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with [redacted], Cyber Branch, Washington Field Office, FBI, May 14, 2018, p. 59.

[12] [redacted]

[13] (U) Brian Bennett, "U.S. intelligence official says foreign spy services are trying to hack presidential campaign networks," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2016.

"We're aware that campaigns and related organizations and individuals are targeted by actors with a variety of motivations—from philosophical differences to espionage—from defacements to intrusions. We defer to FBI for specific incidents."[14]

[redacted]

- [redacted][15]

- [redacted][16]

[redacted]

C. (U) The Weaponization of Information

(U) One day after the publication of the *Washington Post* article tying the cyber intrusion of the DNC to actors associated with the Russian government, a self-proclaimed hacker using the moniker "Guccifer 2.0" started to publicly release documents obtained from the DNC's network.[17]

(U) On June 15, 2016, Guccifer 2.0 published a blog article titled, "Guccifer 2.0 DNC's Servers Hacked By A Lone Hacker," which included links to several documents including a

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[14] (U) ODNI, Tweet on May 18, 2016, 8:54 a.m., https://twitter.com/ODNIgov/status/732962479983185920.
[15] [redacted] NIC [redacted] January 19, 2016.
[16] [redacted] NIC, [redacted] April 1, 2016.
[17] (U) Indictment, *United States v. Viktor Borisovich Netyksho, et al.*, Case 1:18-cr-00215-ABJ (D.D.C. July 13, 2018).

December 2015 report prepared by the DNC on then-candidate Donald Trump and a purported list of donors to the DNC.[18] The post also includes the statement, "The main part of the papers, thousands of files and mails, I gave to Wikileaks. They will publish them soon."[19]

(U) Guccifer 2.0 published seven additional blog posts between June 18, 2016, and July 14, 2016, highlighting additional documents obtained from the DNC's networks or providing additional background on the self-proclaimed hacker.[20] Guccifer 2.0's blog activity continued through the election.

(U) Starting in mid-June 2016, documents from entities and individuals associated with the Democratic Party were published by the GRU-controlled online personas Guccifer 2.0 and DCLeaks.[21] Despite this, as of mid-July 2016, both the IC and policymakers were generally not under the impression that Russia was engaged in an active measures campaign targeting the 2016 election.

(U) FBI announced on Monday, July 25, 2016, three days after WikiLeaks posted approximately twenty thousand e-mails from the DNC, that "[t]he FBI is investigating a cyber intrusion involving the DNC and are working to determine the nature and scope of the matter" and furthermore "[a] compromise of this nature is something that we take very seriously, and the FBI will continue to investigate and hold accountable those who pose a threat in cyberspace."[22]

(U) Witnesses interviewed by the Committee consistently said that Russian cyber activity was a well-known issue within the administration, however hardly any administration officials had considered the threat of information collected through cyber espionage being weaponized when assessing the consequences of the Russian cyber intrusions into the DNC and DCCC networks.

- [redacted][3]

[18] (U) "Guccifer 2.0 DNC's Servers Hacked By A Lone Hacker," June 15, 2016, web.archive.org/web/20160615212118/https://guccifer2.wordpress.com/.

[19] (U) *Ibid.*

[20] (U) "Guccifer 2.0," web.archive.org/web/20160721114432/https://guccifer2.wordpress.com/.

[21] (U) Raphael Satter, Jeff Donn, and Chad Day, "Inside Story: How Russians Hacked the Democrats' Emails," *US News*, November 4, 2017; Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller, III, Report On The Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election, March 2019, Volume I, p. 36.

[22] (U) Andrea Peterson, "Wikileaks posts nearly 20,000 hacked DNC emails online," *Washington Post*, July 22, 2016; Mike Levine, Rick Klein, and Shushannah Walshe, "FBI Confirms Investigation Into Massive Hack of DNC," ABC News, July 25, 2016.

[23] (U) SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, p. 6.

- [redacted][24]

- (U) FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe told the Committee that the weaponization of information from the DNC by the Russians was occurring "in a way that we've never seen before."[25]

(U) Despite the unprecedented scale and sophistication of the 2016 Russian active measures campaign, Moscow has a decades-long history of conducting active measures campaigns against the United States. Among these efforts, Russia previously conducted active measures operations to discredit U.S. diplomatic personnel, as well as officials in allied nations, using leaked information.

(U) Special Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes told the Committee that he was involved with the response to the 2014 incident when the Russians captured a January 28, 2014, phone call between Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. A recording of that conversation was posted on YouTube one week later.[26]

(U) Mr. Rhodes also told the Committee that, "[t]he Russians also engaged in influence operations against our Ambassador [to Russia], Mike McFaul, where YouTube videos would be posted or innuendo would be spread on social media."[27]

(U) Speaking about the 2014 phone call involving U.S. officials that was released, former Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated:

> *[I]t sort of fed the larger concern that we had that we were in a new world of misinformation . . . a new world where information warfare was really the new front line, and that the Russians were using it in increasingly aggressive ways. And it was one of the ways where they could have an asymmetric advantage.*[28]

[redacted]

[24] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Rick Ledgett, June 15, 2017, pp. 23-24.
[25] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Andrew McCabe, February 14, 2018, p. 36.
[26] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Benjamin J. Rhodes, July 25, 2017, p. 13-14; BBC, "Ukraine crisis: Transcript of leaked Nuland-Pyatt call," February 7, 2014.
[27] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Benjamin J. Rhodes, July 25, 2017, p. 14.
[28] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Antony Blinken, August 18, 2017, p. 64.

[redacted]

[redacted][29]

(U) Despite Moscow's history of leaking politically damaging information, and the increasingly significant publication of illicitly obtained information by coopted third parties, such as WikiLeaks, which historically had published information harmful to the United States, previous use of weaponized information alone was not sufficient for the administration to take immediate action on the DNC breach. The administration was not fully engaged until some key intelligence insights were provided by the IC, which shifted how the administration viewed the issue.

IV. [redacted] INTELLIGENCE WAS THE "WAKE UP" CALL

[redacted]

[29] [redacted]

[30] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with John Brennan, June 23, 2017, pp. 24-26.

(U) Ambassador Rice recalled:

[redacted]

(U) Within an hour or two of learning of the information, Ambassador Rice advocated for the material to be briefed to President Obama.[32] "The President's reaction was of grave concern," Ambassador Rice recalled, which prompted her to call the first of a series of restricted small-group Principals Committee (PC) meetings on the topic.[33] During the meeting with the President, Director Brennan also advised the President of a plan to brief key individuals, including congressional leadership, but not to disseminate the intelligence via routine reporting channels.[34]

(U) Soon thereafter, a PC meeting resulted in the decision to share the information briefed by Director Brennan with Congressional leadership and specifically the "Gang of Eight," which comprises the Speaker of the House, House Minority Leader, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI).[35]

(U) According to Director Brennan, he recommended that the intelligence be briefed to the Gang of Eight, stating, "I think it's important that this be a personal briefing."[36] Director Brennan did not describe the reaction of any of the individual Gang of Eight members in his testimony to the Committee.

(U) According to Ms. Monaco, Director Brennan was dispatched to brief Congressional leadership in early August 2016, which he immediately began to do in a series of one-on-one engagements, due to the sensitive nature of the intelligence.[37] Ms. Monaco further stated that Director Brennan had worked his way through the leadership briefings, completing the last briefing with Leader McConnell close to the Labor Day holiday in 2016.[38]

(U) According to CIA and Senate records, Director Brennan briefed House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi on August 11, 2016, HPSCI Ranking Member Adam Schiff on August 17,

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[31] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 7.
[32] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[33] (U) *Ibid.*
[34] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with John Brennan, June 23, 2017, p. 39.
[35] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 11.
[36] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with John Brennan, June 23, 2017, p. 39.
[37] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 17.
[38] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

2016, and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid on August 25, 2016. The remainder of the Gang of Eight—Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, SSCI Chairman Richard Burr, SSCI Vice-Chairman Dianne Feinstein, HPSCI Chairman Devin Nunes, and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan—were each briefed individually on September 6, 2016.[39]

(U) The Committee notes that typically Gang of Eight member notifications occur as a group, rather than individually. Because these events unfolded in August, concurrent with the August congressional recess, the opportunity to convene a Gang of Eight session in a classified setting as a group would not have occurred until September.

V. (U) DEBATE ON HOW TO RESPOND

A. (U) The "Small Group"

(U) According to multiple administration officials, the receipt of the sensitive intelligence prompted the NSC to begin a series of restricted PC meetings to craft the administration's response to the Russians' active measures campaign. These restricted "small group" PC meetings, and the corresponding Deputies Committee (DC) meetings, were atypically restricted, and excluded regular PC and DC attendees such as the relevant Senior Directors within the NSC and subject matter experts that normally accompanied the principals and deputies from U.S. Government departments and agencies.

(U) According to former NSC Senior Director for Intelligence Programs, Brett Holmgren, no one other than the principals participated in the initial PC meetings, due to the sensitivity of the intelligence reporting.[40] Mr. Holmgren further stated that the "reports were briefed verbally, often times by Director Brennan. So I didn't get access to a lot of those reports until the November or December time frame."[41]

(U) According to Director Clapper and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, the extraordinarily restricted nature of the meetings and departure from routine methods of disseminating intelligence were reminiscent of the highly restricted meetings employed prior to the U.S. military operation to capture Osama bin Laden.[42] Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates told the Committee that DC meetings related to the Russian interference issue would not always be identified in internal scheduling or agenda documents because it was considered so sensitive and characterized the meetings as "[v]ery cloak and dagger."[43]

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[39] **(U)** Response to CapNet E-Mail: Transmittal Form, June 28, 2019; SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, p. 39.
[40] **(U)** SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Brett Holmgren, November 13, 2017, p. 12.
[41] **(U)** *Ibid.*
[42] **(U)** SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Samantha Power, July 28, 2017, p. 15; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with James Clapper, July 17, 2017, p. 59.
[43] **(U)** SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Sally Yates, August 15, 2017, pp. 28-29.

[redacted]

(U) Attendance at the "small group" PCs was restricted to a handful of members of the President's cabinet whom Ambassador Rice deemed necessary for the conversation, and consisted of the following, though the last two individuals were not included in the first meeting: Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Avril Haines; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa Monaco; White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough; Attorney General Loretta Lynch; Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper; CIA Director John Brennan; FBI Director James Comey; Secretary of the Department for Homeland Security (DHS) Jeh Johnson; and NSA Director Admiral Michael Rogers.[46]

(U) This list excluded several cabinet level officials who would normally be present for national security and policy response activities, including the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of the Treasury. In early September the group was expanded to include the Departments of Defense, State, and Treasury, to ensure that the full range of response options was being appropriately considered.[47]

(U) Several NSC officials who would normally be included in discussions of importance, such as the NSC Senior Director for Russia, the Senior Director for Intelligence Programs, and the White House Cybersecurity Coordinator were neither included in the discussions nor exposed to the sensitive intelligence until after the election.[48]

[redacted] According to White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, although only a small number of people were aware of the sensitive [redacted] intelligence, the "small group" attendees engaged a larger group of people within their departments and agencies to develop potential response options for consideration.[49]

(U) The Committee inquired about public reports that Mr. Daniel and the NSC cyber directorate were told to "stand down," and found that the instructions given were consistent with Ambassador Rice's desire to keep the group working on response options to the Russian interference extremely small.

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[44] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 15-16.
[45] (U) *Ibid.*
[46] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 10-18; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, pp. 7-8.
[47] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 28.
[48] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Celeste Wallander, August 23, 2017, pp. 20-21.
[49] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 19.

(U) Ambassador Rice testified to the committee that:

> [redacted] *Michael Daniel's team had been requested back in June by Lisa [Monaco] in the context of the DNC hack to work the cyber response group, which is customary, like we did after Sony or in the context of Chinese hacks or whatever, to look at potential response options. It was in late August when I understood that Michael Daniel* [redacted], *a list of potential response options [] that was separate and apart from the very small-group process that we were running.* [redacted]. *He was not part of that small-group process that I and my colleagues were running. He had simply worked up these options coming out of Lisa [Monaco]'s tasking, had disseminated them very widely within the inter-agency, as well as within the NSC, to a bunch of people who had no business seeing them. And it was separate from my effort to do what my job was, which was to bring together policy options that are well-coordinated, well-planned, well-conceived for the President's decision.*[50]

(U) Rice further stated that she was concerned that too many people were exposed to the information and that Mr. Daniel's efforts were not synchronized with the other efforts because he was not aware of the restricted small-group activities.[51]

(U) When asked about whether the NSC cyber directorate was told to "stand down," Mr. Daniel told the Committee:

> *I think there was a concern on the part of the senior level at the White House that some of the discussions had gotten frankly over-broad, and too many people had been brought into those discussions, and so part of that work was to restrict—shrink down—the number of people that were involved in developing the response options. . . . I would say essentially we were told to focus on the defensive work and that we basically put other activities on hold.*[52]

B. (U) Debate Over Options

[redacted]

[50] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, pp. 22-23.
[51] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[52] (U) *SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: Policy Response to Russian Interference in the 2016 U.S. Elections, June 20, 2018*, pp. 32-34.

[redacted][53]

(U) Mr. McDonough told the Committee:

[redacted]

(U) Ms. Monaco, speaking hypothetically about cyber attacks against election infrastructure such as voter registration databases, stated, "[M]y worry was, if any of these things happen at such scale, you're going to have . . . chaos and even leading to potential unrest in some precincts."[55]

(U) Ambassador Rice categorized those fears into two main categories. The first related to future information disclosures, regardless of whether they were based on real or forged material, that could be disruptive in terms of manipulating perceptions. The second, and more important fear from the NSC perspective, was any Russian effort to "mechanically mess with the election infrastructure," to include voter registration and vote tallying in addition to state and local infrastructure involved in conducting an election.[56]

[redacted][58]

(U) Regarding voting machines and other election infrastructure, Ambassador Rice feared a range of additional actions Putin could take such as affecting votes, altering or deleting voter registration data, or falsifying and releasing information online that appeared to be authentic. She stated that Secretary Johnson, as the head of DHS, decided to alert states and urge the secretaries of state to harden systems associated with their respective election infrastructure.[59]

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[53] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 31.
[54] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, pp. 13-14.
[55] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 33.
[56] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 13-14.
[57] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[58] (U) *Ibid.*
[59] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

(U) Ms. Monaco also stated that the national security team within the White House received clear guidance from President Obama that "first and foremost our priorities were to protect the integrity of the election and make sure that any vulnerabilities in the election infrastructure and the process, that we do our best to address, working with state and local governments."[60] The responsibility to shepherd the election integrity effort was Ms. Monaco's to execute with DHS.

(U) Ultimately, the direction outlined by Ambassador Rice translated into the actions that the administration undertook, focusing largely on protecting election infrastructure and castigating the Russians prior to the election, saving punitive responses until after Moscow's ability to affect the 2016 election had passed.

C. (U) Perceived Constraints

(U) Administration officials described to the Committee the evolution of policy discussions behind the decisions they made during the summer of 2016 in responding to the Russian active measures campaign. In total, the Committee found that the administration operated within the following six general categories of constraints, which affected the response options available as well as the timing and sequencing of their implementation: (1) the heavily politicized environment; (2) the concern that public warnings would themselves undermine public confidence in the election, thereby inadvertently helping the Russian effort; (3) the unknown extent to which the Russians could target and manipulate election systems; (4) the delay in definitive attribution of some efforts to Russia; (5) the time and resources required to compose policy options prior to execution; and (6) challenges in how to address WikiLeaks.

1. (U) Heavily Politicized Environment

(U) Administration officials told the Committee that they did not want the response to Russian election interference to be seen as a politically motivated action in an already highly political environment. They were concerned that warning the public about Russian efforts would be interpreted as the White House siding with one candidate. They pointed out in interviews that candidate Trump was, at the time, publicly saying that the election would be "rigged."

- (U) On October 16, 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump publicly tweeted, "The election is absolutely being rigged by the dishonest and distorted media pushing Crooked Hillary – but also at many polling places – SAD."[61] The next day, he followed up with a tweet stating, "Of course there is large scale voter fraud happening on and before election day," and further reiterated these claims at a campaign rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin that

[60] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 15.
[61] (U) Donald J. Trump, Tweet on October 16, 2016, 1:01 p m., https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/787699930718695425.

evening, stating, "[r]emember, we're competing in a rigged election. This is a rigged election process."[62]

(U) Mr. McDonough noted that President Obama was traveling nearly every day in September and October 2016 in support of candidate Clinton. To emphasize the separation between politics and policy, the NSC "went out of [its] way to ensure that there was not a partisan veneer to any of the work."[63] Mr. McDonough further stated that the direction issued to government agencies, pursuant to White House-convened meetings on Russian interference in the 2016 election, included an instruction to handle the issue in a nonpartisan manner.[64]

(U) According to Ms. Monaco, the NSC recognized the IC and law enforcement community's professional aversion to partisan matters. Ms. Monaco told the Committee that she called the Deputy Director of the FBI upon learning of the penetration into the DNC network because she was concerned about FBI's "justifiable and appropriate concern when dealing in a political climate with a political entity in a political campaign."[65] Ms. Monaco recalled that she requested that the FBI "not be so cautious that they not raise that up and engage more actively" while ensuring that the DNC not be "treated differently" from any other victim of a breach.[66]

(U) Secretary Kerry told the Committee that there was extensive discussion in the White House Situation Room, particularly among those who had previously run for office, about how to keep politics out of statements made by the White House, especially since President Obama was actively campaigning for candidate Clinton. Secretary Kerry also noted that candidate Trump was making public assertions about the election being rigged.[67]

(U) Avril Haines, the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, recalled that administration officials quickly discarded any thought of legislation to amplify economic sanctions against Russia, and focused on options that could be pursued by executive order "[b]ecause we didn't think we would get bipartisan support for legislation, and we didn't think that was going to be doable in the time period that we had."[68]

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[62] (U) Donald J. Trump, Tweet on October 17, 2016, 8:33 a.m., https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/787995025527410688; Donald Trump Campaign Event in Green Bay, Wisconsin, October 17, 2016, https://www.c-span.org/video/?417019-1/donald-trump-campaigns-green-bay-wisconsin, 00:13:30.

[63] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 25.

[64] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[65] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 90.

[66] (U) *Ibid.*

[67] (U) SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, p. 5.

[68] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Avril Haines, August 10, 2017, p. 49.

2. (U) Concern that Public Warnings Could Undermine Confidence in the Election

(U) Several administration officials told the Committee that they felt constrained by worries that warning the American public would trigger the very thing they were trying to prevent: the public questioning the integrity of the election. Some in those policy debates argued for exposing Russian activities to reduce their effectiveness. Others, including some in the administration and some in Congress, worried that such warnings would create the public impression that the elections were compromised and would essentially amplify Russia's tactics.

- (U) Mr. McDonough stated that the administration had to be careful about "not doing the Russians' dirty work for them."[69] He also expressed concern that any actions taken by the administration prior to the election might be perceived as partisan in nature and reduce the American people's confidence in the election process. These concerns influenced the White House's decision to not take any overt action in response to Russia's activities.[70]

- (U) Ambassador Rice similarly stated that the administration was "very concerned about doing the Russians' dirty work for them . . . to sow concern, confusion, distrust in our electoral institutions and the integrity of our election, that for us to take such actions would only play into their desire to scare people, basically, about the election."[71]

- (U) Ms. Monaco told the Committee that the administration was very concerned about not sowing distrust in the electoral system "because we did not want to, as we described it, do the Russians' work for them by sowing panic about the vulnerability of the election."[72]

- (U) Director Clapper told the Committee that:

  The major concern I think in the White House was, if we do something or say something, particularly publicly, about this, are we amping it up? Are we then dignifying what the Russians are doing and hyping it even more in the minds of the public? And as well, I think, concern about putting a hand on the scale by saying something public, that the Russians were clearly trying to manipulate the election and do so in favor of one of the candidates, and of course, the political firestorm that that could generate.[73]

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[69] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 52.
[70] (U) *Ibid.*
[71] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 51.
[72] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 29.
[73] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with James Clapper, July 17, 2017, p. 18.

3. [redacted]

(U) In late summer 2016, DHS was just beginning to understand the threat Russia posed to state election systems, and the absence of a comprehensive awareness of Russian activity mandated that they assume the worst-case scenario. Several officials told the Committee that, at the time, they were deeply concerned about the possibility that Russia had the capability to change individual votes or modify vote totals. Compounding those concerns, some officials raised the prospect that Moscow could retaliate for any U.S. punitive measures by using that capability. The administration decided to confront Putin directly, threaten retaliation for additional interference, and then to retaliate if evidence was discovered that Moscow continued its activities.

- [redacted] Ambassador Rice told the Committee that [redacted] that "much more could be done [by Russia], and therefore we wanted to deter Putin from doing more and all that he could."[74] She further stated that the administration was concerned about the Russians leaking falsified information, further public dissemination of illicitly obtained information, and [redacted] that Moscow could use against election infrastructure. "We didn't want to preemptively poke the hornet's nest and prompt them to do more."[75]

- (U) One of Ms. Monaco's primary fears was that the Russians would modify voter registration databases to invalidate voters, which if performed on a large enough scale, could lead to chaos and confusion at polling places as well as a lack of confidence in the voting system.[76]

- (U) Ms. Monaco and Ambassador Rice were not alone in their concerns. Director Brennan told the Committee:

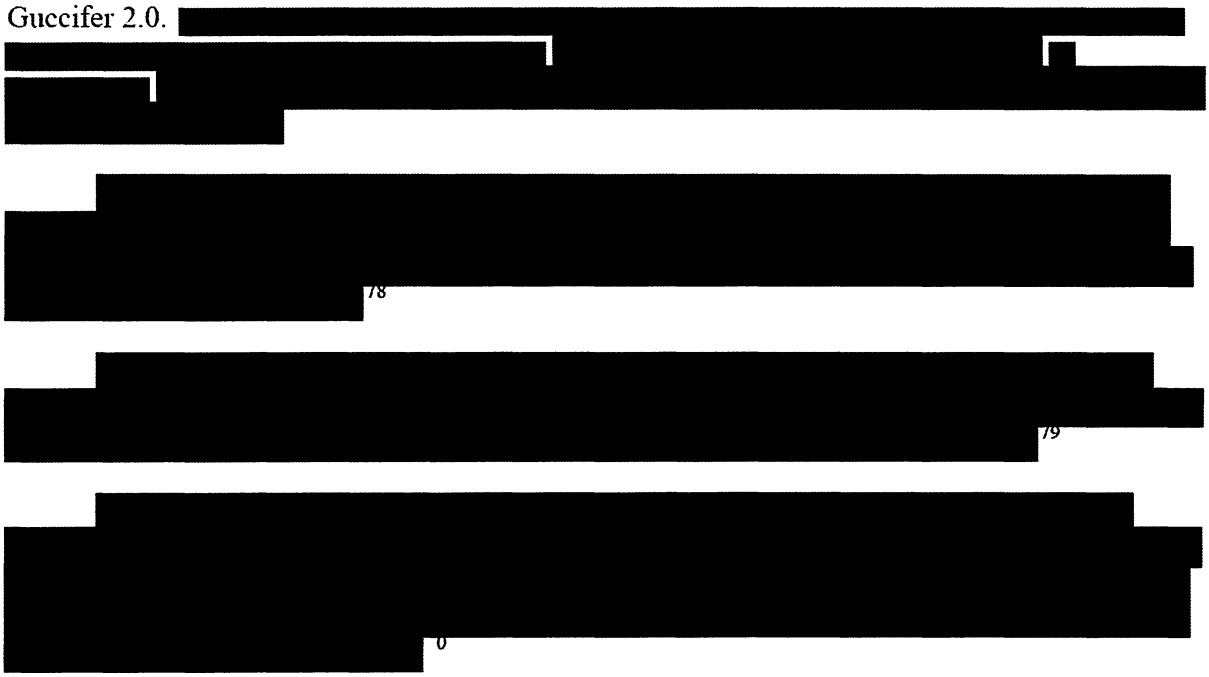
  I was concerned about what the Russians might have up their sleeve and what they could do, because it's not just dealing in a foreign theater, where we make a chess move and they make a chess move. . . . I didn't know what the Russians might stoop to and so I did not have great ideas at all about if we do this it's really going to have that salutary effect.[77]

4. (U) Delay in Publicly Attributing Some Efforts to Russia

[redacted] Senior administration officials told the Committee that they hesitated to publicly attribute the cyber efforts to Russia until they had sufficient information on the penetration of the DNC network and the subsequent disclosure of stolen information via WikiLeaks, DCLeaks, and

[74] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 13.
[75] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
[76] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 28.
[77] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with John O. Brennan: July 23, 2017, pp. 56-57.

Guccifer 2.0. [redacted]



(U) Ambassador Rice stated that the NSC, via the restricted PC and DC meetings, was encouraging the IC to "come to a unified, high-confidence conclusion as to what this interference was and wasn't." She noted, "[t]hat took longer than we would have hoped or anticipated. But you couldn't have it bad; you had to have it when it was done and ready, and that was the IC's to determine."[81]

(U) Ms. Haines told the Committee that in the restricted NSC meetings:

> *[E]verybody knew we had to find a way to make this as public as possible and do so sensitive to all the equities that everybody had, but also do it at a time when the Intelligence Community actually had something to say with confidence, because really you don't want to put something like that out there and then have to walk any aspect of it back. There were already enough credibility issues in the context of the political season. So we wanted it to be absolutely solid.*[82]

(U) Ms. Monaco recalled several officials including herself, Director Brennan, and Secretary Johnson answering questions in several public forums regarding intrusions into U.S.

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[78] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: Russian Active Measures, November 17, 2016, p. 73.
[79] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with James R. Clapper, July 17, 2017, pp. 18-19.
[80] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with John O. Brennan, June 23, 2017, pp. 78-79.
[81] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 37-38.
[82] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Avril Haines, August 10, 2017, p. 66.

election processes and systems during the summer of 2016. She recalled that administration officials issued largely general responses, stating that the answer was frequently "intrusions into our election process would be a very significant event and that the process of attribution is one that [the United States] takes very seriously."[83]

(U) Mr. Daniel noted for the Committee that conflicting cultures at member agencies of the IC commonly result in delays in the release of attribution statements, particularly with respect to ascribing the confidence level with which a statement can be made.[84]

(U) Secretary Johnson recalled that, as of October 1, 2016, "[a]s an administration we had not reached the conclusion, yes, we will attribute to Russia, and who's going to do it."[85]

5. (U) Time and Resources Required to Compose Policy Options Prior to Execution

(U) While some policy options were ready to execute on short notice—in part because they had been developed, but not used, in response to earlier acts of Russian aggression—a more comprehensive set of options took time to formulate and prepare. The extremely restricted nature of the discussions by cabinet level officials hampered the administration's ability to prepare complex response options. Policymakers were also concerned about escalation and believed their options for sending a nuanced message to Moscow prior to the election were limited.

(U) Mr. McDonough stated that he did not recall any specific proposals for pre-election response actions though he noted that "it was a decision to not act before the election . . . although there was work that we had to do, which obviously informed then the timing of when we do take the steps we take in December."[86]

(U) Ambassador Rice told the Committee that in the fall of 2016, the interagency process "continued to work up these potential response options" to have "them sufficiently baked so that if we had to . . . punish the Russians prior to the election . . . we were going to be in a position to do so relatively quickly."[87] She went on to state that in October 2016, the administration was continuing to prepare response options, consciously deciding that "absent further indications of Russian interference, we would bake these options to 300 [degrees] and take them to 375 [degrees] after the election, and then they'd be done."[88]

[redacted]

[83] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, pp. 13-14.
[84] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with J. Michael Daniel, August 31, 2017, p. 78.
[85] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 30.
[86] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 38.
[87] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 36.
[88] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[redacted]

6. (U) WikiLeaks

(U) The executive branch struggled to develop a complete understanding of WikiLeaks. Some officials viewed WikiLeaks as a legitimate news outlet, while others viewed WikiLeaks as a hostile organization acting intentionally and deliberately to undermine U.S. or allies' interests.

- [redacted][91]
- [redacted][92]
- [redacted][93]
- [redacted] General Paul Selva, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Committee that, [redacted][94]

[redacted]

[89] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[90] [redacted]

[91] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, p. 119.

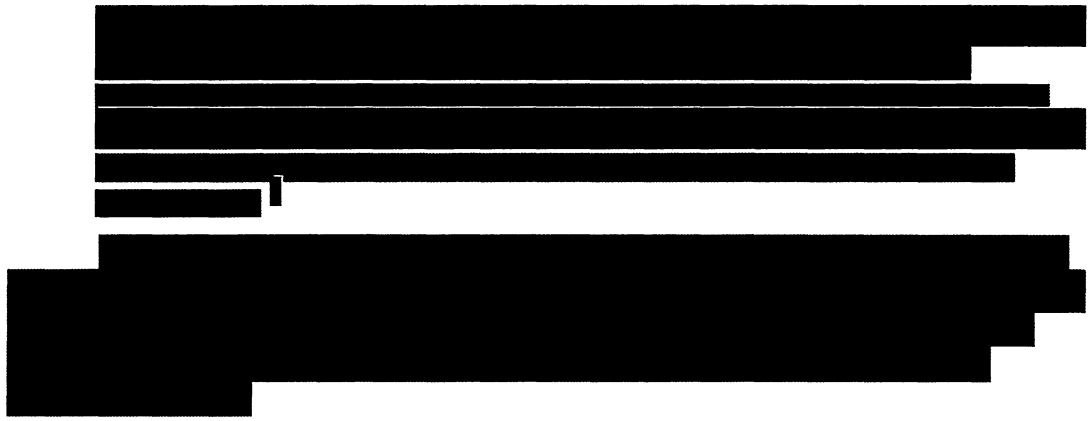
[92] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Benjamin J. Rhodes, July 25, 2017, p. 51.

[93] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with J. Michael Daniel, August 31, 2017, pp. 94-95.

[94] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with General Paul Selva, September 15, 2017, p. 26.

- [redacted][95]
- [redacted][96]

[redacted]



VI. (U) PRE-ELECTION ACTIONS

(U) Actions undertaken prior to the November 8, 2016, presidential election were limited to admonishing the Russians at various levels, providing federal assistance to secure state election infrastructure, and issuing a public statement attributing the penetration of the DNC and the disclosure of illicitly obtained information to Moscow.

(U) Several administration officials told the Committee that they believed they had exhausted the non-escalatory actions they could take prior to the election, primarily because they did not know the full range of Moscow's capabilities and were fearful that the Russians might attempt to affect electoral infrastructure. For example, Ambassador Rice told the Committee:

> *[M]y view was that we were right to put emphasis on trying to take the partisanship out of this very charged set of revelations in a very difficult atmosphere. I think we were right to put emphasis on hardening the states and making sure that the mechanics of our system were maximally defended. I think we were right to try to deter the Russians from doing more, and my understanding*

[95] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Admiral Michael S. Rogers, March 19, 2018, pp. 17-18.
[96] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: Russian Active Measures, November 17, 2016, pp. 23-26.
[97] [redacted]

is, as I said, that we had reason to believe they were in a position to do more and decided not to, which would lead me to conclude, although one can't be 100 percent sure of this, that our deterrence had some effect.[98]

A. (U) Warnings to Moscow

(U) The administration delivered at least five direct warnings to various levels of the Russian government. Two of those warnings were direct messages from President Obama to President Putin, including an in-person confrontation at the G20 summit in Hangzhou, China, on September 5, 2016. Another in-person warning was issued by Ambassador Rice to the Russian ambassador to the United States on October 7, 2016, accompanied by the delivery of an additional written message from President Obama to be passed directly to President Putin. An additional two warnings occurred on the margins of already scheduled, senior bilateral engagements, one involving Secretary Kerry and the other involving Director Brennan. A final warning involved using the "cyber hotline," a communications channel between the U.S. and Russian governments that had not previously been used.

1. (U) Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov

[redacted][99]

2. (U) Directors Brennan and Bortnikov

(U) Director Brennan publicly testified that he spoke with Alexander Bortnikov, the head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), on August 4, 2016, during a previously scheduled phone call to discuss Syria and counterterrorism issues. On the call, Brennan raised the issue of "the continued mistreatment and harassment of U.S. diplomats in Moscow," which he described as "irresponsible, reckless, intolerable, and needed to stop."[100] Director Brennan also raised the issue of Russia's attempts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election and recalled "[he] warned Mr. Bortnikov that if Russia pursued this course, it would destroy any near-term prospect for improvement in relations between Washington and Moscow and would undermine constructive engagement even on matters of mutual interest." Director Brennan stated that Mr. Bortnikov

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[98] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 87.
[99] (U) SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, p. 4.
[100] (U) Transcript, House Permanent Select Intelligence Committee Holds Hearing on Russia Investigation, May 23, 2017, http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-5108530.

denied that Russia was doing anything to influence the election and also accused Washington of conducting similar activities against elections in Russia.[101] When Director Brennan repeated the warning, Brennan recalled that Mr. Bortnikov "again denied the charge but said that he would inform President Putin of my comments."[102]

3. (U) Presidents Obama and Putin

(U) Ambassador Rice, with input from other senior administration officials, recommended to President Obama that he issue a warning to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, China. She recalled that the G20 summit was:

> *the best target of opportunity to put the finger right into Putin's chest and tell him that we knew what he was doing, that it needs to stop, and that if there were further indications that they had taken steps beyond what we knew they had already done, that there would be serious consequences for the Russians.*[103]

[redacted][104] The message was carefully crafted and coordinated with members of the small group of principals. It was ultimately delivered by President Obama to President Putin at the conclusion of a bilateral meeting held during the G20 summit, with only interpreters and the two heads of state present.[105] While subsequent news media reporting claims specific threats were made, Ambassador Rice told the Committee that the consequences for the Russians were purposely left ambiguous by the President in an effort to intimate that a range of diplomatic, economic, [redacted] options were available to use in response to Russia.[106]

(U) Ambassador Rice stated that, "[t]he President characterized Putin as being dishonest and obfuscating, denying any Russian involvement, criticizing the United States for interfering in Russian electoral processes and fomenting Orange revolutions in their territory." She further stated that Putin's response was an "energetic" and "non-substantive" denial.[107]

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[101] (U) *Ibid.*
[102] (U) *Ibid.*
[103] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 24.
[104] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[105] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 26; SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, p. 4.
[106] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 27-28.
[107] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, pp. 91-92.

4. (U) Ambassadors Rice and Kislyak

(U) On the same day as the issuance of the ODNI-DHS public statement on October 7, 2016 (*see infra*), Ambassador Rice called Sergey Kislyak, the Russian Ambassador to the United States, to her office to deliver a verbal message and pass a written message from President Obama to President Putin. The written message was a more specific warning that contained "the kinds of consequences that he could anticipate would be powerfully impactful to their economy and far exceed anything that he had seen to date."[108] According to Ambassador Rice, such a meeting was not a regular occurrence, nor was the passage of a written note from President Obama to be delivered directly to President Putin. The exchange was scheduled to occur just prior to the release of the ODNI-DHS statement.[109]

[redacted]

(U) Approximately a week after the October 7, 2016, meeting, Ambassador Kislyak asked to meet with Ambassador Rice to deliver Putin's response. The response, as characterized by Ambassador Rice, was "denial and obfuscation," and "[t]he only thing notable about it is that Putin somehow deemed it necessary to mention the obvious fact that Russia remains a nuclear power."[113]

5. (U) The Cyber Hotline

[redacted] According to Ambassador Rice, in the fall of 2016 the administration passed another warning to the Russian government [redacted][114]

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[108] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 46.
[109] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[110] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[111] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, pp. 92-93.
[112] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 48.
[113] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
[114] (U) In June 2013, the U.S. and Russian governments agreed to strengthen relations between the two countries as it relates to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The two governments concluded an agreement which included three confidence building measures between the two countries: (1) the creation of a communications channel and information sharing agreements between the countries' computer emergency response teams; (2)

Ambassador Rice viewed the use of this particular communications line as not escalatory, but rather a means to address the frequent Russian objection that standard, official channels were not being used to convey messages. From the U.S. side, however, the message was considered delivered when President Obama met with President Putin in September 2016.[115]

(U) The initial undated message sent via the cyber hotline alluded to information contained in the October 7, 2016, ODNI-DHS statement, as well as the scanning of state election infrastructure. It further stated:

[redacted]

[redacted][116]

(U) In total, the Committee is aware of eight messages transmitted, four by each side, as part of the exchange, but only three messages contain substantive information. In addition to the first message, the United States sent Russia additional technical information regarding the malicious cyber activity.[117]

(U) In responding, Moscow denied any connection between the activities raised in the U.S. messages and Russia, adding that it too had been victim to some of the same cyber activity.[118]

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authorization to use the existing direct communications link between the two countries' Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers; and (3) establishment of a direct communications link between senior White House and Kremlin officials to manage potentially dangerous situations from ICT-related events. *See* Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin, "Joint Statement by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation on a New Field of Cooperation in Confidence Building", June 17, 2013, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/17/joint-statement-presidents-united-states-america-and-russian-federatio-0.

[115] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 44-45.

[116] (U) Department of State letter to Chairman Burr and Vice-Chairman Warner, Cyber Hotline Production, July 27, 2018, pp. 3-4 also marked as CDP-2017-00011G-000183—CDP-2017-00011G-000184.

[117] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 3-21 also marked as CDP-2017-00011G-000183—CDP-2017-00011G-000201.

[118] (U) *Ibid.*

B. (U) Protecting Election Infrastructure

(U) In line with President Obama's mandate to protect the integrity of the election, Secretary Johnson first broached the idea of designating election infrastructure as a "critical infrastructure" sector at a press breakfast sponsored by the *Christian Science Monitor* on August 3, 2016.[119]

(U) Secretary Johnson subsequently had a conference call with representatives from all 50 states, including secretaries of state or other senior election officials, on August 15, 2016.[120] During that call, Secretary Johnson informed state election officials that while DHS did not currently have a specific or credible threat targeting the election systems themselves, DHS was in a heightened state of awareness regarding election infrastructure and recommended that they each "do everything you can for your own cyber security leading up to the election."[121]

(U) Secretary Johnson also raised the possibility of designating election infrastructure as critical infrastructure, but recalled that he received opposition from a number of states.[122] Some state election officials, in rejecting the idea, cited federal government interference in a state function as a major concern over the potential designation. Secretary Johnson was taken aback by these responses, stating that, "among those that spoke up, I was surprised and disappointed that there was this resistance."[123]

(U) Based on the negative feedback he received, Secretary Johnson concluded that "it was better for our cyber security around the election system if I put the critical infrastructure designation on the back burner" and instead continued to urge the states to request DHS services.[124]

(U) Following Secretary Johnson's phone call, DHS issued a public statement recapping the conversation with members of the National Association of Secretaries of State and other Chief Election Officials. The statement reinforced DHS's recommendation that states focus on securing election infrastructure and offered cybersecurity support from DHS's National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center. The statement did not include any mention of threats posed by Russia against electoral infrastructure and carefully touched on the topic of designating election infrastructure as critical infrastructure, stating:

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[119] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson; June 12, 2017, p. 10.
[120] (U) The Committee notes that Secretary Johnson's engagements with state officials occurred prior to the September 8, 2016, congressional briefing where the issue of state election security was raised.
[121] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 13.
[122] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 21; for more information on Secretary Johnson's designation of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure, *see Volume 1: Russian Efforts Against Election Infrastructure,* July 25, 2019.
[123] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 14.
[124] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 15.

DHS is exploring all ways to deliver more support to the sector in a collaborative and non-prescriptive manner, and would be examining whether designating certain electoral systems as critical infrastructure would be an effective way to offer this support.[125]

(U) While Secretary Johnson decided to not proceed with the designation of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure, DHS devised a plan to provide similar services without necessitating the designation. According to Secretary Johnson, under this plan DHS could "deliver to the states almost everything that you could if there was a critical infrastructure designation."[126]

(U) In addition to DHS efforts to protect state election infrastructure, and perhaps in response to the reaction received by Secretary Johnson in his earlier attempts to engage the states, the administration decided in early September to engage Congress on the issue to help assuage states' concerns about federal reach into the election process.

(U) Secretary Johnson also continued to issue public statements on election security throughout the fall of 2016.

- (U) On September 16, 2016, Secretary Johnson released a statement concerning the Cybersecurity of the Nation's Election Systems. In the statement, Secretary Johnson acknowledged the existence of "cyber intrusions involving political institutions and personal communications," as well as "some efforts at cyber intrusions of voter registration data maintained in state election systems."[127] Similar to the statement issued after the call with the state election officials, the statement reinforced that "DHS assistance is strictly voluntary and does not entail regulation, binding directives, and is not offered to supersede state and local control over the process."[128]

- (U) On October 1, 2016, Secretary Johnson issued a statement thanking the House of Representatives and Senate leadership for sending a letter to the National Association of State Election Directors.[129] This statement again reinforced that DHS's assistance does not entail federal regulation or "binding federal directives over state systems of any kind."[130] The statement again confirmed that DHS had observed malicious cyber activity, including successful intrusions into some state systems. The statement closed

[125] (U) "Readout of Secretary Johnson's Call with State Election Officials on Cybersecurity," August 15, 2016, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/08/15/readout-secretary-johnsons-call-state-election-officials-cybersecurity.
[126] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 18.
[127] (U) "Statement by Secretary Johnson Concerning the Cybersecurity of the Nation's Election Systems," September 16, 2016, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/09/16/statement-secretary-johnson-concerning-cybersecurity-nation's-election-systems.
[128] (U) *Ibid.*
[129] (U) "Statement by Secretary Johnson About Election Systems' Cybersecurity," October 1, 2016, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/10/01/statement-secretary-johnson-about-election-systems-cybersecurity.
[130] (U) *Ibid.*

with an advisement to state and local election officials to seek the assistance of DHS, indicating that 21 states had contacted DHS thus far.

- (U) On October 10, 2016, Secretary Johnson issued a statement which indicated that 33 state and 11 county or local election agencies had sought DHS assistance.[131] The statement also sought to raise awareness of cybersecurity threats, highlighting that there were only 29 days until Election Day and that the process by which DHS could conduct a scan and assist local officials in mitigating any discovered vulnerabilities would take at least three weeks.[132]

(U) Secretary Johnson told the Committee that he also called the Chief Executive Officer of the Associated Press (AP) to ensure their systems were protected from any cyber meddling the Russians might try to conduct on Election Day because he believed the AP had an effective monopoly on delivering election night returns to the news organizations. According to Secretary Johnson, the Chief Executive Officer assured him that the AP had enough redundancy in its communications systems that reporting could still be transmitted, even if by courier, if internet communications were unavailable.[133]

(U) DHS also established a crisis action response team to address any problem or incidents that may have arisen on Election Day.[134]

C. (U) Congressional Statements

(U) Administration officials who spoke to the Committee repeatedly stressed their attempts to be scrupulously nonpartisan in their approach with Congress and state election officials due to the highly charged political environment of the 2016 presidential election, an aspiration complicated by the fact that the President and Vice President were actively campaigning in support of one candidate.

- (U) Ambassador Rice stated, "[W]e were hell-bent and determined to try to do this in a way that was apolitical as possible. Again, that's why we put such emphasis on trying to invest and enlist the leadership of Congress to reinforce the messages that we were trying to deliver, particularly to the states."[135]

- (U) Mr. McDonough told the Committee the administration needed a bipartisan statement from Congress to help state and local authorities understand the threat and

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[131] (U) "Update by Secretary Johnson on DHS Election Cybersecurity Services," October 10, 2016, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/10/10/update-secretary-johnson-dhs-election-cybersecurity-services.
[132] (U) *Ibid.*
[133] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, pp. 40-41.
[134] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[135] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 23.

engage with the federal government to protect their election systems.[136] These engagements occurred after Secretary Johnson's phone call with state officials on August 15, 2016, during which Secretary Johnson's raising the possibility of designating election infrastructure as critical infrastructure was met with resistance.

(U) On September 8, 2016, Ms. Monaco, Director Comey, and Secretary Johnson briefed the Gang of Eight and the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Homeland Security Committees from the House of Representatives and the Senate.[137] Secretary Johnson told the Committee that although the briefing provided to the group was not at the highest classification level (i.e., it did not contain the details of the sensitive intelligence collection which had only been briefed to the Gang of Eight), it was clear to him that certain members were receiving the classified intelligence briefing from the IC and law enforcement for the first time.[138] It was during this briefing that administration officials discussed the issuance of a bipartisan statement, which they hoped would convince state and local officials to avail themselves of the cybersecurity services being offered by DHS to secure and protect election infrastructure.[139] Director Comey briefed on what FBI was observing and "described in some detail specific Russian malicious activity," and Secretary Johnson detailed assistance that DHS could provide to state and local election infrastructure operators, including those services potentially available as a result of a designation of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure.[140]

(U) Numerous administration officials stated some members of Congress that attended the September 8, 2016, meeting resisted the administration request that a bipartisan statement be made regarding Russia being responsible for interference activities.

[redacted] Ms. Monaco recalled Senate Majority Leader McConnell stating "[y]ou security people should be careful that you're not getting used," which she interpreted as suggestive that the intelligence regarding Russian efforts to interfere in the 2016 elections was being inflated or used for partisan ends.[141] According to Ms. Monaco, the interaction with Senate Majority

[136] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, pp. 14-16.
[137] (U) *Ibid.*; SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, p. 40.
[138] [redacted]
[139] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 10; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 21.
[140] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, pp. 45-46; SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, pp. 39-42.
[141] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, pp. 47-48.

Leader McConnell comported with Director Brennan's account of his interaction with Senate Majority Leader McConnell when briefing the [redacted][142]

(U) In a July 17, 2018, closed Committee hearing examining the Obama administration's response to Russian interference in the 2016 election, Senator Burr, who was present for the September 8, 2016, meeting as the Committee's Chairman, responded to Ms. Monaco and stated, "[T]he question that [Senate Majority Leader McConnell] raised was: Would this not contribute to Russia's efforts at creating concerns about our election process, if the leadership of the Congress put that letter out?"[143]

(U) Following his trip to the G20 summit in China, and in the second week of September, President Obama met with House and Senate leadership at the White House.[144] The publicly stated purpose for the meeting was to discuss the government's budget and to provide the congressional leadership with a back-brief on the G20 summit.[145] However, according to Ambassador Rice, the primary purpose of the meeting was to bring the leaders together to discuss Russian interference in the election and tell them that "we need to come together and address this as two branches and two parties," with the goal of having them collectively issue a joint public statement.[146]

(U) Prior to the issuance of a bipartisan statement to election officials, Senator Feinstein, then serving as Vice Chairman of the Committee, and Representative Adam Schiff, the Ranking Member of the HPSCI, issued a statement on September 22, 2016, stating that they both "concluded that Russian intelligence agencies are making a serious and concerted effort to influence the U.S. election" and that the "effort is intended to sow doubt about the security of our election and may well be intended to influence the outcomes of the election."[147] Their statement was the first government communication publicly attributing cyber activity to Russian actors, and until December 29, 2016, when DHS and FBI issued a Joint Analysis Report and President Obama amended Executive Order (EO) 13964 to authorize sanctions on individuals who "tamper with, alter, or cause a misappropriation of information with the purpose or effect of interfering with or undermining election processes or institutions," the only public statement of attribution linking the election influence effort to Russia's intelligence services.[148,149]

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[142] (U) *Ibid.*
[143] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, p. 45.
[144] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[145] (U) *Ibid.*
[146] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 37.
[147] (U) Dianne Feinstein and Adam Schiff, "Feinstein, Schiff Statement on Russian Hacking," September 22, 2016, https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=A04D321E-5F86-4FD6-AD8E-7F533E1C2845.
[148] (U) DHS and FBI, *GRIZZLY STEPPE – Russian Malicious Cyber Activity*, December 29, 2016, https://www.us-cert.gov/sites/default/publications/JAR_16-20296A_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf.
[149] (U) The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement by the President on Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment, December 29, 2016.

(U) The leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate eventually wrote a letter to the president of the National Association of State Election Directors on September 28, 2016, highlighting the "challenge of malefactors that are seeking to use cyberattacks to disrupt the administration of our elections" and further encouraged states to take advantage of public and private sector resources to protect network infrastructure from cyber attacks.[150] The letter further made clear that DHS was ready to provide assistance to states that requested it, and that the assistance would not be encumbered with federal regulation or federal directives.[151] The letter, however, also stated, "[W]e oppose any effort by the federal government to exercise any degree of control over the states' administration of elections by designating these systems as critical infrastructure."[152] The letter did not reference Russian cyber activities.

(U) According to Avril Haines, the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the perceived difficulty in obtaining a bipartisan leadership letter from Congress to get the states to engage on the issue of protecting electoral infrastructure left the NSC "disappointed." As a result, Ms. Haines said, "we tempered our response options."[153]

D. (U) The October 7, 2016, ODNI-DHS Statement

(U) As the restricted PC meetings occurred through September 2016, participants continued to believe a public statement that attributed the cyber activity to the Russian government had to be made.[154] In addition to determining how to present the content, the question that senior advisors debated was who would issue such a statement.[155]

- (U) Secretary Johnson characterized the decision to release a statement on attribution was a "very, very big decision."[156] He further stated that the intent of the statement would be the IC publicly attributing the cyber activity to the Russian government, coupled with DHS addressing how the interference would be defended against. Secretary Johnson believed that DHS should do more than just alerting the public, but should provide direction, i.e., "here's what you should do about it, here's what we are doing about it."[157]

- (U) During one meeting in the White House Situation Room, Director Clapper passed Secretary Johnson a written note suggesting that the two of them issue a joint statement,

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[150] (U) Paul Ryan, Nancy Pelosi, Mitch McConnell, and Harry Reid, Letter to Todd Valentine, President of the National Association of State Election Directors, September 28, 2016, http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3872866-Read-McConnell-and-other-congressional-leaders.html.
[151] (U) *Ibid.*
[152] (U) *Ibid.*
[153] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Avril Haines, August 10, 2017, p. 94.
[154] (U) SSCI Transcript of Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 26.
[155] (U) *Ibid.*
[156] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 31.
[157] (U) *Ibid.*

rather than issuing parallel ones.[158] This moment was the genesis for the October 7, 2016, joint statement by the DNI and DHS Secretary, with the first paragraph written by the IC and the second paragraph written by DHS.[159]

(U) According to Ambassador Rice, Director Comey wanted to issue an op-ed in September on the topic of Russian interference in the election.[160] After a series of discussions, the restricted PC group decided that it was best to release a joint statement from ODNI and DHS, mainly because the ODNI represented the entire IC, rather than a single element, and because a public statement seemed to be more appropriate than an op-ed. By October, however, while the senior officials would have preferred that FBI join the ODNI-DHS joint statement, the FBI Director thought it would be "untimely and probably inappropriate for FBI to sign onto such a statement," even though he supported both the content and issuance of the statement.[161]

(U) Deputy Director McCabe told the Committee that he believed "Director Comey felt that [the op-ed] was important to do when he suggested it." However, "[b]y the time he kind of got around to thinking about it seriously, he felt like the opportunity had passed and we were too close [to the election] at that point to have the intended effect on the electorate."[162]

[redacted] Ms. Monaco testified to the Committee that the proposed op-ed by Director Comey would have been focused on attributing the penetration of the DNC network, [redacted]. She also stated, however, that the proposed op-ed did not comport with FBI's previous history of issuing formal statements regarding attribution of cyber actors, such as when FBI attributed the cyber attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment to the DPRK.[163]

(U) The DNI and DHS Secretary issued an unprecedented joint statement on October 7, 2016, stating:

> *The U.S. Intelligence Community is confident that the Russian Government directed the recent compromises of e-mails from US persons and institutions, including from US political organizations. . . . Some states have also recently seen scanning and probing of their election-related systems, which in most cases originated from servers operated by a Russian company. However, we are not now in a position to attribute this activity to the Russian Government. The USIC and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) assess that it would be*

[158] (U) *Ibid.*
[159] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[160] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 39.
[161] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[162] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Andrew McCabe, February 14, 2018, p. 217.
[163] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, pp. 65-67.

extremely difficult for someone, including a nation-state actor, to alter actual ballot counts or election results by cyber attack or intrusion.[164]

(U) Secretary Johnson was convinced that the statement would be "above-the-fold news" because the United States had "never before accused a superpower of meddling in our political system" and doesn't "normally speak in such blunt terms."[165] The public reaction compared to what the administration anticipated, however, was muted.

(U) According to open source information, the joint ODNI-DHS statement was issued at approximately 3:30 p.m. EDT on October 7, 2016. At 4:03 p.m. EDT, the Washington Post released the *Access Hollywood* videotape. Approximately 30 minutes later, WikiLeaks released e-mails purportedly from John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager.

E. (U) Effects of Pre-Election Actions

(U) Following the delivered warnings, particularly the one issued by President Obama at the G20 summit, the administration sought to ascertain whether the Russians would continue their actions and further interfere in the 2016 presidential election process.[166] According to Ambassador Rice, "[W]e did not see any indications in the run-up to and including the election that they had hacked more stuff [or] falsified information."[167] She further told the Committee that she believed that the release of information by WikiLeaks, including John Podesta's e-mails, was information already in the possession of the Russians: "The horse had left the barn."[168] She also stated that if additional intrusions had been detected, the United States would have responded with a combination of actions that had been developed through the restricted PC process.

(U) According to Ambassador Rice, the restricted PC group did discuss taking punitive action prior to the election, regardless of whether additional Russian cyber activity was detected. The administration decided, however, to not proceed out of concern about provoking the Russians to undertake additional activity.[169]

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[164] (U) James Clapper and Jeh Johnson, "Joint Statement from the Department of Homeland Security and Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Election Security," October 7, 2016, https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases-2016/item/1635-joint-dhs-and-odni-election-security-statement.

[165] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, p. 35.

[166] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 50.

[167] (U) *Ibid.*

[168] (U) *Ibid.*

[169] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 51.

(U) Ms. Haines told the Committee that she similarly judged that the warning message from President Obama to President Putin had a deterrent effect on stopping the Russians moving forward with "actually manipulating the vote and the voting process."[170]

(U) Subsequent to the 2016 election, however, intelligence and other information has revealed that Russian cyber actors did in fact engage in significant additional cyber activity following the warning delivered by President Obama to President Putin during the G20 summit in early September and prior to the election.

- (U) As late as October, GRU cyber actors conducted penetration testing on state and county election infrastructure. For example, GRU cyber actors visited the websites of counties in Georgia, Iowa, and Florida to identify vulnerabilities.[171]

- (U) Days before the election, GRU cyber actors sent over 100 spearphishing emails to election officials and organizations in numerous Florida counties. These emails contained malware designed to look like a legitimate election infrastructure vendor.[172]

- [redacted]

VII. (U) POST-ELECTION ACTIONS

(U) Following the election, administration officials told the Committee that they were no longer constrained by fears that the Russians would further meddle in the election. The NSC continued to convene policy meetings to discuss response options, and ultimately executed a series of actions.[174]

[redacted]

(U) The Committee heard from several administration officials that the response options were still being debated and calibrated post-election to maximize effectiveness while minimizing

[170] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, pp. 30-31.
[171] (U) Indictment, *United States v. Viktor Borisovich Netyksho, et al.*, Case 1:18-cr-00215-ABJ (D.D.C. July 13, 2018).
[172] (U) *Ibid.* For a more comprehensive account of Russian activity against state and local election infrastructure, *see Volume 1: Russian Efforts Against Election Infrastructure*, July 25, 2019.
[173] (U) DHS briefing for SSCI staff, March 5, 2018.
[174] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Staff Interview with Celeste Wallander, August 23, 2017, pp. 49-50.

blowback on the United States and its allies, and that process took several weeks to finalize.[175] However, at least one administration official, Secretary Kerry, did not fully understand the rationale behind why the response actions occurred late in December, rather than immediately following the election.[176]

(U) When the PC met to discuss which responses to levy against Russia, Ambassador Rice stated that the government exhibited typical "rice bowl behavior, where the various elements of the interagency [were] happy to see somebody else's rice bowl broken, but they were protective of their own."[177] As Ambassador Rice recalled:

- (U) The Department of State expressed concern about the number of Russians that the U.S. would declare *persona non grata*, expecting a similar expulsion of U.S. diplomats from Russia and knowing that the number of U.S. diplomatic staff in Russia was already smaller in comparison to the official Russian presence in the United States.[178]

- (U) The IC expressed concern about naming Russian intelligence elements in a sanctions order, and the Department of Defense was similarly concerned about naming the military intelligence entity in a sanctions order.[179]

- (U) The Department of Defense and the NSA expressed concern about cyber actions that could be taken against Russia, due to the fact that some of the actions could reveal cyber operations tradecraft to the Russians that they wanted to keep undetectable.[180]

A. (U) Expulsion of Russian Diplomats

(U) On December 29, 2016, the Department of State announced that 35 Russian government officials from the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and the Russian Consulate in San Francisco, California were declared *persona non grata* and given 72 hours to depart the United States. According to the Department of State's announcement, this was in response to the harassment of U.S. diplomatic personnel. Furthermore, the Department of State declared that the Russian government would be denied access to two Russian government-owned compounds, one in Maryland and one in New York.[181]

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[175] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 29-31; SSCI Transcript of the Interview with General Paul Selva, September 15, 2017, p. 43.
[176] (U) SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, p. 5.
[177] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, pp. 94-95.
[178] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[179] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.
[180] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[181] (U) The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, FACT SHEET: Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/29/fact-sheet-actions-response-russian-malicious-cyber-activity-and, December 29, 2016.

[redacted][182]

B. (U) Modifying the EO and Sanctions

(U) On December 29, 2016, President Obama amended Executive Order (EO) 13964 to authorize sanctions on individuals who "tamper with, alter, or cause a misappropriation of information with the purpose or effect of interfering with or undermining election processes or institutions."[183] This amendment of EO 13964 enabled the administration to sanction nine Russian entities and individuals, including the GRU, the FSB, three companies that supported the GRU, Chief and Deputy Chief of the GRU, and two additional GRU officers.[184]

(U) Ms. Monaco told the Committee that the IC and the Departments of the Treasury and Justice had sanctions packages that were ready to execute, but "[t]hese were not individuals that we could link to the 2016 active measures campaign" and that she asked participants in the interagency process to "link any individuals or entities for the cyber activity related to 2016."[185] She reported that Director Brennan committed to examining all available intelligence "to develop potential sanctions targets with some link to the cyber activity as related to the active measures campaign."[186]

[redacted]

C. [redacted]

[redacted]

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[182] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Denis McDonough, July 18, 2017, p. 48.
[183] (U) The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, FACT SHEET: Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/29/fact-sheet-actions-response-russian-malicious-cyber-activity-and, December 29, 2016. Executive Order 13964 was issued on April 1, 2015, and created a new authority for the U.S. government to block property of individuals engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities.
[184] (U) *Ibid.*
[185] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Lisa Monaco, August 10, 2017, p. 76.
[186] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[187] [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

D. (U) Cybersecurity Action

(U) On December 29, 2016, DHS and FBI issued a Joint Analysis Report (JAR) that contained declassified technical information on Russian government cyber capabilities, including tools, tactics, and infrastructure used by Russian intelligence services. The JAR referred to the Russian intelligence activity targeting networks and endpoints, particularly those associated with the 2016 U.S. election, as GRIZZLY STEPPE. This was the first JAR to attribute cyber activity to a specific country.[194]

(U) On February 10, 2017, DHS's National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center published an analytical report, titled *Enhanced Analysis of GRIZZLY STEPPE Activity*. The analytical report included additional signatures to be used by cybersecurity practitioners to detect a number of capabilities associated with GRIZZLY STEPPE.[195]

E. (U) Tasking the ICA

(U) On December 6, 2016, President Obama tasked the IC, through Director Clapper, to assemble all the information held by the IC relating to Russian attempts to interfere in the 2016 election, along with other historical references, in a single document. According to Ambassador Rice:

> *The President felt strongly that it was important to leave a record for the public, Congress, and for the incoming administration of everything that the [IC] had found in its heretofore relatively piecemeal assessments, so that we had basically put in one place the sum total of our understanding. He thought that was necessary for the public's information and necessary for the incoming administration to be able to pick up where we left off, and our responsibility as well to Congress.*[196]

[redacted] According to Ms. Monaco, the document was not simply a "rollup of everything we saw until Election Day,"[197] but rather included all information available to the IC as of the date of publication, [redacted]

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[193] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 72.
[194] (U) DHS and FBI, *GRIZZLY STEPPE – Russian Malicious Cyber Activity,* December 29, 2016, https://www.us-cert.gov/sites/default/publications/JAR_16-20296A_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf.
[195] (U) *Ibid.*
[196] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Closed Hearing: White House Awareness of and Response to Russian Active Measures, July 17, 2018, p. 131.
[197] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[redacted][198] Monaco further explained that "[t]he desire was also to put in context everything we'd been seeing and have one place. . . . We've now seen a series of these things and an escalation, so let's have one record."[199]

(U) Secretary Kerry told the Committee that he submitted a written memo to President Obama advocating for a national, bipartisan commission, similar to the Warren Commission, to dig deeply into every aspect of Russia's attempts to interfere with the 2016 elections.[200] He stated that he was disappointed that the idea was not endorsed and moved forward, and that rather President Obama issued the tasking to create the ICA.[201]

(U) Working together, ODNI, CIA, NSA, and FBI completed the task with three versions of the same intelligence product, including a highly classified memorandum to the President completed on December 30, 2016, a Top Secret ICA published on January 5, 2017, and an unclassified ICA made publicly available on January 6, 2017. The Committee's review of the IC's response to President Obama's tasking are captured in the Committee's review of the ICA, *Volume 4: Review of the Intelligence Community Assessment.*

F. (U) Protecting Election Infrastructure

(U) On January 5, 2017, Secretary Johnson convened a phone call, similar to the August 15, 2016, call, where he once again raised the issue of designating election infrastructure as critical infrastructure for the purposes of providing federal assistance. Based on the feedback he received, Secretary Johnson proceeded with his plan to bolster protection of election infrastructure.[202]

(U) On the same day the DNI released the unclassified ICA, January 6, 2017, Secretary Johnson designated election infrastructure as a subsector of the existing Government Facilities critical infrastructure sector, which enables states to leverage the full scope of cybersecurity services offered by DHS, provided they request them. The issues surrounding states' ability to administer elections, however, were still in the foreground. Secretary Johnson's public statement was explicit in asserting that: "[t]his designation does not mean a federal takeover, regulation, oversight or intrusion concerning elections in this country."[203]

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[198] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.
[199] (U) *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[200] (U) The "Warren Commission" was the commission established via Executive Order 11130 by President Lyndon B. Johnson on November 29, 1963 to investigate and report on the November 22, 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren, served as the chairman of the commission.
[201] (U) SSCI Memorandum for the Record: Interview with Former Secretary of State, John Kerry, November 8, 2017, pp. 5-6.
[202] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Jeh Johnson, June 12, 2017, pp. 44-46.
[203] (U) "Statement by Secretary Jeh Johnson on the Designation of Election Infrastructure as a Critical Infrastructure Subsector," January 6, 2017, https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/01/06/statement-secretary-johnson-designation-election-infrastructure-critical.

VIII. (U) OPTIONS CONSIDERED BUT NOT EXECUTED

(U) Administration officials provided insight into response options that were considered, but not executed for various reasons.

(U) According to Ambassador Rice, the response options being considered were heavily slanted towards economic measures, meaning the Department of Treasury's assessments "bore a lot of weight in our deliberations, as we'd been sanctioning Russia for years."[204] Ambassador Rice noted that while Treasury's position had often been "hawkish" on Russia, it assessed that previous sanctions applied against Russia had exhausted economic options that would impact Russia in a meaningful way but would not harm the United States or its allies. Treasury assessed that the remaining economic options would incur significant blowback to either the United States or its allies, notably the Europeans.[205]

(U) Some administration officials indicated that uncertainty about the future Russia policy of the incoming administration, combined with uncertainty about the level of commitment from European allies, factored into considerations regarding more aggressive punitive sanctions. Christina Segal-Knowles, who served as the Senior Director for Global Economics and Finance, stated that sanctions "relied on psychology to be effective" and recalled concerns about credibility and continuity. Ms. Segal-Knowles said, "I think the possibility of reversal—I'm not sure that it was necessarily 'we know what the [incoming] administration will do,' but it certainly weighed on the constraints that we were facing, in that we couldn't promise what the next administration's policy would be."[206] Ambassador Rice told the Committee, "[w]e were trying to punish the Russians without losing the Europeans, without causing some unforeseen reaction by the new administration."[207]

[redacted][208]

[redacted][210]

[204] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 74.
[205] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.
[206] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Christina Segal-Knowles, May 10, 2018, pp. 23-24.
[207] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Susan Rice, July 12, 2017, p. 75.
[208] (U) *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
[209] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Samantha Power, July 28, 2017, pp. 34-35.
[210] (U) *Ibid.*

[redacted][12]

IX. (U) RECOMMENDATIONS

1. (U) Strengthen Partnerships

(U) The executive branch should bolster partnerships with Russia's "near abroad." Russia uses countries on its periphery as a laboratory for refining its active measures campaigns. The United States should establish and expand partnerships with those countries to identify new Russian active measures and assist these partners' ability to defend against them. Such partnerships will help to prepare defenses for the eventual expansion of interference techniques targeting the West.

2. (U) Support Cyber Norms

(U) The United States should lead the way on creating international cyber norms. Russia and China are actively promoting their view of cyber norms to international forums, redefining the cyber battlefield and writing the rules in their favor. Much as with other agreements, U.S. leadership is needed to balance any formalized international agreement on acceptable uses of cyber capabilities.

3. (U) Prepare for the Next Attack

(U) The executive branch should be prepared to face an attack on U.S. elections in a highly politicized environment, either from the Russia or from elsewhere. This preparation should include developing a range of standing response options that can be rapidly executed, as appropriate, if a clandestine foreign influence operation is directed at the United States.

(U) The DNI, as the country's senior intelligence representative, should provide a regular, apolitical assessment of foreign intelligence threats to U.S. elections, including clandestine foreign influence campaigns, prior to regularly scheduled federal elections, as first proposed in Section 608 of the *Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018*, S. 1761 (115th Cong., 1st Sess.) (introduced, Aug. 18, 2017).

(U) Executive and legislative branch officials, regardless of party affiliation, should jointly and publicly reinforce the DNI's findings, particularly if a foreign influence effort is directed at specific candidates seeking office.

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[211] (U) SSCI Transcript of the Interview with Celeste Wallander, August 23, 2017, pp. 25-26.
[212] (U) *Ibid.*

(U) The President of the United States should take steps to separate himself or herself from political considerations when handling issues related to foreign influence operations. These steps should include explicitly putting aside politics when addressing the American people on election threats and marshalling all the resources of the U.S. Government to effectively confront the threat.

(U) Sitting officials and candidates should use the absolute greatest amount of restraint and caution if they are considering publicly calling the validity of an upcoming election into question. Such a grave allegation can have significant national security and electoral consequences, including limiting the response options of the appropriate authorities, and exacerbating the already damaging messaging efforts of foreign intelligence services.

4. (U) Integrate Responses to Cyber Incidents

(U) Cyber events, especially those undertaken by a nation state that go beyond traditional intelligence collection, must be assessed within the geopolitical context to identify and understand both the potential intent and impact of an attack. Current and future administrations should align and synchronize cyber as an integral part of foreign policy activity, rather than treating cyber as an isolated domain.

5. (U) Prioritize Collection on Information Warfare

(U) The IC should prioritize resources to better collect on and analyze information warfare and the influence capabilities of hostile nations. The IC should also contextualize cyber events with this information to better understand adversary capability and intent.

6. (U) Increasing Information Sharing on Foreign Influence Efforts

(U) Once credible information is obtained about a foreign influence or active measures operation, that information at the appropriate classification level should be shared as broadly as appropriate within government, including Congress, while still protecting sources and methods. This information should also be shared with relevant state and local authorities, and relevant private sector partners, as appropriate. For operations specifically targeting election infrastructure and systems, federal engagement with state and local election officials, as well as relevant private sector partners, must be substantive and timely.

(U) In the event that such a campaign is detected, the public should be informed as soon as possible, with a clear and succinct statement of the threat, even if the information is incomplete. Delaying the release of information allows inaccurate narratives to spread, which makes the task of informing the public significantly harder. Mechanisms for issuing public warnings related to threats to elections should be put in place to allow for any warning to be made in a timely and non-partisan manner.

7. (U) Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Authorities

(U) The lack of clear authorities and responsibilities within the IC for detecting and mitigating Russian influence operations conducted via social media inhibited the ability to provide early warning to policymakers, or quickly formulate a complete set of response options. The Committee addresses its findings and recommendations regarding election security and social media in separate volumes of this report.

(U) List of Classification Sources:

- [redacted]

ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF SENATORS RISCH, RUBIO, COTTON, CORNYN, and SASSE

(U) Volume 3 of the Select Committee on Intelligence's "Report on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election," exposes in great detail the Obama administration's inept response to Russia's persistent and complex campaign to influence and interfere in the most recent U.S. presidential election. In its report, the Committee found that administration officials felt constrained in its response to Russian malign activity due to a number of factors including the heavily politicized environment that existed in 2016, and the fear that public warnings about such activity could undermine confidence in the election, the very thing Russia was trying to accomplish. Such factors do not excuse the administration's failures to heed clear intelligence warnings, establish an effective deterrent, or take effective action to counter Russia's activities before, and after November 8, 2016.

(U) Available Intelligence

(U) As detailed in the Committee's report, there was intelligence available as far back as 2015 that indicated significant Russian malign activity targeted at our civil society. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) attempted to warn the Democratic National Committee (DNC) on several occasions throughout 2015 and 2016 that malign actors had or sought to penetrate its networks. Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper "publicly alluded to the threat of cyberattacks against presidential campaigns during a May, 2016, event." Despite this intelligence reporting, which was apparently known at the highest levels of the intelligence community for quite some time, former administration officials interviewed by the Committee claimed they were unaware of the Russian cyber penetration of the DNC until it was reported in the *Washington Post* on June 14, 2016. Even after the information was published, the administration believed this to be "within the bounds of traditional espionage," not indicators of the active measures campaign it actually was. It was not until additional information was obtained by senior administration officials in late July 2016 that the administration received what it called its "wake up call" on Russian operations.

(U) Warnings Did Not Work

(U) Once senior administration officials became aware of the threat, warnings were delivered to the highest levels of the Russian government—its president, foreign minister, intelligence chief, and ambassador to the U.S. In chronological order, Former Secretary of State John Kerry told the Committee that the first such confrontation was on July 26, 2016, with a warning that Russian interference in the U.S. elections was serious, and that such behavior posed risks to the bilateral relationship. Former CIA Director John Brennan confirmed that on August 4, 2016, á warning was provided that if Russia pursued this course, it would destroy any near-term prospect for improvement in relations between Washington and Moscow. President Obama, on recommendation from Ambassador Susan Rice and others, delivered a carefully crafted message to Putin in early September 2016, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Huangzhou, China. In a meeting on October 7, 2016, between Ambassador Rice and the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., a verbal message was delivered to the Russian Ambassador, along with a

written one from President Obama to Putin, which outlined the kinds of consequences that Putin could anticipate would be powerfully impactful to Russia's economy and far exceed anything he had seen to date.

(U) The Committee's report notes that senior administration officials "assessed that their warnings to Russia before the election had the desired effect, and that Russia undertook little to no additional action once the warnings were delivered." Rice testified, "[W]e did not see any indications in the run-up to and including the election that they had hacked more stuff [or] falsified information." Information released by WikiLeaks after warnings from the administration, in Rice's view, was information that had already been stolen and was in possession of the Russians, therefore, "the horse had left the barn."

(U) But in reviewing intelligence reporting available during that time as part of this investigation, the Committee found that "at least some aspects of Russian activity continued through the fall of 2016 and after the election; notably, Russia's use of social media and its attempts to penetrate vulnerable state and local election infrastructure." Assertions made by former administration officials that they believed their warnings had been heeded ring especially hollow because it was after these warnings were issued that WikiLeaks posted the first tranche of thousands of emails from the Clinton campaign. Another tranche of emails stolen from the DNC were released on November 6, 2016. From August through October 2016, Russian trolls and Russians posing as Americans organized campaign rallies in Florida and Pennsylvania; published fake advertisements designed to sow dissent amongst Americans; and used Twitter accounts to post accusations of voter fraud under false identities. What appeared to be genuine American political activity was in fact an active measures campaign bought and paid for by the Russians. It remains unclear whether reporting attributing such activity to Russia made its way up to senior administration officials through the regular channels, but it is baffling that the administration did not aggressively seek any information available from the intelligence community to verify that its warnings to Moscow had their intended effect.

(U) Post-Election Response

(U) In interviews with the Committee, former Obama administration officials expressed that after the election they no longer felt constrained in responding to Russia the way they had before November 8. And yet, the United States did not respond for weeks and weeks following Election Day. In addressing this delay to the Committee, Rice attributed it to the various disagreements that took place in the interagency over the suite of proposed options. We remain baffled as to why these options – expelling diplomats, levying sanctions, and publicly revealing Russian cyber activities targeted at our election were not prepared months beforehand, following the administration's discovery of Russian activity in late July 2016, so that they could be operationalized as soon as necessary. Waiting until after the election to debate the merits and second-order impacts of expelling diplomats or sanctioning individuals involved in Russia's malign activity enabled continued Russian meddling. Hollow threats and slow, hapless responses from the administration translated to perceived weakness on the part of the U.S., and Putin exploited that weakness with impunity. It appears to us that either the Obama administration was woefully unprepared to address a known and ongoing national security threat, or even worse, that the administration did not take the threat seriously.

(U) Missed Opportunity

(U) Intelligence pointing towards malign Russian activity aimed at our civil society existed [redacted] That there was no recognition of this activity by senior Obama administration officials until late July 2016 is appalling. The administration missed important opportunities to deter Russian operations before they escalated, and that is inexcusable.

(U) When the administration finally recognized Russia'a malign activity three months before the election, its response, or lack thereof, failed to stop Russia's efforts. Even worse, senior Obama administration officials seemed to believe their warnings had in fact deterred Russia without taking any steps to prove that was the case. Without consequences, Putin was free to continue to wreak havoc on our democratic process, and further imperil our democracy. These warnings were yet another red line that the Obama administration drew but refused to enforce, emboldening Moscow to continue its malign activities aimed at our democratic process and sow discord in our society.

(U) While we understand some of the constraints by which the administration felt bound in the lead-up to the election, these constraints did not inhibit or preclude a strong response from Washington. When it comes to protecting American democracy against our most capable and malicious adversaries, there should be nothing but a strong response. We now know what happens when an administration fail to take such actions.

MINORITY VIEWS OF SENATOR WYDEN

(U) The Committee's report on the U.S. Government's response to Russian interference lacks critical information, leaving the American people in the dark about key events leading up to the 2016 election. In 2016, the Obama Administration withheld information from the congressional intelligence committees, preventing members from conducting oversight, developing policy responses, or advocating for transparency with the public. In addition, the so-called "Gang of Eight" briefings did not involve formal recordkeeping. As a result, the Committee's report denies the American public an opportunity for historical accountability – for the refusal of some members to inform the public about Russian interference and for public statements denying the existence of intelligence indicating that Russia was seeking to help Donald Trump.

(U) The report includes several recommendations with which I strongly agree, particularly with regard to the need for transparency. As the Committee urges, information on foreign influence campaigns should be shared as widely as possible, including with state and local officials, the private sector, and Congress. The public should be informed of foreign influence campaigns as soon as possible, even if the information is incomplete. And, members of Congress from both parties should "jointly and publicly reinforce the DNI's findings, particularly if a foreign influence effort is directed at specific candidates seeking office."

(U) There are multiple reasons why these principles were not adhered to in 2016, but many of them begin with the Obama Administration's decision to severely limit its briefings to Congress on Russian interference. Intelligence of this magnitude should have been briefed to the full congressional intelligence committees and to the committees' full complement of staff with its range of responsibilities and expertise. Complex policy and legal issues could have been discussed and debated. Questions could have been asked of the administration, not just during an initial briefing but in written follow-up questions and subsequent staff and member briefings. Members could have developed positions, individually, with other members, or perhaps even as a Committee. Members could also have weighed in on what information should be downgraded or declassified, for release to the full Congress, state and local officials, and the public.

(U) But none of that happened. Instead, at a moment when the country's democracy was under direct attack and the administration was hoping for support from Congress, it refused to engage the congressional intelligence committees.[1] How might things have turned out differently? Historically, the full committees have reacted to information differently than have the "Gang of Eight." For example, only when the committees learned of the CIA's torture program and the NSA's warrantless wiretapping program was there meaningful oversight and legislative responses. And while the response of the full committees to a hypothetical pre-election briefing on Russian interference may be unknown, the fact remains that, shortly after the election, when the full Senate Intelligence Committee was briefed for the first time, a number of members called for declassification of information. Much of that information would later be made public through the January 2017 *Intelligence Community Assessment.*

[1] The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, which establishes statutory reporting requirements, recognizes the "Gang of Eight" briefings only with regard to covert action and not to collection or analysis.

(U) Engaging the full congressional intelligence committees prior to the election would also have left a documentary record. Briefings and hearings would have been transcribed. Written questions would have been submitted and responded to. Follow up staff briefings would have been documented. And letters from members would have been drafted and sent. The result would have been historical accountability, for an administration legally obligated to keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed, and for members of Congress responsible to their constituents and their oaths of office. The public would know how their representatives responded to the attack. Historians would have a basis for future judgments. This report would have been very different.

(U) But among the insidious aspects of "Gang of Eight" briefings is the lack of a paper trail, which is why this report leaves so many questions largely unanswered. What, precisely, was shared with members of the "Gang of Eight" between August 11 and September 6, 2016? What was shared at the September 8, 2016, briefing with the "Gang of Eight" and the leaders of the homeland security committees? What did the administration ask of these members? How did members respond? Did members of Congress question classification decisions that impeded sharing with the full intelligence committees, the full Congress, state and local officials, and the public? And were members' subsequent public statements consistent with what they were briefed on?

(U) The report provides little information on what then-CIA Director John Brennan briefed the members of the "Gang of Eight." In 2017, Director Brennan testified publicly about the briefings:

> *The substance of those briefings was entirely consistent with the main judgments contained in the January [2017] classified and unclassified assessments namely, that Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton and harm her electability and potential presidency, and help President Trump's election chances.*[2]

(U) Absent a transcript, however, it is difficult to confirm what, exactly was conveyed to the members of the "Gang of Eight," or even whether the same information was provided at each of the separate individual briefings. The content of these briefings is critically important, however, as a measure both of the administration's adherence to statutory notification requirements and of members' responses to learning of this ongoing attack.

(U) The report provides a little more information about the September 8, 2016, briefing for the "Gang of Eight" and the leadership of the homeland security committees, but that information derives from interviews conducted almost a year after the fact. This briefing, which, despite the inclusion of additional members and the exclusion of key details, was still not provided to the full congressional intelligence committees, was not transcribed. The absence of a transcript is particularly troublesome because of the administration's request in that briefing for a public, bipartisan statement about Russian interference and the response to that request. The report conveys only that "some members" resisted and cites only the views of Senate Majority

[2] Testimony to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, May 23, 2017

Leader McConnell. Otherwise, the public record is limited to subsequent statements and letters from the attendees of the briefing.

(U) The missing details of these interactions are critically important because of what happened next. As the report describes, the Obama Administration believed that any public statements about Russian interference it might make would be seen as partisan, a concern that would be mitigated if members of Congress were to publicly support the available intelligence. I believe that warning the public about a foreign influence campaign should not depend on the support of both parties, particularly when one of the parties stands to gain politically from that campaign. But that is how the Obama Administration felt. As Avril Haines, the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs noted, as a result of the failure to elicit a bipartisan letter related to Russian interference, the administration "tempered our response options."

(U) The immediate result of the Republican refusal to publicly acknowledge Russian interference was the watered down letter to the president of the National Association of State Election Directors on September 28, 2016. That letter cited only "malefactors," a word that in no way conveyed the threat posed by a sophisticated nation state adversary like Russia. The letter, which also opposed the designation of election systems as critical infrastructure, failed to prompt a response proportional to the seriousness of the threat.

(U) The lack of a bipartisan public acknowledgment of the ongoing attack by Russia had other implications. If the Administration had informed the public of Russian hacking and dumping earlier than October 7, and had there been bipartisan condemnation of these operations, the public and the press may have reacted differently to the WikiLeaks releases. At the least, stories about Democratic emails might have mentioned that their release was part of a Russian influence campaign and that Donald Trump's repeated references to the releases, his stated adoration of WikiLeaks, and his solicitation of Russian assistance were taking place in the context of an ongoing influence campaign to assist him. Bipartisan public warnings of Russian interference might have alerted the public and the private sector to Russian social media influence operations and helped inoculate the public against those operations. Finally, clear, fact-based bipartisan statements about Russia's actions would have changed the public's understanding of how the very issue of Russian influence was being debated by the candidates ("No puppet. You're the puppet.")

(U) An acknowledgment of Russian influence operations, particularly operations intended to help Donald Trump, would have reflected poorly on the candidate and his campaign. But that should not have been a reason for the administration and members of Congress to withhold from the public warning of an ongoing attack by a foreign adversary. Nor should a political environment in which one candidate was questioning the legitimacy of the election with falsehoods ("large scale voter fraud") have been a reason to keep the public in the dark about real threats to America's democracy.

(U) The Committee's report describes a number of understandable challenges facing the Obama administration, including those related to understanding the relevant intelligence. But the administration's interactions with Congress, the public response –or lack thereof from

Republican leadership, and the paucity of public information represent a serious political breakdown. There are lessons to be learned from this history, many of which are reflected in the report's recommendations. But one must be explicit: when the country is under threat, the government has a particular responsibility to provide all relevant intelligence to the full congressional intelligence committees. Meaningful engagement between the two branches of government offers the best opportunity for bipartisan resistance to an attack from a foreign adversary and, absent that, accountability for any failures to defend the country.

(U) Finally, the concerns that I raised in my minority views in Volume I related to the lack of access by most Committee staff to relevant investigative materials have not been resolved. In this report, the Committee recommends that information about foreign influence campaigns be shared as broadly as possible. It is bizarre that the Committee would not heed its own recommendation and grant access to this information to its own staff, thereby remedying some of the very concerns I have identified in these views.

ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF SENATOR HEINRICH

(U) I voted to adopt Volume III of the Committee's Report on Russian Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election, which focuses on the U.S. government response to Russian activities. I also voted to publicly release the unclassified version of this volume. I commend the Committee's professional staff for their work and especially for their efforts to make sense of the tumultuous events that unfolded in the months before and after the 2016 U.S. election.

(U) As the report notes, the Committee knows far more about the scope of Russian activity now – with the benefit of hindsight and additional information – than the Obama administration knew in 2016. This volume is an attempt to bring together information drawn from interviews with key administration officials and classified and unclassified documents to tell the story of how Russia's interference was understood and addressed in real-time.

(U) While this volume might be one of the more robust publicly available accounts of the administration's actions in response to Russian interference, it should not be mistaken for a thorough historical record, as Sen. Wyden's minority views point out. The decision to limit engagement with Congress through the "Gang of Eight" mechanism meant that no formal records were kept of the various interactions between administration principals and congressional leaders. As a consequence, we cannot know precisely what was shared in these meetings or how members of Congress reacted.

(U) Limiting information only to a handful of members of Congress also constrained the administration's ability to build the bipartisan support necessary to credibly push back against Russian interference. While the administration was understandably worried that actions taken prior to the election might be perceived as partisan and undermine confidence in the election process, a show of broad bipartisan support for the validity of the intelligence could have alleviated some of those concerns.

(U) Finally, the volume includes recommendations to defend against Russian or other attempts to interfere in elections in 2020 and beyond. I agree with all of them. In particular, as discussed above, I agree that it is critical to share as broadly and as quickly as possible credible information about a foreign influence or active measures operation.

(U) I also agree wholeheartedly that "executive and legislative branch officials, regardless of party affiliation, should jointly and publicly reinforce the DNI's findings" regarding foreign intelligence threats to elections. As administration officials have warned publicly, these threats are evolving and increasing in sophistication – at the same time as political polarization in this country deepens. One way to reinforce the Intelligence Community's findings of foreign election interference is for Congress to work together to pass bipartisan election security legislation and other legislative measures that would signal a joint commitment to protecting our democratic institutions. Americans of all political affiliations deserve elected representatives who understand and act meaningfully on the threat of foreign election interference to our democracy.