

False Claims of Hacked Voter Information Likely Intended to Cast Doubt on Legitimacy of U.S. Elections

 ic3.gov/media/2020/200928.aspx



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Questions regarding this PSA should be directed to your local **FBI Field Office**.

Local Field Office Locations: www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices

The FBI and CISA are issuing this PSA as a part of a series on threats to the 2020 election to enable the American public to be prepared, patient, and participating voters.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) are issuing this announcement to raise awareness of the potential threat posed by attempts to spread disinformation regarding cyberattacks on U.S. voter registration databases or voting systems.

During the 2020 election season, foreign actors and cyber criminals are spreading false and inconsistent information through various online platforms in an attempt to manipulate public opinion, discredit the electoral process, and undermine confidence in U.S. democratic institutions. These malicious actors could use these forums to also spread disinformation suggesting successful cyber operations have compromised election infrastructure and facilitated the “hacking” and “leaking” of U.S. voter registration data.

In reality, much U.S. voter information can be purchased or acquired through publicly available sources. While cyber actors have in recent years obtained voter registration information, the acquisition of this data did not impact the voting process or the integrity of election results. In addition, the FBI and CISA have no information suggesting any

cyberattack on U.S. election infrastructure has prevented an election from occurring, compromised the accuracy of voter registration information, prevented a registered voter from casting a ballot, or compromised the integrity of any ballots cast.

Recommendations

- Seek out information from trustworthy sources, verify who produced the content, and consider their intent.
- Rely on state and local election officials for information about voter registration databases and voting systems.
- View early, unverified claims with a healthy dose of skepticism.
- Verify through multiple reliable sources any reports about compromises of voter information or voting systems, and consider searching for other reliable sources before sharing such information via social media or other avenues.
- Report potential election crimes—such as disinformation about the manner, time, or place of voting—to the FBI.
- If appropriate, make use of in-platform tools offered by social media companies for reporting suspicious posts that appear to be spreading false or inconsistent information about voter information or voting systems.

The FBI and CISA coordinate closely with federal, state, and local election partners and provide services and information to safeguard U.S. voting processes and maintain the integrity of U.S. elections. Both organizations urge the American public to critically evaluate the sources of the information they consume and to seek out reliable and verified information.

The FBI is responsible for investigating malign foreign influence operations and malicious cyber activity targeting election infrastructure and other U.S. democratic institutions. CISA is responsible for protecting the nation's critical infrastructure from physical and cyber threats and has provided voluntary guidance, training, exercises, and other resources to help state and local election officials secure their voter registration systems and data.

Victim Reporting and Additional Information

The FBI encourages the public to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to their local field office (www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices) or to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov). For additional assistance, best practices, and common terms, please visit the following websites:

- Protected Voices: www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/foreign-influence/protected-voices
- Election Crimes and Security: www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes/election-crimes-and-security
- #Protect2020: www.cisa.gov/protect2020