



**NATIONAL SITUATIONAL INFORMATION REPORT
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

Tradecraft Alert

Criminal Investigative Division (CID)

Approved for Release: 16 October 2018

NSIR Number: NSIR-00324152962

(U//FOUO) Threat Actors May Attempt to Suppress Voter Turnout Via Social Media Platforms

SOURCES: (U) US House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (House Intelligence Committee) Report, Clemson University, and Open Source Reporting

Summary: (U//FOUO) The FBI is releasing this report to raise the awareness of FBI partners and state and local election officials to the evolving threat of social media as a platform for threat actors to engage in voter suppression and to urge them to report such activity to the FBI.

Details: (U//FOUO) The FBI assesses threat actors may use social media, namely Facebook and Twitter, to suppress voter turnout by posting disinformation on when and how to vote in the 2018 midterm election. The FBI notes that, based on previous elections, voter suppression is likely to occur the day of or a few days before the election. The FBI has authority to investigate potential violations under Title 18 US Code § 241 (Conspiracy Against Rights Provided by the Constitution and Laws of the United States) and Title 18 US Code § 245 (Interference with Federally Protected Activities). The FBI will lead a multi-agency Election Day Command Post on 6 November 2018 from FBI Headquarters in order to organize the US Government's efforts to address criminal acts or threats to the 2018 Midterm Elections.^a

(U//FOUO) Warning: This is an information report, not finally evaluated intelligence. It is being shared for informational purposes but has not been fully evaluated, integrated with other information, interpreted, or analyzed. Receiving agencies are cautioned not to take actions based solely on this raw reporting unless the information is independently verified. A presumption of innocence still exists for any entity or person being reported on in this report.

(U//FOUO) Note: This product reflects the views of the CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE Division

^a (U) Traditional non-social media methods of voter suppression include robo-calls, flyers with incorrect voting information, and threats against voters.

- (U) During the 2016 presidential election, unknown actors posted false voting information on Twitter in both English and Spanish, according to records Twitter disclosed to the House Intelligence Committee (see text box).
- (U) On 8 November 2016, Election Day, a likely foreign actor posted on Twitter, “I literally can’t wait to vote for Trump tomorrow#TrumpForPresident,” likely in an attempt to suppress voter turnout by implying the election is the next day.

(U) Any reporting suggesting Election Day is other than the first Tuesday after November 1 is incorrect and possibly an attempt to suppress voter turnout. Similarly, FBI partners are advised that US citizens cannot vote online or by text on Election Day. Some states^b make exceptions in advance for voters who fall under the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Under those unique circumstances, overseas citizens and military personnel are allowed to return their absentee ballots via electronic transmissions, such as fax or email. Also, this November, overseas military personnel from West Virginia will be the first in the country to cast federal election ballots via a secure smartphone app.

(U) FBI partners are encouraged to contact their state and local board of elections or their local FBI office with any questions or concerns. Each FBI field office has an election crimes coordinator (ECC) who serves as the point of contact for any election-related issues, regardless of the specific nature of the threat (for example, public corruption, civil rights, cyber, or domestic terrorism). Each ECC has been provided with training and is required to establish liaison relationships with state election officials and state/local law enforcement.

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(U) Images With False Voting Information Posted on Twitter in 2016 Likely an Attempt to Suppress Voter Turnout

(U) The first image below, in Spanish, incorrectly states citizens are able to vote from home or at work by sending a text message to the number “59925.” The second image, in English, incorrectly implies citizens can vote by posting “Hillary” with the hashtag “#PresidentialElection” to Facebook or Twitter on Election Day.



(U) Source: Web site; US House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats; “2018_02_27_13_40_38_twitter_suppression-1;” February 2018; https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2018_02_27_13_40_38_twitter_suppression-1; accessed 30 July 2018; Source is a pdf document turned over by Twitter with voter suppression-related images the company claims to have removed.

^b (U) **Four states allow some voters to return ballots using a web-based portal:** Arizona, Colorado, Missouri and North Dakota. **Twenty states + DC allow some voters to return ballots via email or fax:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Washington and West Virginia. **Seven states allow some voters to return ballots via fax:** Alaska, California, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Texas.

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Product Title: (U//FOUO) Threat Actors May Attempt to Suppress Voter Turnout Via Social Media Platforms

Dated:

Customer Agency: _____

Relevance to Your Intelligence Needs

1. The product increased my knowledge of an issue or topic. (Check one)
- 5. Strongly Agree
 - 4. Somewhat Agree
 - 3. Neither Agree or Disagree
 - 2. Somewhat Disagree
 - 1. Strongly Disagree

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2. The product helped me decide on a course of action. (Check one)
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