

This morning the Committee will engage in an activity that is quite rare for us: An open hearing about an ongoing critical intelligence question – the role of Russian Active Measures, past and present. As many of you know, this Committee is conducting a thorough, independent and non-partisan review of the Russian Active Measures campaign conducted against the 2016 U.S. elections. Some of the intelligence provided to the Committee is extremely sensitive and requires that most of the work be conducted in secure settings to maintain the integrity of the information, and to protect the very sensitive sources and methods that gave us access to that intelligence.

However, the Vice Chairman and I understand the gravity of the issues we are reviewing and have decided it is crucial that we take the rare step of discussing publicly an ongoing intelligence question. That is why we have convened this second open hearing on the topic of Russian Active Measures, and I can assure you that to the extent possible, the Committee will hold additional open hearings on this issue. The American public – indeed, all democratic societies – need to understand that malign actors are using old techniques with new platforms to undermine our democratic institutions.

This hearing, entitled “Disinformation: A Primer in Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns” will consist of two panels and will provide a foundational understanding of Russian active measures and information operations campaigns. The first panel will examine the history and characteristics of those campaigns; the second panel will examine the role and capabilities of cyber operations in support of these activities.

Unfortunately, you will learn today that these efforts by Russia to discredit the United States and weaken the West are not new. These efforts are, in fact, at the heart of Russian – and previously, the Soviet Union – intelligence efforts. You will learn today that our community has been a target of Russian information warfare, propaganda, and cyber campaigns – and still is. The efforts our experts will outline today continue unabated. The takeaway from today’s hearing? We are all targets of a sophisticated and capable adversary – and we must engage in a whole-of-government approach to combat Russian active measures.

Today we will receive testimony from experts who have in some cases worked directly to respond to Active Measures, who understand the history and context of Active Measures, and whose significant experiences and knowledge will shed new light on the problem and provide useful context.

Doctors Godson and Rumer and Mr. Watts, we are grateful for your appearance today.

This afternoon we will reconvene and welcome witnesses who will discuss the technical side of the question – cyber operations, including computer network exploitation, social media and online propaganda activities and how they enable and promote Russian influence campaigns and information operations.

We have a full day ahead of us and I am confident that the testimony you will hear today will help to establish a foundational understanding of the problem as the Committee continues its inquiry into Russian activities.

Finally, I would like to commend the Vice Chairman for his dedication to the goals of the Committee's inquiry and to the integrity of the process. The Vice Chairman and I realize that if we politicize this process, our efforts will likely fail. The public deserves to hear the truth about possible Russian involvement in our elections, how they came to be involved, how we may have failed to prevent that involvement, what actions were taken in response – if any, and what we plan to do to ensure the integrity of future free elections at the heart of our democracy.

Gentlemen, I thank you again for being here and look forward to your testimony. I now turn to the Vice Chairman for any remarks he may have. .

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