Publications

<u>Senate Select Committee on Intelligence</u>

<u>July 3, 2018</u>

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) is conducting a bipartisan investigation into a wide range of Russian activities relating to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. While elements of the investigation are ongoing, the Committee is releasing initial, unclassified findings on a rolling basis as distinct pieces of the investigation conclude.

The Committee has concluded an in-depth review of the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) produced by CIA, NSA, and FBI in January of 2017 on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (*Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*; declassified version released January 6, 2017) and have initial findings to share with the American people.

- The ICA was a seminal intelligence product with significant policy implications. In line with its historical role, the Committee had a responsibility to conduct an in-depth review of the document.
- In conducting its examination, the Committee reviewed thousands of pages of source documents and conducted interviews with all the relevant parties—including agency heads, managers, and line analysts—who were involved in developing the analysis and drafting the assessment.
- The Committee is preparing a comprehensive, classified report detailing our conclusions regarding the ICA on Russian activities. That report, when complete, will be submitted for a classification review, and the unclassified version will be released to the public.

The Intelligence Community Assessment: Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections

Summary of Initial Findings

The Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) released in January 2017 assessed that Russian activities in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election represented a significant escalation in a long history of Russian attempts to interfere in U.S. domestic politics. This escalation was made possible by cyber-espionage and cyber-driven covert influence operations, conducted as part of a broader "active measures" campaign that included overt messaging through Russian-controlled propaganda platforms. The ICA revealed key elements of a comprehensive and multifaceted Russian campaign against the United States as it was understood by the U.S. Intelligence Community at the end of 2016.

President Obama in early December 2016 tasked the Intelligence Community with writing an assessment that would capture the existing intelligence on Russian interference in U.S. elections. By early January, the CIA, NSA, and FBI produced a joint assessment under the auspices of the ODNI, titled *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, which included both classified and unclassified versions. Only three agencies were represented in the drafting process because of the extreme sensitivity of the sources and methods involved.

<u>Initial Findings</u>

Summary

The Committee finds that the Intelligence Community met President Obama's tasking and that the ICA is a sound intelligence product. While the Committee had to rely on agencies that the sensitive information and accesses had been accurately reported, as part of our inquiry the Committee reviewed analytic procedures, interviewed senior intelligence officers well-versed with the information, and based our findings on the entire body of intelligence reporting included in the ICA.

The Committee finds the difference in confidence levels between the NSA and the CIA and FBI on the assessment that "Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances" appropriately represents analytic differences and was reached in a professional and transparent manner.

In all the interviews of those who drafted and prepared the ICA, the Committee heard consistently that analysts were under no politically motivated pressure to reach any conclusions. All analysts expressed that they were free to debate, object to content, and assess confidence levels, as is normal and proper for the analytic process.

As the inquiry has progressed since January 2017, the Committee has seen additional examples of Russia's attempts to sow discord, undermine democratic institutions, and interfere in U.S. elections and those of our allies.

Russian Efforts to Influence the 2016 Election

The ICA states that:

Russian efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election represent the most recent expression of Moscow's longstanding desire to undermine the U.S.-led liberal democratic order, but these activities demonstrated a significant escalation in directness, level of activity, and scope of effort compared to previous operations.[1]

- The Committee found that this judgment was supported by the evidence presented in the ICA. Since its publication, further details have come to light that bolster the assessment.
- The ICA pointed to initial evidence of Russian activities against multiple U.S. state or local electoral boards. Since the ICA was published, the Committee has learned more about

Russian attempts to infiltrate state election infrastructure, as outlined in the findings and recommendations the Committee issued in March 2018.

- While the ICA briefly discussed the activities of the Internet Research Agency, the Committee's investigation has exposed a far more extensive Russian effort to manipulate social media outlets to sow discord and to interfere in the 2016 election and American society.

Russian Leadership Intentions

The ICA states that:

We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.[2]

- The Committee found that the ICA provided a range of all-source reporting to support these assessments.
- The Committee concurs with intelligence and open-source assessments that this influence campaign was approved by President Putin.
- Further, a body of reporting, to include different intelligence disciplines, open source reporting on Russian leadership policy preferences, and Russian media content, showed that Moscow sought to denigrate Secretary Clinton.
- The ICA relies on public Russian leadership commentary, Russian state media reports, public examples of where Russian interests would have aligned with candidates' policy statements, and a body of intelligence reporting to support the assessment that Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for Trump.

The ICA also states that:

We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.[3]

- The Committee found that the ICA provided intelligence and open source reporting to support this assessment, and information obtained subsequent to publication of the ICA provides further support.
- This is the only assessment in the ICA that had different confidence levels between the participating agencies—the CIA and FBI assessed with "high confidence" and the NSA assessed with "moderate confidence"—so the Committee gave this section additional attention.

The Committee found that the analytical disagreement was reasonable, transparent, and openly debated among the agencies and analysts, with analysts, managers, and agency heads on both sides of the confidence level articulately justifying their positions.

Russian Cyber Operations

The ICA states that:

Russia's intelligence services conducted cyber operations against targets associated with the 2016 U.S. presidential election, including targets associated with both major U.S. political parties. We assess Russian intelligence services collected against the U.S . primary campaigns, think tanks, and lobbying groups they viewed as likely to shape future U.S. policies. In July 2015, Russian intelligence gained access to Democratic National Committee (DNC) networks and maintained that access until at least June 2016.[4]

- The Committee found this judgment supported by intelligence and further supported by our own investigation. Separate from the ICA, the Committee has conducted interviews of key individuals who have provided additional insights into these incidents.

Russian Propaganda

The ICA states that:

Russia's state-run propaganda machine—comprised of its domestic media apparatus, outlets targeting global audiences such as RT and Sputnik, and a network of quasi-governmental trolls— contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences.[5]

- The ICA provides a summary of Russian state media operations in 2012 and notes that RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik are coordinated Russian state platforms. The ICA fails to provide an updated assessment of this capability in 2016, which the Committee finds to be a shortcoming in the ICA, as this information was available in open source.
- The Committee notes that the ICA does not comment on the potential effectiveness of this propaganda campaign, because the U.S. Intelligence Community makes no assessments on U.S. domestic political processes.

Historical Context

The ICA states that:

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union used intelligence officers, influence agents, forgeries, and press placements to disparage candidates perceived as hostile to the Kremlin, according to a former KGB archivist…For decades, Russian and Soviet intelligence services have sought to collect insider information from U.S. political parties that could help Russian leaders understand a new U.S. administration's plans and priorities.[6]

- The Committee found the ICA's treatment of the historical context of Russian interference in U.S. domestic politics perfunctory.
- The unclassified ICA cites efforts to collect on the 2008 election and the Soviet recruitment of an activist who reported on Jimmy Carter's campaign in the 1970s, demonstrating two examples of Russian interest in U.S. elections. The ICA failed entirely to summarize historic collection by U.S. agencies as well as extensive open-source reporting—significant elements of which are derived from Russian intelligence archives—to present a more relevant historical context.

Counterintelligence Investigations

The ICA did not attempt to address potential counterintelligence investigations, for example, whether Russian intelligence services attempted to recruit sources with access to any campaign. The FBI had a collection of reports a former foreign intelligence officer was hired to compile as opposition research for the U.S. election, referred to as the "dossier," when the ICA was drafted. However, those reports remained separate from the conclusions of the ICA. All individuals the Committee interviewed verified that the dossier did not in any way inform the analysis in the ICA—including the key judgments—because it was unverified information and had not been disseminated as serialized intelligence reporting.

- The Committee will address the contents of the reports and their handling by the United States Government in a separate part of its report.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Finally, the Committee notes that, as is the case with all intelligence questions, information continues to be gathered and analyzed. The Committee believes the conclusions of the ICA are sound, and notes that collection and analysis subsequent to the ICA's publication continue to reinforce its assessments. The Committee will remain vigilant in its oversight of the ongoing challenges presented by foreign nations attempting to secretly influence U.S. affairs.

[1] Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.ii. (NOTE: all page numbers referenced are from the Unclassified ICA)

[2] Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.ii.

[3] Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.ii.

[4]Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.2.

[5]Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russia n Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.3.

[6] Intelligence Community Assessment: *Assessing Russia n Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, 6 January 2017. P.S.