



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

Hearing on “The Scourge of Russian Disinformation”

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building

Opening Statement of Senator Cory Gardner

This hearing of the Helsinki Commission will come to order. Welcome, and good morning to everyone. I am honored to speak on behalf of Senator Wicker, the Commission’s Chairman, and to preside over this hearing.

The Commission is mandated to monitor the compliance of participating states with consensus-based commitments of the OSCE. Today’s hearing focuses on the pressing issue of Russian disinformation and how it undermines the security and human rights of people in the OSCE region.

Disinformation is an essential part of Russia’s hybrid warfare against the United States and the liberal world order. As one of our distinguished panel witnesses today wrote in her recent article: “The Russian security state defines America as the primary adversary. The Russians know they cannot compete head-to-head with us—economically, militarily, technologically—so they create new battlefields. They are not aiming to become stronger than us, but to weaken us until we are equivalent.”

Through its active measures campaign that includes aggressive interference in Western elections, Russia aims to sow fear, discord, and paralysis that undermines democratic institutions and weakens critical Western alliances, such as NATO and the EU.

Russia’s ultimate goal is to replace the Western-led world order of laws and institutions with an authoritarian-led order that recognizes only masters and vassals. Our feeble response to Russian aggression in Ukraine and their interference in our elections has only emboldened the Kremlin to think that such a new world order is not only possible, but imminent.

We must not let Russian activities go with impunity. We must identify and combat them, utilizing every tool in our arsenal.

I am proud that my home state of Colorado is home to Fort Carson and the 10th Special Forces Group, an elite unit that has been at the tip of the spear in identifying and combating some of these malign Russian activities in European frontline states. I thank them for their important work, and for keeping our nation safe.

To help us lead our discussion today, I am pleased to introduce three distinguished witnesses.

Mr. John F. Lansing is the Chief Executive Officer and Director of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). He joined the BBG as CEO and Director in September 2015. Previously he was the President of Scripps Networks, where he is credited with guiding the company to become a leading developer of unique content across various media platforms.

Ms. Melissa Hooper is the current Director of Human Rights and Civil Society programs at Human Rights First. Ms. Hooper's research focuses on Russia's foreign policy strategies of spreading Russian influence and undermining democratic institutions in Eastern Europe, and how these strategies intersect with existing autocratic trends.

Ms. Molly McKew is an expert on information warfare and Russian disinformation policies. She currently heads an independent consulting firm, Fianna Strategies, advising governments and political parties on foreign policy and strategic communications. She has extensive regional experience, advising both Georgian and Moldovan governments. She also writes extensively on issues pertaining to Russian information warfare.

We will begin with Mr. Lansing who will offer his testimony and inform us what the BBG is doing to counter Russian disinformation in the OSCE region. We will then move onto to Ms. McKew's testimony where she will discuss information warfare and Russia's activity in this space. Finally, Ms. Hooper will present her analysis of Russian disinformation's influence over the German elections and its potential influence over future elections in Europe.

So, thank you to these distinguished members of today's expert panel for joining us today, and I look forward to our discussion as we strive to better understand this serious threat.

We may now begin with testimony by Mr. Lansing.