

GARY C. PETERS, MICHIGAN, CHAIRMAN

THOMAS R. CARPER, DELAWARE  
MAGGIE HASSAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
KYRSTEN SINEMA, ARIZONA  
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA  
ALEX PADILLA, CALIFORNIA  
JON OSSOFF, GEORGIA

ROB PORTMAN, OHIO  
RON JOHNSON, WISCONSIN  
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY  
JAMES LANKFORD, OKLAHOMA  
MITT ROMNEY, UTAH  
RICK SCOTT, FLORIDA  
JOSH HAWLEY, MISSOURI

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

DAVID M. WEINBERG, STAFF DIRECTOR  
PAMELA THIESSEN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
LAURA W. KILBRIDE, CHIEF CLERK

November 15, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20528-0525

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

On August 29, 2022, I sent you a letter detailing concerns with DHS' affirmation of and subsequent response to an Office of Inspector General report, which recommended centralizing disinformation policing under the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans. The report came after the Homeland Security Advisory Council's (HSAC) preliminary findings on July 18, 2022, which determined that there is "no need" for the Disinformation Governance Board's existence. My letter to you asked a number of questions to exercise needed Congressional oversight over such work. As of the date of this letter, I have not received a reply to the August 29 letter.

Now, new reports and documentation show that DHS is going even further by seeking to expand disinformation authority across several sub-agencies in the Quadrennial Homeland and Security Review. The expansion is a disturbing trend where the federal government goes from combatting foreign interference to controlling national narratives and debate under the guise of security. DHS appears to be taking such steps by entrenching disinformation police throughout many of its critical missions and speaking into contentious areas like the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The concerns are further compounded by reports that DHS is continuing to coordinate with private technology and social media companies to deem what is disinformation. As a result, many citizens are rightfully troubled about the slow creep of information control.

DHS hasn't given Congress and the American people clear answers about its full intent to combat disinformation. Instead Members of Congress are left to read news reports and leaked documents from whistleblowers that paint a politicized attempt to silence certain viewpoints. I urge you to set expansion of disinformation authorities aside and provide timely answers to Congress.

Included for your review is the letter I originally sent on August 29, 2022 with a requested response date of September 9, 2022. In light of new reports regarding DHS' efforts to expand disinformation authority, please answer the following questions no later than November 30, 2022.

- Please detail how DHS plans to use advanced data analytics technology and what sub-departments are going to be tasked with implementation and oversight of the technology.
- What, if any, public-private partnerships is DHS planning to enter into for analyzing data on online platforms?
- Please detail the process that DHS and Facebook have created to report disinformation. Is Meta's third party fact checking program involved in DHS' work to report disinformation? If so, in what role?
- Please list the NGOs that DHS is consulting or contracting with to assess the impacts of disinformation. Additionally, please detail what funding is being used for such purposes.

- Please provide a detailed chart on any new roles and responsibilities of each DHS office and component for combatting disinformation. Additionally, please detail how of each expansion in authority aligns with the mission of DHS.
- Do the definitions of "disinformation" and "misinformation" change depending on the authority of the office or component?
- Please detail how DHS decided to target disinformation on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Additionally, please list examples of disinformation about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and what authority decides whether the information is inaccurate.
- Please detail DHS' continued role regarding COVID-19 disinformation and origins of the pandemic.
- Please provide a chart detailing the roles and responsibilities of Under Secretary Silvers regarding combatting disinformation at DHS.
- Please provide the difference of missions between the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force and DHS' work to combat disinformation.
- Please provide the difference of missions between the State Department's Global Engagement Center and DHS's work to combat disinformation.

In God We Trust,



James Lankford  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government Operations  
and Border Management