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The Russia Investigation: What's New

September 25, 2017



Mark Zuckerberg **TechCrunch / Flickr (CC BY 2.0)**

The U.S. Federal Government Notifies 21 States Their Voting Systems Were Hacked

A year after the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) first expressed concerns, the U.S. federal government informed 21 states on Friday that hackers possibly connected to Russia had targeted their voting systems, the Associated Press reported.

The news agency said that key swing states including Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin were among 21 to have their balloting systems targeted, though voter data and election results were not necessarily tampered with, U.S. officials said.

Law-makers were reportedly angry about a delay in the report's publication, after a months-long effort to obtain confirmation of the hacks by U.S. Senator Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat who leads a bi-partisan Senate investigation of Russia's interference in the elections.

“It is completely unacceptable that it has taken DHS over a year to inform our office of Russian scanning of our systems, despite our repeated requests for information,” California Secretary of State Alex Padilla was cited by BuzzFeed as saying.

Embed:

> DHS in future must notify states of attempted election hacking in real time, not a year later. And all states must fortify election systems. https://t.co/hJTof1bG0V
>
> — Adam Schiff (@RepAdamSchiff) September 22, 2017

Facebook to Turn Over 3,000 Russian 'Troll' Ads to Congress

Facebook has reportedly agreed to turn over to Congress ads linked to Russian companies suspected of interference in the U.S. election, notably the Internet Research Agency, known as the Kremlin “troll far."

Related article: Kremlin Says It Doesn't Know Who Buys Political Ads on Facebook

"This has been a difficult decision,” Colin Stretch, Facebook's general counsel said in a blog post. Disclosing content is not something we do lightly under any circumstances."

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg last year dismissed the idea that fake news, which he characterized as "a very small amount" of the social media platform’s content could have an impact, calling it "a pretty crazy idea."

But on Sept. 6, with concern mounting over anonymous political ads, Facebook's management admitted it had found 3,000 Russia-related ads connected to 470 inauthentic accounts and pages which had spent $100,000 in violation of its policies.

"We are in a new world," Zuckerberg said in a live broadcast and post on his Facebook Friday. "It is a new challenge for internet communities to deal with nation states attempting to subvert elections."

Google, Twitter, Reddit and Other Internet Companies May Be Drawn Into U.S. Investigation of Russian Election Interference

A U.S. Congressional investigation into Russia's involvement in the 2016 presidential election may go beyond Facebook, a member of the committee and the top Democrat leading the investigation told technology news site Recode Sept. 20.

“Just as the case with Facebook ... I think the Russians actively used Twitter accounts,” Warner said, adding that he believes Twitter doesn't screen out as many anonymous or fake accounts as Facebook.

He also expressed concern about the popular news-sharing site Reddit and possible manipulation of Google search results related to the election.

Senator Warner plans to hold a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in October, at which the tech giants would testify, although a date has not been set nor have the Internet companies received invitations to testify, said Recode.

Mueller Asks White House to Turn Over Air Force One Phone Records Related to Meeting with Russian Lawyer at Trump Tower

Special Counsel Robert Mueller, leading a probe into the relations of the Trump campaign to Russia, has requested that the White House turn over phone records from Air Force One, the presidential plane, related to a June meeting between Trump's son and a Russian lawyer, the U.S. news site The Hill reported.

President Donald Trump initially drafted a statement about his son's meeting while flying home from Germany on July 8, saying the lawyer, Natalya Veselnitskaya, a former Moscow Region prosecutor and counsel to the Russian-owned Prevezon Holdings in a U.S. money-laundering case "had primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children."

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