Workshop 5

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Defend, Detect, and Recover:

Countering the Threat of Interference in Election Infrastructure

Throughout 2020, the Paris Call Community for Countering Election Interference–led by the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD), the Government of Canada, and Microsoft in support of the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace–convened a series of multi-stakeholder workshops, each addressing a critical topic related to preventing interference in the electoral process. The outcomes below are a first glimpse at some of the key observations made by practitioners during these workshops. A more in-depth overview of best practices is planned for early 2021.

Protecting election infrastructure is essential to countering election interference. Here are some best practices we heard from stakeholders across government, industry, the media, and civil society to achieve this before, during, and after elections.

Protect Voter Registration Systems

- Consider encrypted backups, including encrypted remote mirrored sites, and paper backups.
- Restrict access to voter registration systems. Follow the principle of least privilege—an individual should be given only the privileges within a technical system that are needed to complete a task.

Support Electronic Poll Books and Quick Paper-Based Voting Systems

- There are advantages to electronic pollbooks and paper-based voting systems that quickly count ballots (i.e. scanners) and can be audited.
- Electronic pollbooks allow quicker voting and real-time synchronization to help reliably record that a voter has checked in, cast a ballot, and not voted more than once.
- But electronic pollbooks can fail, so stock back-up materials such as paper pollbooks and envelopes for voters to vote provisionally.

Keep Voting Technology Up to Date

- Have plans to periodically replace voting technology to prevent the use of outdated or insecure voting systems.

Implement Audits to Boost Confidence in Election Results

- Risk-limiting audits offer advantages over traditional audits. They are more efficient, they are dynamic, and they confirm only the winner, not the margin by which the winner won since this type of audit checks a statistically significant sample, rather than a full count.

Allow Cybersecurity Firms to Support Election Campaigns

- Campaigns frequently do not have the expertise or capacity to handle cybersecurity issues on their own.

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