

Senate Intel Vice Chair Warner on Mueller Indictment of Russian Troll Farm

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, issued the following statement today after the Special Counsel announced the [indictment](#) of 13 Russian nationals and three Russian companies for criminally interfering with the 2016 U.S. presidential election:

“The Senate Intelligence Committee, as a part of our bipartisan investigation into Russia’s interference in the 2016 election, has been focused on uncovering and exposing the role that social media disinformation played in that effort.

“I’m glad to see that work vindicated today by the Special Counsel’s indictment of the ‘Internet Research Agency,’ the Russian troll farm that was a key component of Russia’s attempts to interfere in the U.S. elections in 2016, and which continues to spew divisive and false content aimed at undermining the United States. With this indictment, the Special Counsel and his team have taken an important step to hold Russia accountable.

“As we heard [this week](#) from the nation’s top intelligence officials, Russia is still using social media to attack our democratic institutions and sow division amongst Americans. In Tuesday’s hearing, I was frustrated to hear that there is still no one leading a coordinated, organized effort within the intelligence community to monitor and combat Russian disinformation campaigns on social media. As Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I will continue pressing the nation’s intelligence leaders and the social media companies to be far more aggressive and proactive in responding to this threat.

“While platforms like Facebook and Twitter are allowing Americans to communicate and share ideas in ways unimaginable just a decade ago,

we’re also learning that we each bear some responsibility for exercising good judgment and a healthy amount of skepticism when it comes to the things we read and share on social media.”

Sen. Warner has been a leader in recognizing the challenges posed by Russian use of social media. While companies like Facebook and Twitter initially denied that Russia used their platforms to influence the 2016 election, Warner publicly and privately pressed the companies to conduct thorough internal investigations of Russian misinformation and disinformation. In September, Facebook [announced](#) that the Internet Research Agency purchased approximately \$100,000 worth of advertisements in connection with the 2016 election. Later estimates from the company found that as many as 150 million Americans may have been exposed to content from the Internet Research Agency. Twitter has [also announced](#) that at least 1.4 million people on Twitter engaged with content created by Russian trolls during the 2016 presidential election, and Google has uncovered [evidence](#) of Russian ad purchases and other activity on its platforms such as YouTube.

Russian use of misinformation and disinformation was the prime topic of the very first public hearing held by the Senate Intelligence Committee as part of its investigation. On March 30, 2017 – almost one year ago – the Committee held an open hearing on “[Disinformation: A Primer in Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns](#).” On November 1, 2017, the Senate Intelligence Committee [held a public hearing](#) with the top legal officials from the three companies on “[Social Media Influence in the 2016 U.S. Elections](#).”

In October, Sen. Warner introduced [bipartisan legislation](#), the *Honest Ads Act*, to help prevent foreign interference in future elections and improve the transparency of online political advertisements.

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