



*Issued 7/18/18*

## **NSA and Cyber Command to Coordinate Actions to Counter Russian Election Interference in 2018**

The head of the nation's largest electronic spy agency and the military's cyberwarfare arm has directed the two organizations to coordinate actions to counter potential Russian interference in the 2018 midterm elections. The move, announced to staff at the National Security Agency last week by NSA Director Paul Nakasone, is an attempt to maximize the efforts of the two groups and comes as President Trump in Helsinki on Monday said Russian President Vladimir Putin was "extremely strong and powerful" in denying Russian involvement in the presidential election two years ago. It is the latest initiative by national security agencies to push back against Russian aggression in the absence of direct guidance from the White House on the issue. "Nakasone, and the heads of the other three-letter agencies, are doing what they can in their own lanes, absent an overall approach directed by the president," said Michael V. Hayden, who has headed the NSA and the CIA. "As good as it is, it's not good enough. This is not a narrowly defined cyberthreat. This is one of the most significant strategic national security threats facing the United States since 9/11." Nakasone stated that one of the most disturbing facts is that the United States' adversaries, including Russia, "don't fear us." On Friday, the same day that special counsel Robert S. Mueller III announced the indictment of 12 Russian military intelligence officers for hacking Democrats' emails, Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats issued a new alert on Russia. "The warning lights are blinking red again," he said, also likening them to the danger signs that presaged the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. "Today, the digital infrastructure that serves this country is

literally under attack,” he said, adding that if Russia continues to assault the United States in cyberspace, the government should “throw everything we have got into it.” Nakasone wants to better coordinate NSA intelligence-gathering on Russian cyberactivities and CyberCom’s plans to thwart Kremlin operations. When directed by the president or defense secretary, the military unit, located at Fort Meade with the NSA, may also take offensive action such as disrupting an adversary’s computer networks. The joint CyberCom-NSA Russia group is working with the FBI, the CIA and Department of Homeland Security, each of which has its own initiative to detect and deter Russian influence operations. FBI Director Christopher A. Wray last year set up the foreign-influence task force to counter such attempts. It works closely with DHS, which has its own task force focused on election security — with an eye to the midterms — and has worked with state and local authorities on the issue.