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# **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

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## **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS [DATE]**



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# **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

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## **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS [DATE]**



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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

January 31, 2022

**ACTION**

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY**

**FROM:** Robert Silvers  
Under Secretary  
Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans

Jennifer Daskal  
Acting Principal Deputy General Counsel

**ROBERT P  
SILVERS**

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**JENNIFER C  
DASKAL**

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**SUBJECT: Disinformation Governance Board Charter**

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**Purpose:** To obtain your approval of the charter for the Disinformation Governance Board.

**Background:** On September 29, 2021, you directed headquarters and Component leadership to pursue a governance board model to coordinate efforts to counter mis-, dis-, and mal-information (MDM) across the Department.<sup>1</sup> You emphasized the need for clarity as to the Department's policies, standards, and best practices related to MDM work. You also concluded that operational efforts to counter MDM should largely be carried out by Components, which would be responsible for their respective mission areas subject to the oversight of the governance board.

Based on that guidance, we developed the attached charter for a DHS Disinformation Governance Board ("the Board") to execute this critical work. The Board will ensure Departmental efforts to counter MDM are coordinated, deconflicted, and harmonized. The Board's primary roles are to develop and support the implementation of best practices, policies, and protocols that support the identification, assessment, response, and resilience to MDM threats, and that do so in a way that ensures respect for privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. The Board will also support and coordinate, in conjunction with the relevant Components, MDM work with other departments and agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental actors. In addition, the Board will support research and development efforts to understand the MDM threat to homeland security.

The Board will be co-chaired by representatives of the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans (PLCY) and the Office of the General Counsel. Members will include components engaged in

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<sup>1</sup> This model is presented as Option 2 in the September 13, 2021 memorandum 'Organizing DHS Efforts to Counter Disinformation.'

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counter-MDM activities or that provide oversight and support for such activities. Members will be represented by the principal or deputy for their respective Component/Offices.

The Board will meet no less than once per quarter for the first two years of its existence. It will be supported by a Steering Group, consisting of representatives designated by each Member. A senior official from within PLCY will serve as Executive Director for the Board and Chair of the Steering Group, to be supported by an Executive Secretariat comprised of staff detailed or assigned to PLCY. As we build, we may enlist your office's support in obtaining detailees or other staffing.

The Charter has been coordinated with all DHS components that will be Members of the Board.

For your awareness, we attach a copy of the MDM Playbook that PLCY, together with components, developed for countering MDM in a unified way across the Department in the context of the current situation in Ukraine. We are enthusiastic about the further work that the Disinformation Governance Board can accomplish.

**Timeliness:** We request your signature of the charter as soon as practicable.

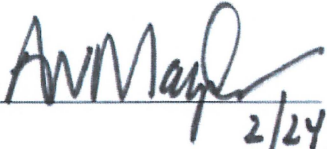
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**Recommendation:** Approve the charter for the Disinformation Governance Board.

Approve/date  2/24/22 Disapprove/date \_\_\_\_\_

Modify/date \_\_\_\_\_ Needs discussion/date \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachments:**

- A. Disinformation Governance Board Charter
- B. Ukraine MDM Playbook
- C. 'Organizing DHS Efforts to Counter Disinformation' (September 13, 2021)

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**DHS Disinformation Governance Board**  
**Charter**

**Section 1. Purpose**

The DHS Disinformation Governance Board (“Board”) will guide and support the Department’s efforts to address mis-, dis-, and mal-information that threatens homeland security (“MDM”). Whereas Department Components will lead on operational responses to MDM in their relevant mission spaces, the Board will ensure DHS efforts are coordinated, deconflicted, and harmonized, both within DHS and across the interagency, to ensure efficiency, unity of effort, and promotion of applicable compliance and best practices.

The Board will focus on the following four cross-functional lines of effort to counter MDM, many of which are already underway (“lines of effort”): (1) identifying MDM (“Identification”); (2) assessing and analyzing the risk that such MDM poses to homeland security (“Risk Assessment”); (3) responding to these MDM threats (“Response”); and (4) building resilience to MDM (“Building Resilience”).

With respect to each of these lines of effort, the Board will develop and support the implementation of governance policies and protocols that, among other issues, protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties; harmonize and support coordination with other departments and agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations; and support research and development efforts to assess and combat MDM.

**Section 2. Members**

The Board will be co-chaired by representatives of the Office for Strategy, Policy, and Plans (PLCY) and the Office of the General Counsel (OGC). Standing Board members will be representatives of the following DHS Components: the Management Directorate (MGMT); Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A); Science and Technology Directorate (S&T); Privacy Office (PRIV); Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL); Office of Public Affairs (OPA); Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA); Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Representatives shall be the Principal or Deputy for their respective Component. Other Components may be invited to either join the Board or participate on an ad hoc basis, as appropriate and needed.

**Section 3. Structure**

The Board will be supported by a Steering Group, which will consist of a representative from each Component participating in the Board. Each representative will be selected by their respective Board member.



The Board co-chairs will designate a DHS senior official to serve as the Executive Director for the Board and Chair of the Steering Group. The Executive Director will be detailed or assigned to PLCY, where they will be supported by an Executive Secretariat for the Board comprising staff detailed or assigned to PLCY. The Executive Director will attend and may participate in all Board meetings.

#### **Section 4. Board Responsibilities**

Components will lead on MDM-related operational responses and other efforts to counter MDM in their relevant mission spaces. The Board will serve as the central forum in the Department to ensure consistent governance and coordination of such efforts, and adherence to applicable constitutional, statutory, and regulatory authorities and obligations.

The Board's initial responsibilities will include a review of existing MDM governance policies and practices across the Department, including:

- policies, procedures, practices, plans, and standards to ensure compliance with applicable constitutional, statutory, and regulatory obligations;
- policies, procedures, practices, plans, and standards to ensure appropriate privacy and civil rights and civil liberties protections;
- policies, procedures, practices, plans, and standards for interactions with the private, non-profit, and academic sectors; and,
- relevant procurement policies and practices.

Based, in part, on the findings from its initial review, the Board will be responsible for developing MDM-related guidance, best practices, and recommendations regarding:

- compliance with applicable constitutional, statutory, and regulatory obligations;
- standards for and implementation of appropriate privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections;
- procurement guidelines for contracting or funding third parties to support the Department's MDM efforts;
- grant funding and cooperative agreements;
- development and implementation of new technological and data management tools; and,
- any other applicable guidance, best practices, and recommendations to guide the aforementioned four lines of effort.

The Board also will coordinate, deconflict, and harmonize departmental efforts to address MDM, including by:

- receiving regular and routine updates from DHS Components, the Intelligence Community, and other interagency partners on MDM;
- harmonizing and deconflicting activities by DHS Components regarding the lines of effort;
- harmonizing, deconflicting, and coordinating, in conjunction with relevant Components, the Department's external engagement regarding MDM;

- serving as the Department's internal and external point of contact for coordination with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, the private sector, and non-governmental actors regarding MDM; and,
- serving as the Department's internal and external point of contact for receiving, coordinating, responding to, and interacting with interagency partners, including the Executive Office of the President, for policy matters generally related to mis-, dis-, and mal-information, but not related to the performance of intelligence activities.

## **Section 5. Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members**

The co-chairs of the Board will:

- convene the Board as needed;
- approve the agenda for Board meetings;
- preside over Board meetings;
- approve summaries of conclusions reached during the Board meetings;
- communicate Board decisions and activities to the Secretary and other DHS leadership, as appropriate;
- represent the Board to external audiences; and,
- take all other actions necessary and proper for the execution of the Board's responsibilities.
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The Board Members will:

- represent the perspectives of their respective Components at Board meetings;
- review any proposals submitted to the Board; and,
- ensure that their respective Components implement, execute, and follow Board decisions.

The Executive Director will:

- propose agenda items and discussion topics for the Board following Steering Group review;
- communicate the positions taken at the Steering Group concerning proposals before the Board;
- propose summaries of conclusion for each Board and Steering Group meeting;
- implement and execute Board decisions through the Steering Group;
- supervise the activities of the Executive Secretariat; and,
- represent the Steering Group and, where appropriate and in coordination with the co-chairs, the Department to external audiences on MDM-related matters.

The Steering Group Members will:

- represent the perspectives of their respective Components at Steering Group meetings;
- review and discuss any proposals to be submitted to the Board;
- communicate their considerations of Board proposals to their respective Board Members, the Executive Director, and other members of the Steering Group;



- review and approve summaries of conclusions of Steering Group meetings; and,
- subject to the direction and guidance of their respective Board Members, help ensure that their respective Components implement, execute, and follow Board decisions.

#### **Section 6. Processes & Procedures**

The Board will meet regularly at the discretion of the co-chairs and no less than once per quarter for the first two years of the Board's existence. The Steering Group will meet at the discretion of the Board or Executive Director. Issues raised and proposals submitted to the Board will be resolved by consensus to the greatest extent possible. Where there is a disagreement amongst the Board members, the Board will resolve the matter before it by majority vote. In the absence of consensus, any Board member may elevate, in the form of a written memorandum, an issue to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary where they believe that a decision made by the Board implicates their statutory or other assigned authorities.

The Steering Group is not a voting body. Instead, its members will discuss all issues brought before it and make their recommendations to the Board. Steering Group members will support the development of consensus recommendations to the Board to the greatest extent possible.

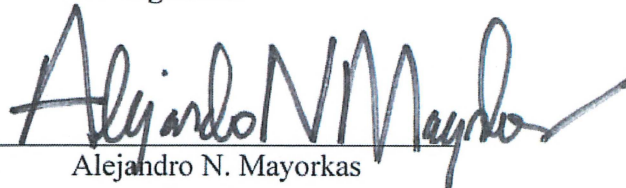
#### **Section 7. Relationship to Other Departmental Governance Bodies**

The Board will serve as the departmental forum for governance of DHS policies, plans, procedures, standards, and activities pertaining to MDM that threatens homeland security. As such, all DHS-wide or Component-specific proposals for funding related to efforts to counter MDM should be appropriately coordinated with the Board, including in advance of submitting any final funding proposals. Matters raised before the Board may implicate other departmental governance fora already in existence. Where that occurs, the Board will coordinate its activities with those respective fora through the Executive Director.

#### **Section 8. Effective Date**

This charter will go into effect when signed by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

#### **Section 9. Signature**

  
Alejandro N. Mayorkas

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Feb. 24, 2022  
Date