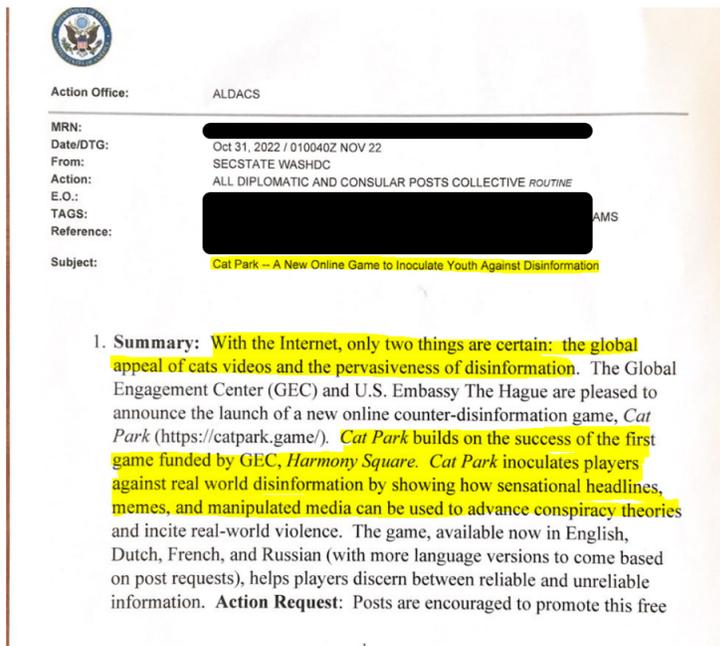


US Gov't Funding 'Disinformation' Video Game 'Cat Park', Leaked State Dept Memo Reveals

“With the Internet, only two things are certain: the global appeal of cat videos and the pervasiveness of disinformation.”

So begins a government memorandum recently circulated by the US State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) titled: “Cat Park – A New Online Game to Inoculate Youth Against Disinformation,” [recently obtained](#) by America First Legal and reviewed by Foundation for Freedom Online.

The memo, dated Oct. 31, 2022, details a government plan to roll out a new taxpayer-funded online game called *Cat Park*. The game is billed as a product that “inoculates players against real world disinformation by showing how sensational headlines, memes, and manipulated media can be used to advance conspiracy theories and incite real-world violence.”



However, there is more going on here than a simple cat-themed video game.

As this report will explain, the GEC appears to be using taxpayer dollars to fund “[behavioral modification](#)” propaganda games intended to make young people around the world view populist content online as being de facto “disinformation.”

To understand the full story, we will explore the *Cat Park* game itself, break down the GEC memo, and then reveal the bigger picture of where this all came from and what's behind it.

Cat Park: 'Vaccinating' Young People Against Distrust In The Government

Aimed at young people aged 15 years and up, *Cat Park* purports to be a “noir adventure” where a player takes on “the role of a disinformation agent recruited into a shadowy social media pressure campaign.”

In the game’s plot, the player assumes the role of a social media user who makes memes and news headlines to energize local citizens to stop the construction of a local park for cats (hence, *Cat Park*). Then, the player, realizing they have been *spreading disinformation*, must repent for their memes that resulted in the park getting canceled.

The major crux of plot tension in the game is the concern that the cat park being built by the city’s mayor ostensibly only serves the city’s upper-income residents. Thus, populist resentment lurks within the lower-income strata at the city who believe their own needs are being neglected by government officials.

Thus, as a “disinformation” purveyor, the player represents the “anti-park” movement, and begins the game by generating grievances against the park’s construction.

See screen-record videos below for an illustration:

[Cat Park - Generate Headlines About Elitist Pets \(rumble.com\)](#)

[Cat Park - Generate Headlines About Burning Money \(rumble.com\)](#)

In case that’s unclear, the generation of the “news headlines” below is framed as an evil act of disruptive populists engaged in a divisive campaign to disrupt the city’s peace:



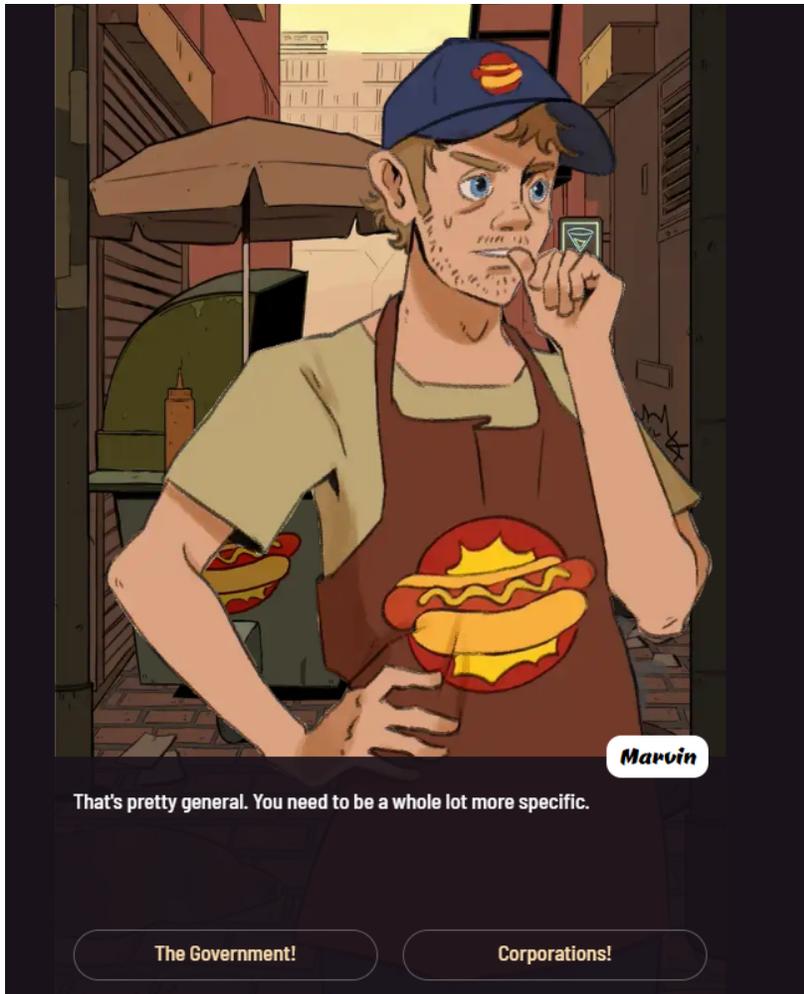
Can you believe the city is
BURNING MONEY ON a
cat park?!

So right away, this government-funded game establishes a moral framework in which complaining about wasteful spending by government elites – spending which comes at the expense of “improving city roads,” “objections of locals” and “our kids” — is framed as *spreading disinformation*.

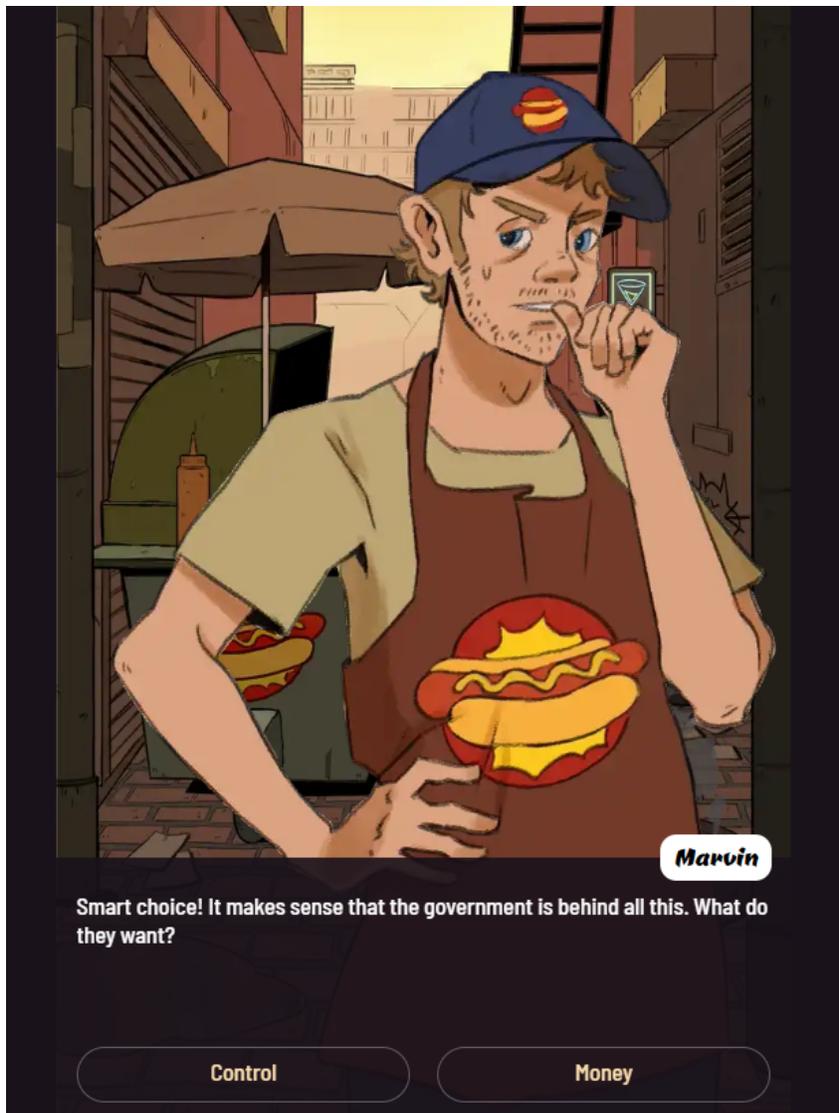
It is almost as if the government is using the video game of *Cat Park* to get young people to subliminally believe that opposing the government is only done by *disinformation purveyors*.

How convenient for the government that this government-funded game has such a plot!

This anti-populist, pro-establishmentarian theme of *Cat Park* permeates every scene in the game. For example, the player meets a zealous working class citizen, Marvin, who runs a local hot dog stand and opposes the cat park’s construction. Marvin instructs the player to create a “cat conspiracy” theory about elites in government, or elites in corporations, being behind the new project:



The in-game exercise then has the player assign a deliberately false motive to the elites behind the cat park construction, making up a conspiracy about “money” or “control.”



The point here is to subliminally train young people to associate social media posts alleging government corruption as being “fake news”, just like such claims are revealed to be “fake news” in *Cat Park*.

The player in the game is first forced to make anti-government memes, then is ultimately forced by the plot to repent for the damage caused by making those memes.

While in the role of a disinformation purveyor, the player is told to start “[a meme war](#)” and “[Make sure to point out how ridiculous this cat park is!](#)”

The “disinformation memes” the player makes include memes making allusions to the city’s local government acting like the The Party out of the dystopian novel, *1984*:

WHEN THE CITY SPENDS MONEY ON CAT PARKS



INSTEAD OF ON FUNCTIONING ROADS

[Check meme](#)

This all has the effect of making challenges to corrupt government practices seem ridiculous and part of a fraudulent subversive campaign by disinformation spreaders.

The 1984-ish irony of the government funding a dystopic cat-themed video game associating 1984 with censorable “disinformation” is, however, wholly lost on the GEC.

To make the irony complete, this propaganda video game designed to create “[behavioral modification](#)” in young people so that they never believe conspiracy theories ends with a conspiracy theory against the other side. As it turns out, the entire disinformation campaign the player embarked on was all secretly planned by an eccentric billionaire organizing the city’s populists from the shadows:



It is this shady populist organizer figure who pushes the player to “[push the anti-park movement to the next level](#),” which includes mobilizing aggrieved citizens to shut the park down.

This reveal has the effect of making young people subtly associate social media posts expressing dissatisfaction with government with fraudulent, astroturfed billion-dollar operations — rather than genuine citizens mobilizing for reform of corrupt government practices.

Inoculation Theory

As the leaked GEC memo makes clear, the exercises and subliminally embedded messaging contained in *Cat Park* are deliberately based on so-called “inoculation theory.”

“Much as vaccinations work by exposing subjects to an innocuous strain of a virus in order to trigger an immune response”, the GEC memo says, “empirical studies indicate that the controlled experience of responding to disinformation through a game can build cognitive resistance to disinformation in the real world. This concept is also known as ‘pre-bunking.’”

The Cat’s Meow: How *Cat Park* Inoculates Against Disinformation

7. *Cat Park* is based on “inoculation theory” research, pioneered by the University of Cambridge’s Social Decision-Making Lab. Much as vaccinations work by exposing subjects to an innocuous strain of a virus in order to trigger an immune response, empirical studies indicate that the controlled experience of responding to disinformation through a game can build cognitive resistance to disinformation in the real world. This concept is also known as “pre-bunking.” Rather than simply waiting for lies to spread and then debunking them with strategic messaging or fact-checks, the goal of *Cat Park* is to proactively educate public audiences about common disinformation techniques, so players are better prepared to spot fake news no matter what form it takes.

The GEC worked closely with the University of Cambridge’s “Social Decision-Making Lab” to produce *Cat Park*. Per its [website](#), the Social Decision-Making Lab has long been at work trying to create “[A Psychological Vaccine Against Fake News](#)”:

EMBED: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jqt7B857ooM>

According to the GEC memo, the Social-Decision Making Lab found that after playing *Cat Park*, “players are 19 percentage points more likely than a control group to spot disinformation and 15 percentage points less likely to want to share disinformation after playing.”

Source:

8. In analysis of *Cat Parks*'s efficacy conducted by the University of Cambridge, researchers found that individual players are 19 percentage points more likely than a control group to spot disinformation and 15 percentage points less likely to want to share disinformation after playing. A media literacy lesson plan for the game will be downloadable from the game's website soon.



Cat Park Hot Headlines prompts players to craft a sensational headline

However, as we highlighted above, *Cat Park* is not really about spotting disinformation. Rather, it is about creating a strong psychological aversion in young people to social media posts associated with populist political sentiments or airing grievances against government.

So the success of *Cat Park* appears to be measured by whether young people are “vaccinated” against populism after playing the game — not by whether they are “vaccinated” against so-called “fake news.”

The final frame at the end of *Cat Park* links to the “[Inoculation.Science](#)” website, [maintained by two UK universities](#): University of Cambridge and University of Bristol.

To appreciate the entrenched political bias and partisan targeting of Cambridge’s Social Decision-Making Lab, recent “disinformation research” from them [includes](#):

- Targeting US conservatives: [Meta-analysis reveals that accuracy nudges have little to no effect for US conservatives](#);
- Targeting “climate changed deniers:” [Climate of conspiracy: Meta-analysis of the consequences of belief in conspiracy theories about climate change](#); [Responding To Climate Change Denial](#)
- Targeting “vaccine skeptics:” [Prebunking messaging to inoculate against COVID-19 vaccine misinformation: An effective strategy for public health](#)
- Targeting “election deniers:” [Democratic Norms, Social Projection, and False Consensus in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election](#)

With the GEC working closely with the UK government to roll out *Cat Park*, it is helpful to know that both the Cambridge and Bristol University “disinfo lab” researchers have explicitly and systematically targeted Brexit supporters and the Brexit political movement for the past five years. See, for example:

- [Joint studies by Cambridge and Bristol](#) (the exact two universities who run the [inoculation.science](#) page linked to in *Cat Park*) to “vaccinate against fake news” motivating “Brexit,” described as “populism on steroids”;
- [June 2017 presentation](#) by Cambridge disinfo researcher Dr. Sander van der Linden specifically targeting Brexit (this author [has been directly involved](#) in GEC-produced disinformation games); and
- [Public testimony](#) by both Cambridge and Bristol disinfo researchers specifically targeting Brexit.

Cat Park As a Sequel To Harmony Square

Cat Park is now the second counter-disinformation video game the GEC has produced at taxpayer expense. Its first video game production, *Harmony Square*, was released in November 2020. The game draws on the same above-mentioned “Inoculation Science” to “prebunk” misinformation in the impressionable minds of young people.

The GEC’s Counter Disinformation Technology Advisor, Davor Devcic, explains how *Cat Park* builds on *Harmony Square* [in this YouTube video](#), clipped below:

EMBED: [Cat Park Explainer - Intro To Harmony Square \(Disinformation 'Inoculation Science'\) \(rumble.com\)](#)

If the explicit political nature of all this is still unclear from the above, the GEC memo removes all doubt. They positively cite a Harvard University pro-censorship publication called the *Misinformation Review*, which [specifically heralded](#) *Harmony Square* as “**‘inoculating’ against political misinformation:**”

Source:

14. In a study conducted by the University of Cambridge and published in the Harvard University Kennedy School *Misinformation Review*, researchers found that “people who play the game find misinformation significantly less reliable after playing, are significantly more confident in their assessment, and are significantly less likely to report sharing misinformation, supporting Harmony Square’s effectiveness as a tool to inoculate people against online manipulation.” <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/breaking-harmony-square-a-game-that-inoculates-against-political-misinformation/>



Cat Park image manipulation before and after

The Cat’s Out of the Bag: Announcing *Cat Park*

2. From the same studio that created *Harmony Square* comes the latest GEC game to counter propaganda and disinformation: *Cat Park* (<https://catpark.game/>). GEC, working with the U.S. Embassy in The Hague, funded a grant to the Dutch studio Tilt to develop an interactive

2

digital experience as an educational tool that is both fun to play and useful for building media literacy skills.

The Purrfect Sequel: Building on the Successes of *Harmony Square*

9. GEC’s first media literacy, counter propaganda and disinformation game *Harmony Square* (<https://harmonysquare.game>) is a mobile-friendly game designed to educate players ages 15-and-up about common disinformation tactics that malign actors use to undermine democratic institutions and

5

societal trust. In *Harmony Square*, players take on the role of Chief Disinformation Officer, abusing social media to spread disinformation, using trolling, emotional language, rage amplification, conspiracy theories, and polarization to magnify inter-group differences. Players “win” by sowing discord and preventing consensus building.

In perhaps a preview of the boomerang of foreign-focused political influence efforts coming home, the *Misinformation Review* write-up had the UK-based University of Cambridge “disinformation” researchers writing their findings directly for the US-based Harvard research community:



NOVEMBER 6, 2020

SHARE [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [d](#) [D](#) [O](#) [W](#) [N](#) [L](#) [O](#) [A](#) [D](#) [P](#) [D](#) [F](#)

PEER REVIEWED

Breaking Harmony Square: A game that “inoculates” against political misinformation

We present Harmony Square, a short, free-to-play online game in which players learn how political misinformation is produced and spread. We find that the game confers psychological resistance against manipulation techniques commonly used in political misinformation: players from around the world find social media content making use of these techniques significantly less reliable after playing, are more confident in their ability to spot such content, and less likely to report sharing it with others in their network.

BY JON ROOZENBEEK

Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK

SANDER VAN DER LINDEN

Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK

The *Misinformation Review* notes that *Cat Park*’s predecessor, *Harmony Square*, is specifically about “election misinformation.” Its psychological impact therefore is intended to translate into direct political impact:

Harmony Square is an interactive social impact game about election misinformation. The goal of the game is to reveal the tactics and manipulation techniques that fake news producers use to mislead their audience, build a following, and exploit societal tensions to achieve a political goal.

The game's setting is Harmony Square, a peaceful place where residents have a healthy obsession with democracy. At the start of the game, players are hired as Chief Disinformation Officer. Their job is to ruin the square's idyllic state by fomenting internal divisions and pitting its residents against each other, all while gathering as many "likes" as they can. In order to deliver sufficiently weakened doses of the informational "virus," Harmony Square makes use of humor throughout the game.

For example, players can share humorous messages in a fictional social network, and are shown entertaining headlines in a news ticker at the top of the screen (see the second panel in Figure 1). Aside from increasing the entertainment value of the game, the use of humor in inoculation interventions has the added benefit of potentially decreasing reactance, i.e., resistance to voluntarily engaging with the intervention (Compton, 2018; Vraga et al., 2019). Over the course of 4 different levels (Trolling, Emotion, Amplification and Escalation), the player's misinformation campaign causes the square to gradually go from a peaceful state to full-blown mayhem.

Instructively, the *Misinformation Review* notes *Harmony Square* was based on the Internet censorship and counter-disinformation theories put forward by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

Foundation for Freedom Online has [previously reported](#) how CISA's censorship network targeted 22 million tweets for takedown or throttling in the run-up to the 2020 election. [Every single one of the "repeat misinformation spreaders"](#) targeted by CISA for "election misinformation" all had the exact same political affiliation as right-of-center accounts:

5. Actors and Networks: Repeat Spreaders of Election Misinformation

Rank	Account	Verified	Incidents	Tweets w/ >1000 Retweets	Followers	Retweets in Incidents	Left or Right
1	RealJamesWoods	True	27	36	2,738,431	403,950	Right
2	gatewaypundit	True	25	45	424,431	200,782	Right
3	DonaldJTrumpJr	True	24	27	6,392,929	460,044	Right
4	realDonaldTrump	True	21	43	88,965,710	1,939,362	Right
4	TomFitton	True	21	29	1,328,746	193,794	Right
6	JackPosobiec	True	20	41	1,211,549	188,244	Right
7	catturd2	False	17	20	436,601	66,039	Right
8	EricTrump	True	16	25	4,580,170	484,425	Right
9	ChuckCallesto	True	15	17	311,517	117,281	Right
10	charliekirk1	True	13	18	1,915,729	232,967	Right
11	marklevinshow	True	12	10	2,790,699	90,157	Right
11	cjtruth	False	12	27	256,201	66,698	Right
11	JamesOKeefeIII	False	12	64	1,021,505	625,272	Right
11	prayingmedic	False	12	26	437,976	57,165	Right
15	RichardGrenell	True	11	12	691,441	143,363	Right
15	pnjaban	True	11	14	208,484	58,417	Right
17	BreitbartNews	True	10	11	1,647,070	38,405	Right
17	TheRightMelissa	False	10	31	497,635	73,932	Right
17	mikeroman	False	10	10	29,610	128,726	Right
17	robbystarbuck	True	10	15	204,355	65,651	Right
17	seanhannity	True	10	22	5,599,939	96,641	Right

Table 5.2: Repeat Spreaders: Twitter accounts that were highly retweeted across multiple incidents. Twitter has since suspended the accounts ofrealDonaldTrump (January 6), The Gateway Pundit (February 6), cjtruth, and prayingmedic (January 8).¹⁶ Account verification status as of 11/10/2020.

Per the GEC memo, *Cat Park's* video game predecessor *Harmony Square* has been played more than 400,000 times. The US government evidently worked closely with the UK government to put Harmony Square in schools through “media literacy lesson plans,” and worked to install Harmony Square in the educational system in Ukraine, and to be played “ahead of national elections” in Latvia and elsewhere.

10. A web-browser game, *Harmony Square* can be played in 10-15 minutes and has a whimsical story crafted to be familiar to players from all backgrounds. Since its November 2020 release, *Harmony Square* has been played nearly 400,000 times, garnered over 150 highly positive reviews and media mentions, and was nominated for two awards at the 2021 Games for Change Festival.
11. *Harmony Square* is playable in 18 languages, including: Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Tagalog, traditional Chinese, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. These languages were developed in response to demand signals GEC received from posts where there were clear plans for rolling out a new translation.
12. GEC has collaborated with the UK Cabinet Office to develop supplemental media literacy lesson plans and promotional materials. A media literacy lesson plan for *Harmony Square* is downloadable from the game's website in English, Latvian, Russian, and Ukrainian.
13. *Harmony Square* is being used by embassies in a variety of ways, including: for counter-disinformation-focused educational initiatives (Ukraine), by foreign governments ahead of national elections (Latvia), as a part of Regional English Language programming (Iraq), by social media

What Is The GEC Doing With *Cat Park*?

Because the US State Department and its taxpayer-funded activities are supposed to be exclusively foreign-facing, *Cat Park*'s programming is not supposed to boomerang back into the US and propagandize the American public with its anti-populist messaging.

But for reasons discussed further above and below (see subsequent section: The GEC's Role In The Censorship Industry), there is ample reason to expect this foreign/domestic distinction may cease to be respected once the game is out on its own, beyond its initial global release.

Further, the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act signed into law by President Obama in 2013 made it [legal for government-produced propaganda made for overseas audiences to be directed at US citizens](#) themselves. So were *Cat Park* to be introduced independently to audiences in America, there would presumably be no legal injunction against it.

That means there is no firewall against *Cat Park* coming to a public school targeting the kids near you.

With that stipulated, however, let's now turn to the GEC's plans to promote *Cat Park* in countries around the world.

The GEC, per the leaked memo, is pushing *Cat Park* for “adoption in local schools” in countries whose languages the video game has been interpreted in (presently, English, French, Dutch and Russian). Importantly, “the game is localized so that the jokes and message will resonate with each translation in the intended community.”

information. **Action Request:** Posts are encouraged to promote this free

1

game for adoption in local schools, to publicize the game online using the linked digital campaign toolkit, and to organize special rollout events. Posts interested in having either *Cat Park* or *Harmony Square* translated into another language are welcome to send that request to Paul J. Fischer (see paragraphs 18-26). END SUMMARY

5. *Cat Park* is a free-to-play, web browser-based game, that plays equally well on a computer or mobile phone. While the game is currently playable in English, French, Dutch, or Russian, each language edition of the game is unique. The game is localized so that the jokes and message will resonate with each new translation in the intended community.

Per the GEC memo, the US government officially launched *Cat Park* on social media three weeks ago, on October 24, 2022. Embassies were instructed to “Consider asking your Ambassador or other well-known official to play the game online with a locally popular influencer, academic, journalist or government official.”

US Embassies were also encouraged to “[draw] on exchange program alumni, youth networks, members of the Digital Communication Network, or other influencers” to “carry the message and promote the game.”

Source:

Cat Nip: How Missions Can Use *Cat Park*

18. **Promote the launch of *Cat Park* Online.** Use the prepared and cleared digital campaign toolkit to publicize the launch of *Cat Park* on social media, starting the week of October 24, 2022. The toolkit includes game images and trailers, and sample posts. Consider asking your Ambassador or other well-known official to play the game online with a locally popular influencer, academic, journalist or government official (an online challenge to see who gets the highest game score is one option). [Cat Park Digital Campaign Toolkit](#)
19. **Leverage alumni, youth, or other communication networks.** When thinking about how best to promote the game and media literacy, consider who is the best messenger for the message for your particular target audience. Who is most vulnerable to disinformation, and how can we use this game to reach this segment of the population? Drawing on exchange program alumni, youth networks, members of the Digital Communication Network, or other influencers, you can ask them to carry the message and promote the game. Feel free to share all of the digital assets from the campaign toolkit.
20. **Partner with local UNESCO Global Media and Information Literacy Week events.** UNESCO takes a decentralized approach to this week, providing the overarching branding for ministries of education or culture, civil society groups, or individual schools to use when organizing their own events. Posts are encouraged to identify related events happening in their countries and to offer *Cat Park* and *Harmony Square* as resources for these events.

The government propaganda launch plans also included “Possible events [that] could include discussions with journalists, academics, educators, game developers, gamers, and cat people about the game, local challenges around disinformation, and how to promote media literacy.”

The GEC stresses *Cat Park*'s inclusion into the curricula of schools “for middle and high-school or university-age players.” Specifically, the GEC notes *Cat Park* “could be readily included in media literacy, history, civics, political science, or international relations curricula.” The GEC further notes to “consider approaching ministries of education or other authorities about adoption of the games into lesson plans:”

21. **Organize an event at an American Space.** Consider utilizing an American Space, Corner, makerspace, cat café, or other suitable venue to host events. Possible events could include discussions with journalists, academics, educators, game developers, gamers, and cat people about the game, local challenges around disinformation, and how to promote media literacy. GEC is willing to participate in events, where appropriate. Posts may also wish to utilize *Cat Park* during International Education Week, November 14-18.
22. **Include the games in functional English lessons.** Leverage Regional English Language Officers or Fulbright English Teaching Assistants to use the games when teaching English or other topics.
23. **Encourage relevant authorities to adopt the games as part of educational curricula in schools.** The games are appropriate for middle- and high-school or university-age players and because of the cross-cutting nature of disinformation, could be readily included in media literacy, history, civics, political science, or international relations curricula. Consider approaching ministries of education or other authorities about adoption of the games into lesson plans.
24. **Give people the “booster.”** Like vaccinations, *Harmony Square* and *Cat Park* inoculation effects only last so long. In the lead-up to local elections, U.S. missions that perceive a disinformation threat could encourage people to get their disinformation booster-shot by playing *Harmony Square* or *Cat Park*. When encouraging people to play the game, posts should think about the right messenger for the message for particular audiences.

The GEC's Role In The Censorship Industry

So why is the GEC really doing this, and what's really going on here?

To answer that question, some historical background on the GEC's history and operations is necessary.

The most important context to understand about the GEC is that it was originally founded to combat the social media popularity of terrorist groups, not populist groups. But like DHS's "[foreign-to-domestic switcheroo](#)" in the context of censoring "disinformation," the GEC pulled off a "terrorist-to-populist switcheroo" in its targeting as well.

The GEC was created by [Executive Order](#) during the Obama Administration in March 2016 at the height of domestic fears over ISIS-related terrorism. The GEC [was tasked](#) with stopping

ISIS's recruiting and virality online on Facebook and Twitter by working with tech companies and global partners to take down ISIS networks (resulting in [635,000 ISIS account takedowns](#)) and to produce counter-propaganda offensives.

Today, the US military [treats the GEC](#) as a key civilian arm of its psychological warfare operations:

The new Global Engagement Center (GEC), established by presidential executive order and located at the DoS, focuses on third-party validators or influencers from the bottom up, whereas MISO [Military Information Support Operations, formerly known as "psyops"] within DoD remains more focused on government top-down communications. [[RAND Corporation](#)]

The GEC was first founded and overseen in 2016 by then-State Department Under Secretary for Public Affairs Richard Stengel. Stengel described his job at GEC as being the US government's "chief propagandist."

EMBED: <https://rumble.com/v1v6138-rick-stengel-chief-propagandist-global-engagement-center.html>

But Stengel, the former Time Magazine editor-in-chief, went from a job "[exporting the First Amendment](#)" before the 2016 election to writing a Washington Post op-ed [calling for an end to the First Amendment](#) after the 2016 election.

What changed? According to the GEC's founder, what changed was the free and open Internet. The Internet, [says Stengel](#), gave political populist groups power to sway the hearts and minds of the public, which was now swaying elections in a political direction with which Stengel vehemently disagreed.

And so, outcompeted in the social media marketplace of ideas, Stengel's GEC network embarked out a crusade to ban the distribution of alternate ideas online. Hence, the rise of Internet censorship after the 2016 election.

Foundation for Freedom Online has previously covered the origin story of Internet censorship in broad sketches, referencing the GEC's key role. Indeed, the current domestic censorship bureau [run out of CISA](#) at DHS [was originally intended](#) to be run out of the GEC at the State Department, until early backers conceded they could not position a domestic censorship directorate at a statutorily foreign-facing office:

For example, the network who first began lobbying for a DHS Ministry of Truth role first had wanted to install the domestic social media censorship bureau at the State Department [GEC], but decided they couldn't overcome the legal prohibition on domestic operations. [[FFO](#)]

So how did the GEC get the mandate to go from “countering propaganda” from terrorists to countering populists?

The opportunity came with the media hysteria over Russiagate after the 2016 election.

The GEC, still primarily staffed in 2017-2018 with Rick Stengel loyalists, [was given \\$120 million](#) to fight so-called “Russian meddling” that was deemed [by groups like Graphika](#) to be plaguing US social media. The Trump Administration, skeptical of such claims, balked at deploying such funds. Nonetheless, the mandate to fight “foreign disinformation” and not just “terrorism” was broadly established, and the GEC conducted a parallel [“foreign-to-domestic switcheroo”](#) with the CISA censors at DHS.

As one illustration of this joint GEC-DHS network, in [this video](#) from October 2019, you can watch GEC founder Rick Stengel planning future domestic-facing Internet censorship operations with none other than Nina Jancowicz, the would-be future face of the DHS’s Disinformation Governance Board:

EMBED: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzkjB4jr7B0&t=1216s>

The GEC now, effectively, forms the global-facing political censorship arm of the Internet, while its sister agency CISA forms the domestic political censorship arm.

Just as the leaked GEC memo detailed herein reveals that *Cat Park* is intended to be played around the world “ahead of national elections,” the GEC has joined forces with CISA to step in behaviorally modify American hearts and minds in US elections as well.

For example, Foundation for Freedom Online has extensively documented how CISA outsources election censorship on social media to a group called the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP). EIP was responsible for [22 million tweets](#) being targeted for censorship during the 2020 election alone, and every single “repeat misinformation spreader” throttled by EIP was politically tagged as right-of-center:

Atlantic Council 360/OPEN SUMMIT #360OS

Four Major Stakeholder Groups

Government	Elections Infrastructure ISAC	 CISA	 GEC							
Civil Society	AARP	NCoC	MITRE SQUINT	STANFORD-MIT HEALTHY ELECTIONS PROJECT	STANFORD UNIVERSITY BELLER CENTER for Science and International Affairs					
Platforms	NAACP	Common Cause	f	Twitter	G	TikTok	Reddit	Nextdoor	Discord	Pinterest
Media	<i>We did not formalize partnerships with media, but we engaged with interested journalists from local and national media organizations.</i>									

THAT WORKED AT BOTH MIT AND STANFORD

1:02 / 1:17 rumble

While the specific “disinformation” takedown requests and communications that GEC sent to EIP about the 2020 election and 2022 midterms remain unknown, [the EIP report](#) suggests the GEC appears to have submitted at least three unique “tickets” during the 2020 election.

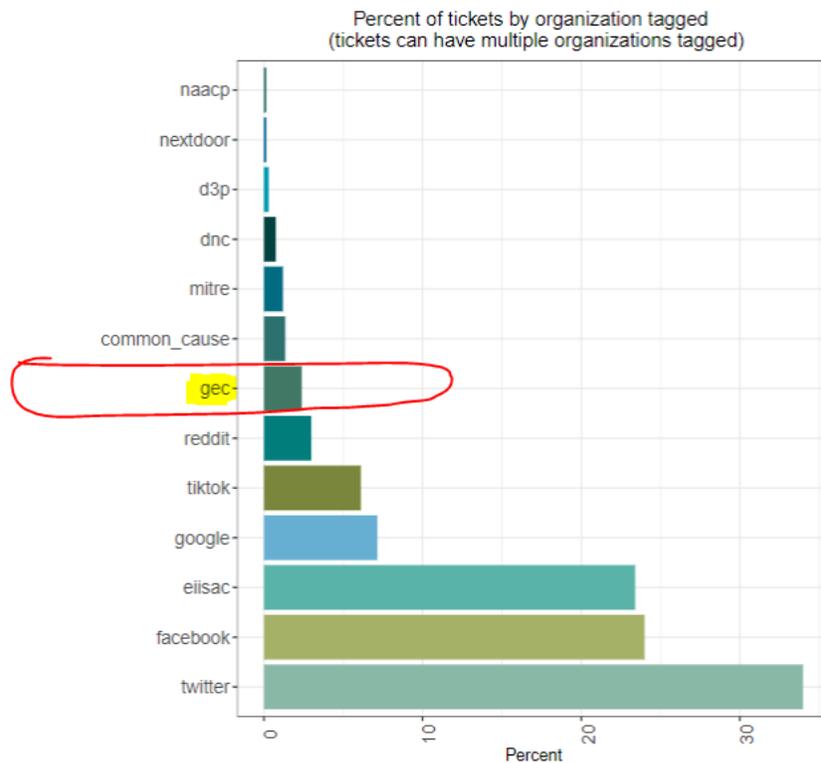


Figure 2.9: Percent of tickets by organization tagged.

EIP’s “disinformation” tickets can refer to censorship of a single URL, or of an entire narrative [comprised of millions](#) of impacted URLs. The total extent of GEC’s involvement in domestic censorship, as a partner to CISA, is therefore presently unclear.

But given the GEC’s explicit intermingling of psychological warfare and political interference since its formation, this new progression into “behavioral modification” video games such as *Cat Park* marks an Orwellian, but perhaps unsurprising, development.

GEC has [publicly acknowledged](#) that *Cat Park* was produced for foreign audiences, and is not intended to boomerang back on schools and curricula here in the US.

But until Congress defunds or recharter the GEC to address much-reforms, it is now up to the American people to remain vigilant to stop GEC-produced products from coming home.

For those who want to see your tax dollars at work, you can play *Cat Park* here: <https://catpark.game/>.