Disinformation Tactics

Various actors, including state and non-state entities, will attempt to leverage international crises and high-profile incidents to spread disinformation and sow discord in the United States. Disinformation has the potential to expend unneeded resources, incite fear, create distrust between the government and people, increase polarization in groups, influence governmental actions or law enforcement responses, or cause undue harm, among other concerns. The list below is not exhaustive, as numerous tactics are frequently employed.

Tactic	Beliefs/Claims	Bots	Social Media Accounts	State-Sponsored Media	Text Messages
Example					
	A false infographic circulated on social media appears to contain information from legitimate health organizations, but it intentionally promotes purposely infecting public spaces, specifically mosques, synagogues, and public transit.	On June 1, the hashtag #dcblackout trended on Twitter. This appeared to promote the claim that during recent protests, Internet and cellular networks were jammed throughout Washington, DC, to hide police retaliations against protesters.	On May 31, a Twitter account claiming an association with Antifa but allegedly created by a white nationalist organization stated that members would start rioting in primarily white residential neighborhoods instead of in cities.	On May 12, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs retweeted a list of alleged US fabricated COVID-19 allegations created to shift blame against China.	On May 31, a bogus text message began circulating that claimed a police officer was advising a family friend that Antifa/rioters were planning to go into neighborhoods to target homes displaying American, law enforcement, and Trump flags.
Analyst Comment	Individuals will attempt to use realistic-looking graphics as a ploy to deceive others. In this case, they used false stereotypes interlaid with legitimate information to convince the public to gather at the specified locations, conflicting with social distancing norms.	Following the protests, Twitter confirmed it suspended hundreds of accounts, many recently created with little to no followers, after they spammed the hashtag with disinformation. The accounts contained social bot indicators and were likely controlled by a software program seeking to mimic human behavior to persuade or confuse social media users and create social unrest.	Since at least 2017, far-right groups and individuals who post simply to evoke a response have used fake social media accounts in an attempt to stoke fear of ongoing protests, incite violence, spread disinformation, trick law enforcement and the general public, and dox perceived enemies.	Nation-state actors typically engage in intentional information laundering in which they will promote already existing misinformation shared online as opposed to creating their own false narratives.	Individuals create similar messages in an attempt to stoke fear from existing protests and promote further discord in communities where peaceful gatherings may occur.

NJOHSP strongly urges the public to use legitimate and credible organizations for accurate information, as well as to fact check claims from competing sources. Rumors can easily circulate within communities during a crisis, and the spread of disinformation can be stopped by choosing trusted sources of information. Suspicious activity with a possible nexus to terrorism should be reported to NJOHSP CTWatch at 866.4SAFENJ (866.472.3365) or tips@njohsp.gov. For additional information, please visit www.njohsp.gov/disinformation.