

The Barr Letter Confirms We Need to Improve Election Security | Slate

By Bryan Jones

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Late Sunday afternoon, after two years of investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller and his team of 19 lawyers and approximately 40 FBI agents, intelligence analysts, forensic accountants, and other professional staff, Attorney General William Barr delivered to Congress his [summary](#) of the [Trump report](#). While the debate has quickly focused on congressional Democrats' calls for disclosing the full report, one item included in Barr's memo should be incontrovertible and remains remarkable: A foreign power took deliberate actions in an attempt to subvert America's democracy. For Mueller's extensive investigation and Trump's own attorney general to confirm that fact should be the real headline this week—and it should be an urgent call to protect our democracy better as the 2020 presidential campaign heats up.

Barr's summary highlights that Mueller found "two main Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election." The first attempt to influence the 2016 election, according to Barr, "involved attempts by a Russian organization, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), to conduct disinformation and social media operations in the United States designed to sow social discord, eventually with the aim of interfering with the election." It was this line of action that led to the [indictments](#) of 13 Russian nationals and three Russian companies for committing federal crimes while seeking to interfere in the United States political system in "information warfare against the United States." It was also the focus of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on the [social media tactics used by the IRA](#) in its attempts to influence U.S. political discourse.

The second attempt involved the "Russian government's efforts to conduct computer hacking operations designed to gather and disseminate information to influence the election." This effort centered around the hacking of emails and computers owned by individuals associated with the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign. The stolen information was disseminated

“through various intermediaries, including WikiLeaks.” This led to the July 13 [indictment](#) of 12 Russian military intelligence officials for conspiring to influence the 2016 election. The 2017 [assessment by the CIA and FBI](#) also found that Russia *did* interfere in the 2016 presidential election with the goal to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process.

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