



United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

May 26, 2023

The Honorable  
Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you for your April 12 letter to Secretary Blinken regarding the Global Disinformation Index (GDI). The Department refers you to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for questions regarding its awards.

Your letter raises several important points concerning free speech and the principles of democracy, both of which are fundamental to the Department's representation of U.S. foreign policy and promotion of American ideals abroad. The Global Engagement Center's (GEC) congressionally mandated mission (section 1287 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017), which focuses on countering foreign disinformation and propaganda, is entirely consistent with those ideals.

We understand that some media outlets have reported that State Department funding may have been used to fund GDI's work in the United States. This is inaccurate. In 2021, GDI was selected by a panel of experts, using objective criteria, at the U.S.-Paris Tech Challenge, to receive a sub-award from a GEC implementing partner. The \$100,000 sub-grant was awarded for GDI to apply a disinformation risk measurement technology it had developed across a set of foreign countries and languages in East Asia and Europe. Languages for which the technology was adapted under the award included Chinese, Japanese, and Korean – selected because the PRC's official Xinhua News Agency publishes in these languages – as well as Vietnamese, Russian, and Ukrainian.

The sub-grant funded activities for a three-month period ending December 31, 2021. The award focused on countering foreign disinformation overseas and, consistent with the GEC's mission, no domestic-focused activities were included in the scope of work. Funding under the award could not be used for any other purpose.

America's foreign adversaries and competitors have wielded information manipulation as a tool of statecraft for decades. The comparatively recent proliferation of global information and communications technology accentuates a contemporary national security risk. The Department stands by the work of the GEC and the crucial role it plays in helping to ensure that foreign disinformation operations do not undermine the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partners.

We hope this information is useful to you. Please let us know if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Naz Durakoğlu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Naz" and last name "Durakoğlu" clearly distinguishable.

Naz Durakoğlu  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Legislative Affairs