

# DHS Quietly Purges CISA "Mis, Dis and Malinformation" Website To Remove Domestic Censorship References

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY'S (DHS) PRIMARY CENSORSHIP COORDINATING AGENCY HAS QUIETLY PURGED WHAT FOR TWO YEARS HAD STOOD AS A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF TARGETING US CITIZENS – "DOMESTIC THREAT ACTORS" – WHO POST "MIS, DIS OR MALINFORMATION" (MDM) ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABOUT COVID-19, US ELECTION ISSUES, AND OTHER CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS.
2. A FOUNDATION FOR FREEDOM ONLINE INVESTIGATION OF WAYBACK MACHINE ARCHIVES HAS DETERMINED THAT LATE LAST WEEK, DHS SCRUBBED AND REDIRECTED A LONGSTANDING WEBSITE LINK THAT WAS HOME TO THE DHS CENSORSHIP TEAM THAT COORDINATES PRIVATE SECTOR "COUNTER-DISINFO" FIRMS TO MASS-FLAG SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS USING DHS'S "DOMESTIC DISINFORMATION SWITCHBOARD."
3. THE SCRUBBING COMES AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF MOUNTING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PROACTIVE CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY AND SUBPOENAS INTO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN DOMESTIC CENSORSHIP

## FINDINGS

Since May 1, 2021, CISA.gov/mdm had stood with an open public declaration that it classified domestic opinions deemed domestic "misinformation" as an attack on "democratic institutions," and therefore as a category of cyber threat to be neutralized by DHS's cyber division, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

Provided below are highlighted screenshots of CISA.gov/mdm snapped by the Wayback Machine on May 1, 2021.

In this first screenshot, the MDM page describes how DHS used to only be involved in censorship work against foreign-based social media opinions. Then, the Countering Foreign Influence Task Force changed its name to generic “Mis, Dis and Malinformation,” which included domestic-based social media opinions.

The screenshot shows the CISA MDM website. The header includes the CISA logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled "MIS, DIS, MALINFORMATION" and contains several sections:

- Election Security**: Includes links for Election Cybersecurity Toolkit, Crossfeed, Election Risk Profile Tool, Election Security Library, MDM Resource Library, Mis-, Dis-, Malinformation (highlighted), Resilience Series Graphic Novels, and Rumor Control.
- ANNOUNCEMENT**: Contains three news items:
  - November 4, 2022**: El material de CISA "Rumor vs. Realidad" está ahora disponible en español. Encuéntrelo en @CISAgov y compártalo en Twitter para crear conciencia acerca de la información electoral exacta y de las narrativas electorales comunes de MDM.
  - November 4, 2022**: CISA's Rumor vs. Reality webpage is now available in Spanish. Check it out. The page provides accurate and reliable information related to common MDM narratives and themes that relate broadly to the security of election infrastructure and related processes.
  - October 18, 2022**: CISA released the **Tactics of Disinformation Series**, available in English and Spanish, to provide state, local, tribal, and territorial government officials and private sector partners insight into eight common tactics used by disinformation actors to spread false narratives as well as proactive measures that can help mitigate the effectiveness of each tactic.

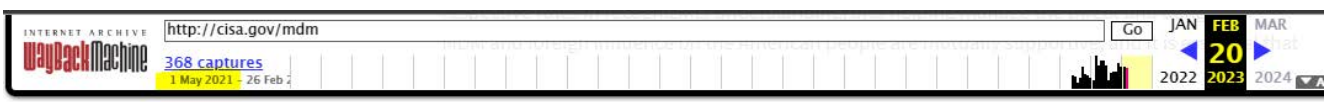
A red arrow points to the text "building national resilience to MDM" in the first announcement.

The screenshot shows the "MDM Overview" section of the CISA MDM website. The text describes the history and mission of the MDM team:

In May of 2018, a Countering Foreign Influence Task Force (CFITF) was established within CISA's predecessor agency. The CFITF was charged with helping the American people understand the risks from MDM and how citizens can play a role in reducing the impact of MDM on their organizations and communities. In 2021, the CFITF officially transitioned into CISA's MDM team, and the mission evolved to reflect the changing information environment. The MDM team continues to work in close coordination with interagency and private sector partners, social media companies, academia, and international partners on a variety of projects to build resilience against malicious information activities.

FFO has previously covered the Foreign-To-Domestic Censorship Switcheroo described in this video found [here](#).

The CISA site plainly stated it believed it could take action to neutralize domestic speech online by classifying purveyors of domestic misinformation as “domestic threat actors” on par with someone conducting a traditional cyber-attack.



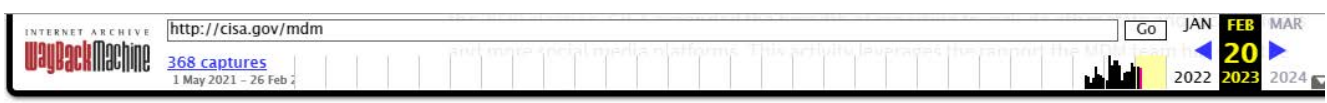
### What is MDM?

Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation make up what CISA defines as “information activities”. When this type of content is released by foreign actors, it can be referred to as foreign influence. Definitions for each are below.

- **Misinformation** is false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm.
- **Disinformation** is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country.
- **Malinformation** is based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate.

Foreign and domestic threat actors use MDM campaigns to cause chaos, confusion, and division. These malign actors are seeking to interfere with and undermine our democratic institutions and national cohesiveness. The resources provided at the bottom of this page provide examples and more information about MDM activities.

The former CISA site went on to proudly tout its role in coordinating the private sector censorship of domestic citizens’ Covid-19 narratives as well:



### COVID-19 Response

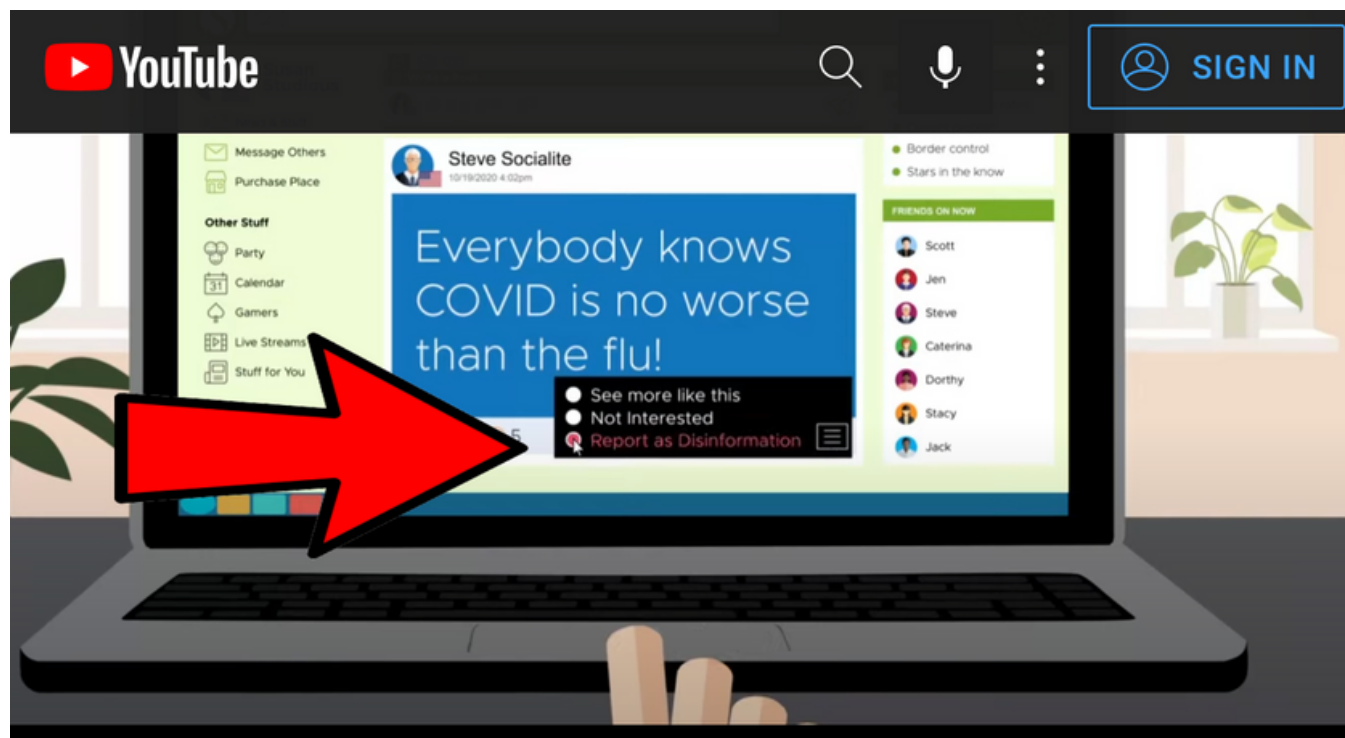
As COVID-19 spread around the globe, mis-, dis-, and malinformation (MDM) spread as well. COVID-19-related MDM activities seek to undermine public confidence and sow confusion. COVID-19 has demonstrated that a rapidly evolving event creates opportunities for adversaries to act maliciously. It also shows that rapid evolution of accurate information makes older, dated information a potential catalyst of confusion and distrust as well. The MDM team supports the interagency and private sector partners’ COVID-19 response efforts via regular reporting and analysis of key pandemic-related MDM trends.

### MDM Resources

- CISA Insights: Preparing for and Mitigating Foreign Influence Operations Targeting Critical Infrastructure
- CISA Insights: COVID-19 Disinformation Activity
- COVID-19 Disinformation Toolkit
- Disinformation Stops With You Infographic Set (also available in Spanish)
- Election Disinformation Toolkit
- Foreign Interference Taxonomy (also available in Spanish)
- Information Manipulation Infographic (also available in Spanish)
- MDM Planning and Incident Response Guide for Election Officials
- Resilience Series: Bug Bytes Graphic Novel
- Resilience Series: Real Fake Graphic Novel
- Rumor Control Page Start-Up Guide
- Social Media Bots Infographic Set (also available in Spanish)
- Tactics of Disinformation Series (also available in Spanish)
- Tools of Disinformation: Inauthentic Content (also available in Spanish)
- War on Pineapple: Understanding Foreign Interference in 5 Steps (also available in Spanish)

FFO extensively covered CISA's domestic censorship of Covid-19 [in this report](#).

This is how an obscure cybersecurity subagency tucked within DHS justified making censorship instructional videos like the one pictured below.



But sometime last week, between [Friday, Feb. 24 at 4:37 p.m.](#) and Sunday, Feb. 26 at 5:55 a.m., CISA's once loud-and-proud declaration of long-arm jurisdiction over domestic opinions online seems to have been walked back.

The site page for [cisa.gov/mdm](https://www.cisa.gov/mdm) now redirects to a generic, foreign-only focused counter-disinfo page:

<https://www.cisa.gov/topics/election-security/foreign-influence-operations-and-disinformation>

All references to the word or concept of “domestic” inward-facing role of CISA have been carefully scrubbed:

The screenshot shows the CISA website header with the logo and navigation menu. The main content area features a large image of a computer monitor displaying a 'BLAYP' logo and a date 'AUG. 24 1989'. Below the image is the title 'Foreign Influence Operations and Disinformation'. A sidebar on the left contains a navigation menu with 'Election Security' and 'Foreign Influence Operations and Disinformation'. The main text area includes an 'Overview' section and a 'CISA's Role' section.

**Foreign Influence Operations and Disinformation**

**Overview**

CISA reduces risk to U.S. critical infrastructure by building resilience to foreign influence operations and disinformation. Through these efforts, CISA helps the American people understand the scope and scale of these activities targeting election infrastructure and enables them to take action to mitigate associated risks.

**CISA's Role**

CISA helps the American people understand the risks from foreign influence operations and disinformation and how citizens can play a role in reducing the impact of it on their organizations and communities. This work is done in close partnership with the interagency, private sector, academia, and international stakeholders.

You can see here the term “domestic threat actors” has disappeared altogether:

Some tactics of **foreign influence** include leveraging misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Definitions for each are below.

- **Misinformation** is false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm.
- **Disinformation** is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country.
- **Malinformation** is based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate. An example of malinformation is editing a video to remove important context to harm or mislead.

**Foreign actors** use misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation campaigns to cause chaos, confusion, and division. These malign actors are seeking to interfere with and undermine our democratic institutions and

The references to CISA’s censorship of Covid and 2020 election claims have disappeared as well.

Perhaps CISA hopes to reverse what is now several years of outright government censorship of domestic speech of American citizens. Or perhaps they are simply hoping no one will notice, or people will forget.

# CONCLUSION

The public-private domestic censorship operation coordinated by the federal government has quietly been organized to quell the online opinions of everyday Americans. Although DHS began to tout their coordination of such efforts publicly on their website, groups like Foundation for Freedom Online have exposed the backbone of this taxpayer-funded domestic censorship apparatus. As a result, it is no surprise that DHS appears to be backtracking on the public display of their domestic censorship efforts.