

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 9, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We write to express our concerns about reports that Russian intelligence services posing as Islamic extremists threatened and harassed U.S. military families. We urge you to investigate this potential false flag operation and to hold any perpetrators accountable.

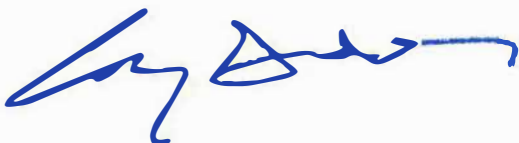
As you may know, a group calling itself the “Cyber Caliphate” launched an intimidation campaign against several U.S. military spouses in 2015, issuing death threats on social media and attempting to hack the spouses’ devices and accounts. The Cyber Caliphate identified itself with the transnational terrorist group known the Islamic State and its cyber threats were so menacing that at least one military spouse fled her home in fear.

This story would be cause for concern if it ended there but many cyber security researchers now say the Cyber Caliphate is merely a front for APT28, the infamous group of hackers who serve the interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have publicly identified APT28 as “Russian civilian and military intelligence services.”

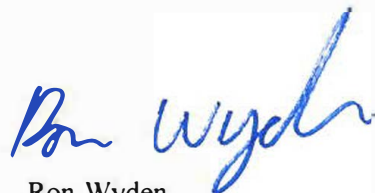
If substantiated, the claims about APT28 posing as the Cyber Caliphate could be the first public evidence that influence operations have specifically targeted American military families. If left unchecked, such operations would threaten the personal liberty, financial security, mental health, and morale of our military families.

The Department of Justice has a primary role in investigating potential crimes against American civilians, and we note that you recently established a Cyber Task Force to address threats in this domain. Accordingly, we urge you to 1) identify those responsible for targeting military families and 2) work with lawmakers to more effectively protect our military families from cyberattacks. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator