

October 4, 2024

The Honorable Chris Carr, Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General of Georgia
40 Capitol Square, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Attorney General Carr,

We urge you to investigate recent efforts by an extremist, non-governmental organization called the “Election Crime Bureau” to obtain personal, sensitive information from Georgia county election officials through deceptive, fraudulent means.¹ It is unlawful to interfere with the duties of election officials or subject them to threats and violence, and it is a crime in Georgia to impersonate a public officer or employee. That is precisely what occurred here. And now election officials in Georgia who reasonably believed and abided by the misleading campaign of the “Election Crime Bureau” are at risk of intimidation and threats because the organization now holds and has control over the dissemination of these election officials’ personal information and Georgia’s voting security systems.

Background

The Election Crime Bureau was founded and funded by Mike Lindell, a prominent proponent of thoroughly debunked claims of election fraud in the 2020 election. The group already is prepared to engage in tactics to undermine the 2024 election results based on similarly false claims, a plan it has named “The Anti-Steal Dossier.”²

In September 2024, several news outlets reported that the “Election Crime Bureau” emailed county election officials in multiple counties in Georgia. Under the subject line “Election Integrity Sharing and Analysis Center,” the email falsely

¹ Free Speech For People is a non-profit, non-partisan public interest legal organization that works to renew our democracy and our United States Constitution for the people. As part of our mission, we are committed to protecting, through legal actions, our elections and the right to vote.

² *The Plan to Secure Our Elections*, Lindell Offense Fund, <https://lindelloffensefund.org/the-plan/> (last visited Oct. 3, 2024).

informed recipients that the “Election Crime Bureau” was investigating voting software security developed by The Center for Internet Security (CIS) and its Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC), a non-profit organization funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.³ The email informed officials that the EI-ISAC is charged with “securing election infrastructure components such as those under your jurisdiction,” and therefore the “Election Crime Bureau is investigating what steps have been taken in all 3,143 counties across America to ensure the security of the upcoming 2024 election.” As part of its “investigation,” it asked officials to provide their home address, personal cell phone numbers, and other sensitive information, and to provide information about monitoring systems developed by CIS.

Since the Election Crime Bureau sent the email, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger warned county officials about the group, and CIS issued a public advisory directing recipients not to click on any links or respond to the survey, as the group appeared to be impersonating CIS.⁴

But the damage may already have been done; anyone who trusted the legitimacy of these emails may have shared sensitive election data or personal information with the extremist group. To comply with the sham “investigation,” election officials may unwittingly have undermined the security of Georgia’s election systems by playing sensitive information in the hands of Lindell’s group—information to which it was not entitled, and which could compromise the security of our elections. Furthermore, the personal information fraudulently obtained from election officials is enough to enable Lindell’s group to “dox” these officials (publicly release their home address and cell phone numbers) now or in the future,⁵ or to

³ See Justin Glawe et al., *Mike Lindell Group Accused of ‘Impersonating’ Election Cybersecurity Initiative*, Rolling Stone (Sept. 15, 2024), <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/mike-lindell-group-accused-impersonating-election-cybersecurity-1235102625/>; see also Travis Gettys, *Mike Lindell group fishing for personal info from Georgia election officials*, Raw Story (Sept. 16, 2024), <https://www.rawstory.com/trump-georgia-election/>.

⁴ *Email from Election Crime Bureau Could Lead Recipients to Believe Email Is From Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing & Analysis Center (EI-ISAC)*, Center for Internet Security, <https://www.cisecurity.org/ei-isac/cyber-alert-misleading-email-to-election-officials> (last visited Oct. 3, 2024).

⁵ The Department of Justice has investigated increased threats and intimidation against election officials across the country, like leaving threatening and violent

unlawfully release sensitive information that undermines the security of Georgia’s election systems. This is particularly alarming given that election workers increasingly have been subject to efforts to obtain and leak their private information online since the 2020 election, including in Georgia.⁶ In response, several states have passed measures to make personally identifiable information of election workers confidential.⁷

Lindell’s Group Must Be Investigated For Violations of Georgia Law

The “Elections Crime Bureau” should be investigated for crimes related to voter intimidation and to the unlawful impersonation of officers. The Election Crime Bureau, by deceptively putting itself forward as an official agency with affiliations to federal offices—despite having no affiliation with these or any other government entity—fraudulently sought to obtain and in fact may have obtained sensitive election data and private information from election officials. Its campaign is intimidating, threatening, and puts the security of Georgia’s elections, election officials, and voters at risk.

voicemails. Jane C. Timm, *The DOJ is investigating dozens of threats against election workers*, NBC News (March 24, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/doj-investigating-dozens-threats-election-workers-rcna145014>.

⁶ Election officials in Georgia have also been subject to harassment based on fraudulent claims about a stolen election, including death threats to election officials and their families. Madeline Halpert, *Abused and stalked, US election workers are bracing for 2024*, BBC (Aug. 17, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66540466>.

⁷ State Laws Providing Protection for Election Officials and Staff, NCSL, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/state-laws-providing-protection-for-election-officials-and-staff> (last updated Sept. 9, 2024). States like Montana, New Hampshire, Colorado, and Arizona have implemented protections against online harassment and “doxing.” Tracker: State Legislation to Protect Election Officials, Public Citizen (Sept. 17, 2024), <https://www.citizen.org/article/tracker-state-legislation-to-protect-election-officials/>; see also Joelle Gross, *Online Hostility Towards Local Election Officials Surged in 2020*, MIT Election Data and Science Lab (Feb. 27, 2023), <https://electionlab.mit.edu/articles/online-hostility-towards-local-election-officials-surged-2020>

It is unlawful to “use[] or threaten[] violence in a manner that would prevent a reasonable poll officer, election official, or poll watcher. . . from the execution of his or her duties or materially interrupt[] or improperly and materially interfere[] with the execution of a. . . election official. . . .” Ga. Code. § 21-2-566(b). It also is unlawful to interfere with the duties of a poll officer, which broadly includes the chief manager, and all “assistant managers and clerks required to conduct primaries and elections.” Ga. Code § 21-2-569; Ga. Code § 21-2-2(26) (definition of poll officer).

The “Election Crime Bureau” deceptively baited election officials to hand over sensitive and confidential information. Any election official that received an e-mail from a group roleplaying as a law enforcement agency conducting an “investigation” of its personnel and systems would feel compelled to respond. The group’s targeting of those charged with overseeing Georgia elections interferes with those officials’ duty to protect confidential voting systems, placing the security of Georgia’s elections at serious risk. Moreover, it endangers the safety of election officials whose personal information currently lies in the group’s hands. The “Election Crime Bureau” now can at any point disseminate the private information it collected, indefinitely subjecting officials to ongoing interference, threats, and violence.

The “Election Crime Bureau” should also be investigated for violating Georgia’s prohibition of impersonating an official agency. *See* Ga. Code § 16-10-23 (“A person who falsely holds himself or herself out as a peace officer, officer of the court, or other public officer or employee with intent to mislead another. . . shall be punished. . . .”). The “Election Crime Bureau” fraudulently masqueraded as a law enforcement agency and sought out protected information from county officials under the guise of a criminal investigation. The Court of Appeals in Georgia has repeatedly upheld the convictions of those who fraudulently claimed to be part of investigations. *See Libri v. State*, 346 Ga. App. 420, 427 (2018) (“[U]se of police terminology; inserting himself in a police investigation. . . [and] describing himself as an agent or investigator. . . was all conduct designed to mislead others. . . .”); *see also Self v. State*, 245 Ga. App. 270, 272 (2000).

Pursuant to your power as Georgia’s Attorney General under Ga. Code. § 45-15-17, we strongly urge you to investigate the Election Crime Bureau’s unlawful attempt to impersonate government officials and to fraudulently collect sensitive information about Georgia county election officials and Georgia’s election security programs.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

John Bonifaz, President
Ben Clements, Chairman and Senior Legal Advisor
Courtney Hostetler, Legal Director
Amira Mattar, Counsel

Free Speech For People