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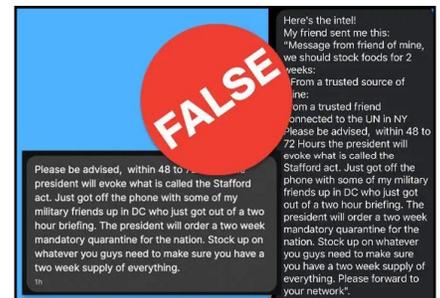
INTELLIGENCE NOTE

March 18, 2020

False Text Messages Part of Larger COVID-19 Disinformation Campaign

Earlier this week, multiple US-based cellular customers received targeted text messages that falsely warned of an impending “mandatory quarantine,” highlighting cybersecurity concerns. Federal and State government officials remain committed to sharing timely and accurate information on COVID-19 and actively investigating false claims that may harm national security efforts. NJOHSP previously published two products addressing individuals and groups attempting to leverage the COVID-19 pandemic in order to cause panic and scam unsuspecting residents, as well as foreign governments engaging in disinformation campaigns to undermine US security.

- Starting on March 15, US cellular subscribers received text messages in which the author claimed to have a connection to someone working at a clinic or government agency and revealed unannounced plans for an impending lockdown or quarantine. The messages follow similar patterns and suggest the recipient stockpile food, gas, medicine, or other necessities and pass the information onto others.
- One text falsely stated that President Donald Trump would enact the Stafford Act and order a two-week mandatory quarantine. The National Security Council quickly took to Twitter on March 15 to disprove the rumors of a national quarantine.
- The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) experienced suspicious cyber activity the same evening related to its coronavirus response and may have been victim to a distributed denial of service, or DDoS attack. According to officials, the attack was unsuccessful, and HHS systems were not significantly affected.



Fake text message regarding national quarantine



Response from National Security Council

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