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November 7, 2019

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable General Paul M. Nakasone
Director
National Security Agency
9800 Savage Road., Suite 6272
Ft. George G. Meade, MD 20755

Dear Secretary Esper and General Nakasone:

I write to ask you to conduct a cybersecurity audit of Voatz, a mobile voting app, to determine whether it can reliably protect the votes of U.S. servicemembers against foreign hacking.

In 2018, West Virginia became the first state to offer military and overseas voters the option of voting over the internet using Voatz, a mobile voting app. Local officials in Colorado, Utah and my home state of Oregon followed suit, conducting their own pilots using Voatz in elections this year.

Congress has taken a number of steps over the years to make it easier for deployed servicemembers to vote, such as providing greater access to secure paper ballots. I support these efforts, as well as others, but I am also very concerned about the significant security risks associated with voting over the internet, including through the use of smartphone-based apps like Voatz. A chorus of cybersecurity experts laid out their concerns in a 2018 National Academy of Sciences Report:

At the present time, the Internet (or any network connected to the Internet) should not be used for the return of marked ballots. Further, Internet voting should not be used in the future until and unless very robust guarantees of security and verifiability are developed and in place, as no known technology guarantees the secrecy, security, and verifiability of a marked ballot transmitted over the Internet.

While Voatz claims to have hired independent experts to audit the company, its servers and its app, it has yet to publish or release the results of those audits or any other cybersecurity assessments. In fact, Voatz won't even identify its auditors. This level of secrecy hardly inspires confidence.

Top national security officials have repeatedly testified before Congress that hostile foreign governments pose a continuing threat to our elections. Indeed, you both cosigned a statement this week saying that "Russia, China, Iran, and other foreign malicious actors all will seek to interfere in the voting process." Given your shared interest in protecting servicemembers and their votes from foreign hacking, I urge you to conduct a cybersecurity audit of Voatz. I also

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urge you to publicize the results of this audit so that state and local officials can make more informed decisions.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I know you share my desire to ensure that our men and women in uniform can vote efficiently and securely. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Wyden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Ron Wyden
United States Senator