THE **SOUFAN** CENTER

PRESS RELEASE

THE QANON MOVEMENT AND THE THREAT TO
UNITED STATES NATIONAL SECURITY

A new report identifies how the conspiracy-based movement can serve as a force multiplier in the broader violent extremist milieu in the United States, and presents openings for America's adversaries to sow discord and exert influence with domestic and international consequences.

LINK TO REPORT

(**New York, NY – April 19, 2021**) The QAnon movement poses a threat to United States national security, concludes a new report by The Soufan Center, *Quantifying the Q Conspiracy: A Data-Driven Approach to Understanding the Threat Posed by QAnon*. Specifically, the report notes how the far-right conspiratorial movement can serve as a force multiplier in the broader violent extremist milieu in the United States.

The new report sets out how the QAnon conspiracy theory generates a process of radicalization and violence similar to that fueling other violent extremist movements, with similarities to some of the beliefs that created a hospitable environment for al-Qaeda and ISIS. The report warns that as the QAnon movement continues to evolve, it has the potential to exploit widespread societal grievances to incite more acts of violence in the future. Moreover, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVEs), including white supremacy extremists, are seeking to recruit QAnon adherents and expand their outreach and influence.

"The national security and broader policy implications of the sustained influence of QAnon conspiracy theories are profound," says Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Executive Director of The Soufan Center. "As such, addressing this challenge will require a joined-up response from the U.S. Government, private sector, civil society organizations, and others in countering the spread of QAnon-related conspiracy theories, and greater investment in preventing and countering terrorism at both government and local levels."

A tool for America's adversaries

Through research conducted with Limbik, a Content Science company that uses AI and predictive modeling to analyze and counter weaponized information online, the report also identifies how the movement has received the backing, through intense amplification efforts, of multiple external actors. Although commonly perceived as a domestic movement within the U.S., the data suggests that foreign states are utilizing the QAnon conspiracy theory to sow societal discord and even compromise legitimate political processes.

"Our data collection and analysis has demonstrated that QAnon has been weaponized by America's adversaries," cautioned Zach Schwitzky, Founder of Limbik. "Actors from Russia, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have all entered the fray amplifying QAnon messaging, most likely as a means to sow further discord and division among the American population."

The Soufan Center's report concludes with a series of recommendations for slowing the spread of false narratives, while warning that the decline of COVID-19 will not mean an end to conspiracy theories and the national security implications they now pose.

ABOUT THE SOUFAN CENTER (TSC)

Based in New York, The Soufan Center is an independent non-profit center offering research, analysis, and strategic dialogue on global security challenges and foreign policy issues. Please contact **Stephanie Foggett** with any media inquiries or interview requests: stephanie.foggett@thesoufancenter.org.

Follow us @TheSoufanCenter and visit **http://thesoufancenter.org/**

###