WASHINGTON — The FBI is concerned that foreign adversaries could deploy artificial intelligence as a means to interfere in American elections and spread disinformation, a senior official said Thursday, describing the technology as an area “that's probably going to see growth over the coming years.”

The threat is more than theoretical [*given the prevalence of AI deepfakes and robocalls*](https://apnews.com/article/artificial-intelligence-elections-disinformation-chatgpt-bc283e7426402f0b4baa7df280a4c3fd) and the way such technology has already surfaced in ***politics***.

The official noted an episode in Slovakia early this year in which audio clips resembling the voice of the liberal party chief — purportedly capturing him talking about hiking beer prices and rigging the vote — were shared widely on social media just days before parliamentary elections. The clips were deepfakes.

An incident in the U.S. involved robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden that urged voters in New Hampshire to abstain from voting in January’s primary election. The robocalls were later [*traced to a political consultant*](https://apnews.com/article/ai-robocall-biden-new-hampshire-primary-2024-f94aa2d7f835ccc3cc254a90cd481a99) who said he was trying to publicize the dangers of AI deepfakes.

AI technology is a challenge to law enforcement not only because it lowers the barrier of entry for people looking to make mischief but also because it adds to the arsenal of more sophisticated foreign governments that want to interfere in elections, said the official, who was one of several FBI officials to brief reporters on the topic of election security on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the FBI.

The three countries of most concern to the FBI in the current election year are Russia, Iran and China. Officials in the past have ascribed different motives and ambitions to the countries in terms of what they hope to achieve by influencing American elections.

In the case of Russia, [*intelligence officials in 2016 and 2020 have said Moscow had a clear preference for Republican Donald Trump*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-donald-trump-iran-moscow-elections-c640ed02202c9d44f0ad186ebd0b3396) and took steps designed to get him elected, including a sophisticated hack-and-leak operation of Democratic emails before he was elected eight years ago.

A [*recent intelligence community report*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-china-iran-elections-87efc9b364018c9f8136b68ac8fdff36) assessed that, in the 2022 midterm election, Russia tried to denigrate the Democratic Party, with a goal of weakening U.S. support for Ukraine, and undermine confidence in the elections.

The report said China sought to influence a handful of races featuring candidates from both major political parties, focusing on those with anti-China views and covertly denigrating a U.S. senator. And it said that Iran conducted covert operations aimed at exploiting perceived social divisions.

In 2024, FBI officials said, China will likely continue its efforts to sow divisions, and the FBI is watching whether the Ukraine war will motivate Russia's behavior.