

# Cybersecurity, Privacy & Data Protection Alert

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## Secretary Blinken Announces Next Steps for Creating a Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy at the Department of State

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On October 27, 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken formally announced plans to modernize and reorient American diplomacy to meet the evolving demands of the 21st century. The State Department, in consultation with governmental and outside experts, and with the support of Congress, intends to establish a new Bureau for Cyberspace and Digital Policy ("Bureau"), as well as name a new special envoy for critical and emerging technology at the Department.

The Bureau will work to shape the digital revolution to ensure it serves American interests while addressing matters related to, but not limited to:

- Preventing cyberattacks to protect American people, networks, businesses and critical infrastructure.
- Protecting Internet freedom and fighting back against disinformation.
- Shaping standards governing new technology to ensure quality, protect health and safety, and facilitate trade.
- Ensuring appropriate use of surveillance technology.

The Bureau and special envoy will report to Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman for at least the first year. The State Department will also recruit specialized talent, including individuals with expertise in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines across the Foreign and Civil Service.

Efforts by the previous administration to organize a similar branch, the Bureau of Cyberspace Security and Emerging Technologies (CSET), faced criticism from lawmakers for being rushed and not organized in a way that best promotes cyber diplomacy efforts.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier this year, the House passed the Cyber Diplomacy Act of 2021 ([H.R.1251](#)), legislation proposing to establish a Bureau of International Cyberspace Policy within the State Department, led by an official appointed by the President with the rank and status of ambassador. It is unclear whether this legislation will serve as a foundation for establishing the new Bureau for Cyberspace and Digital Policy; however, we

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expect the State Department and Secretary Blinken to continue relying on the knowledge and judgment of experts within and outside government in structuring the new Bureau.

<sup>1</sup>The Hill, *Lawmakers to roll out legislation reorganizing State cyber office*, February 23, 2021.

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