

UNCLASSIFIED

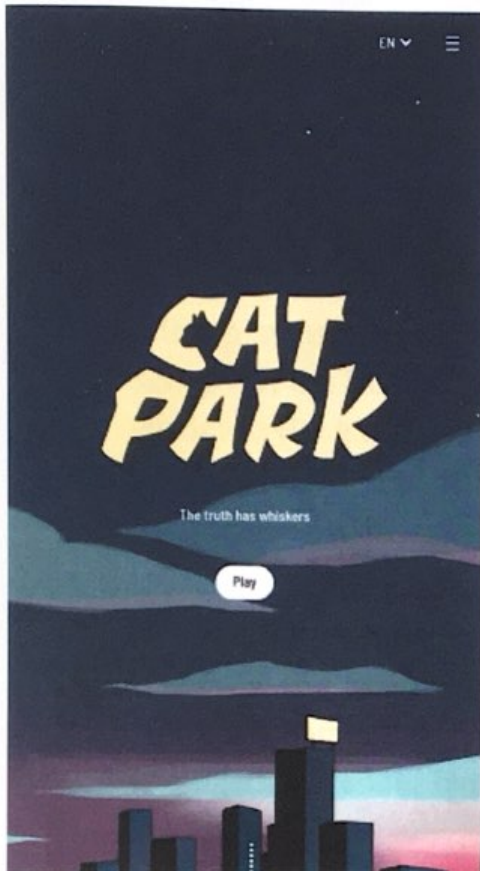


Action Office: ALDACS

MRN: [22 STATE 118582](#)
Date/DTG: Oct 31, 2022 / 010040Z NOV 22
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Action: ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: OIIP, PINS, PNAT, PROP, TINT, TSPL, OEXC, KDEM, KMDR, KPAO, KAMS
Reference: A) [21 STATE 2862](#)
B) [21 STATE 66398](#)
Subject: Cat Park -- A New Online Game to Inoculate Youth Against Disinformation

1. **Summary:** With the Internet, only two things are certain: the global appeal of cats videos and the pervasiveness of disinformation. The Global Engagement Center (GEC) and U.S. Embassy The Hague are pleased to announce the launch of a new online counter-disinformation game, *Cat Park* (<https://catpark.game/>). *Cat Park* builds on the success of the first game funded by GEC, *Harmony Square*. *Cat Park* inoculates players against real world disinformation by showing how sensational headlines, memes, and manipulated media can be used to advance conspiracy theories and incite real-world violence. The game, available now in English, Dutch, French, and Russian (with more language versions to come based on post requests), helps players discern between reliable and unreliable information. **Action Request:** Posts are encouraged to promote this free

game for adoption in local schools, to publicize the game online using the linked digital campaign toolkit, and to organize special rollout events. Posts interested in having either *Cat Park* or *Harmony Square* translated into another language are welcome to send that request to Paul J. Fischer (see paragraphs 18-26). END SUMMARY



Cat Park landing page

The Cat's Out of the Bag: Announcing *Cat Park*

2. From the same studio that created *Harmony Square* comes the latest GEC game to counter propaganda and disinformation: *Cat Park* (<https://catpark.game/>). GEC, working with the U.S. Embassy in The Hague, funded a grant to the Dutch studio Tilt to develop an interactive

digital experience as an educational tool that is both fun to play and useful for building media literacy skills.

3. In this game's noir cityscape, players take on the role of a disinformation agent recruited into a shadowy social media pressure campaign. Players train with a group of eccentric activists with different media manipulation skill-sets – creating sensational headlines, memes, or synthetic media – but with a common cause: to bring down an outrageous public works project, a park for cats!
4. After players destroy the fictional public square, *Cat Park* asks them to scoop out the litter. Using the inverse of the disinformation skills learned earlier in the game, players now seek to educate fellow citizens about the disinformation campaign and the media manipulation meant to hoodwink them.
5. *Cat Park* is a free-to-play, web browser-based game, that plays equally well on a computer or mobile phone. While the game is currently playable in English, French, Dutch, or Russian, each language edition of the game is unique. The game is localized so that the jokes and message will resonate with each new translation in the intended community.
6. At the end of the game, which takes 10-15 minutes and is designed to be played once or twice, players receive a score based on their abilities to garner influence and mobilize followers. The game is appropriate for players 15-years-and-older.



Carmen, a private investigator, waxes poetic about the limitations of memes

The Cat's Meow: How *Cat Park* Inoculates Against Disinformation

7. *Cat Park* is based on “inoculation theory” research, pioneered by the University of Cambridge’s Social Decision-Making Lab. Much as vaccinations work by exposing subjects to an innocuous strain of a virus in order to trigger an immune response, empirical studies indicate that the controlled experience of responding to disinformation through a game can build cognitive resistance to disinformation in the real world. This concept is also known as “pre-bunking.” Rather than simply waiting for lies to spread and then debunking them with strategic messaging or fact-checks, the goal of *Cat Park* is to proactively educate public audiences about common disinformation techniques, so players are better prepared to spot fake news no matter what form it takes.

8. In analysis of *Cat Parks*'s efficacy conducted by the University of Cambridge, researchers found that individual players are 19 percentage points more likely than a control group to spot disinformation and 15 percentage points less likely to want to share disinformation after playing. A media literacy lesson plan for the game will be downloadable from the game's website soon.



Cat Park Hot Headlines prompts players to craft a sensational headline

The Purrfect Sequel: Building on the Successes of *Harmony Square*

9. GEC's first media literacy, counter propaganda and disinformation game *Harmony Square* (<https://harmonysquare.game>) is a mobile-friendly game designed to educate players ages 15-and-up about common disinformation tactics that malign actors use to undermine democratic institutions and

societal trust. In *Harmony Square*, players take on the role of Chief Disinformation Officer, abusing social media to spread disinformation, using trolling, emotional language, rage amplification, conspiracy theories, and polarization to magnify inter-group differences. Players “win” by sowing discord and preventing consensus building.

10. A web-browser game, *Harmony Square* can be played in 10-15 minutes and has a whimsical story crafted to be familiar to players from all backgrounds. Since its November 2020 release, *Harmony Square* has been played nearly 400,000 times, garnered over 150 highly positive reviews and media mentions, and was nominated for two awards at the 2021 Games for Change Festival.
11. *Harmony Square* is playable in 18 languages, including: Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Tagalog, traditional Chinese, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. These languages were developed in response to demand signals GEC received from posts where there were clear plans for rolling out a new translation.
12. GEC has collaborated with the UK Cabinet Office to develop supplemental media literacy lesson plans and promotional materials. A media literacy lesson plan for *Harmony Square* is downloadable from the game’s website in English, Latvian, Russian, and Ukrainian.
13. *Harmony Square* is being used by embassies in a variety of ways, including: for counter-disinformation-focused educational initiatives (Ukraine), by foreign governments ahead of national elections (Latvia), as a part of Regional English Language programming (Iraq), by social media

influencers (Saudi Arabia), and at American Spaces around the world as a strategic educational tool to counter disinformation at its most basic level.

14. In a study conducted by the University of Cambridge and published in the Harvard University Kennedy School *Misinformation Review*, researchers found that “people who play the game find misinformation significantly less reliable after playing, are significantly more confident in their assessment, and are significantly less likely to report sharing misinformation, supporting Harmony Square’s effectiveness as a tool to inoculate people against online manipulation.” <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/breaking-harmony-square-a-game-that-inoculates-against-political-misinformation/>

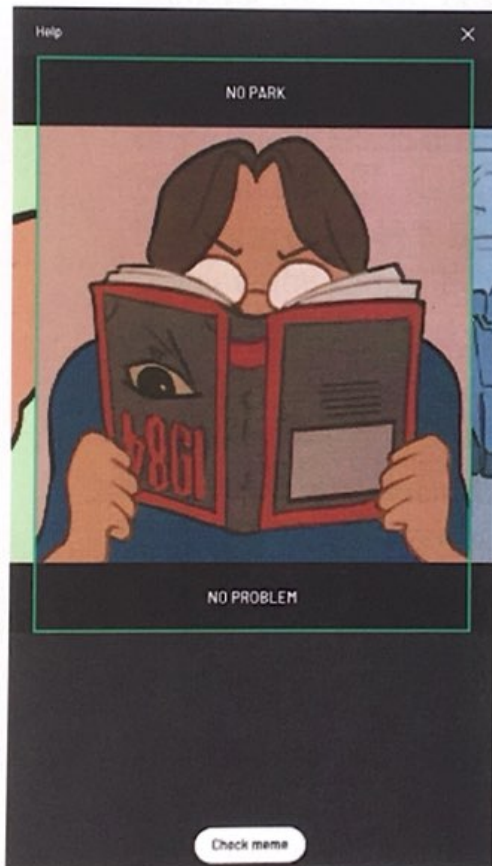


Cat Park image manipulation before and after

Herding Cats: Launching *Cat Park* at Home and Abroad

15. The release of *Cat Park* is timed to coincide with UNESCO’s annual Global Media and Information Literacy Week (October 24-31, 2022). The theme this year is “Nurturing Trust: A Media and Information Literacy Imperative.” <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy-week>

16. From Washington, GEC will highlight *Cat Park* during the PD Next 2022 PAO workshop, including at a Global PD Workshop breakout session. GEC will also socialize the game among game developers and work with a marketing firm to drive extra traffic to the game site. For more information, PAOs can contact GEC and/or attend the Tech Tools for Countering Propaganda and Disinformation breakout session at PD Next 2022.
17. Timing the release with UNESCO media literacy events at posts and International Education Week is intended to help U.S. embassies launch the game, ideally with partners who also seek to promote media literacy and counter propaganda and disinformation.



One possible meme combination of image and caption, but is it the most manipulative option?

Cat Nip: How Missions Can Use *Cat Park*

18. **Promote the launch of *Cat Park Online*.** Use the prepared and cleared digital campaign toolkit to publicize the launch of *Cat Park* on social media, starting the week of October 24, 2022. The toolkit includes game images and trailers, and sample posts. Consider asking your Ambassador or other well-known official to play the game online with a locally popular influencer, academic, journalist or government official (an online challenge to see who gets the highest game score is one option). [Cat Park Digital Campaign Toolkit](#)
19. **Leverage alumni, youth, or other communication networks.** When thinking about how best to promote the game and media literacy, consider who is the best messenger for the message for your particular target audience. Who is most vulnerable to disinformation, and how can we use this game to reach this segment of the population? Drawing on exchange program alumni, youth networks, members of the Digital Communication Network, or other influencers, you can ask them to carry the message and promote the game. Feel free to share all of the digital assets from the campaign toolkit.
20. **Partner with local UNESCO Global Media and Information Literacy Week events.** UNESCO takes a decentralized approach to this week, providing the overarching branding for ministries of education or culture, civil society groups, or individual schools to use when organizing their own events. Posts are encouraged to identify related events happening in their countries and to offer *Cat Park* and *Harmony Square* as resources for these events.

21. **Organize an event at an American Space.** Consider utilizing an American Space, Corner, makerspace, cat café, or other suitable venue to host events. Possible events could include discussions with journalists, academics, educators, game developers, gamers, and cat people about the game, local challenges around disinformation, and how to promote media literacy. GEC is willing to participate in events, where appropriate. Posts may also wish to utilize *Cat Park* during International Education Week, November 14-18.
22. **Include the games in functional English lessons.** Leverage Regional English Language Officers or Fulbright English Teaching Assistants to use the games when teaching English or other topics.
23. **Encourage relevant authorities to adopt the games as part of educational curricula in schools.** The games are appropriate for middle- and high-school or university-age players and because of the cross-cutting nature of disinformation, could be readily included in media literacy, history, civics, political science, or international relations curricula. Consider approaching ministries of education or other authorities about adoption of the games into lesson plans.
24. **Give people the “booster.”** Like vaccinations, *Harmony Square* and *Cat Park* inoculation effects only last so long. In the lead-up to local elections, U.S. missions that perceive a disinformation threat could encourage people to get their disinformation booster-shot by playing *Harmony Square* or *Cat Park*. When encouraging people to play the game, posts should think about the right messenger for the message for particular audiences.

25. **Report on your progress via PD Tools.** PD sections should report on their counter disinformation programs in PD Tools as part of their ongoing PD Implementation Plan (PDIP) process. PD sections that use *Cat Park* in their programs, should ensure that the title, the initiative objective, and/or activity description in PD Tools includes the key phrase “Cat Park.” Don’t turn your highlight into a homeless stray!
26. If *Cat Park* or *Harmony Square* is not available in a language spoken in post’s host country, there is no need to get into a cat fight. For this and other questions about how posts can use these assets and explore additional language versions, please reach out to Technology Engagements Division Senior Technology Advisor Paul J. Fischer (GECTech@state.gov).



Marvin lures players down the rabbit hole of his conspiracy

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