



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 4432 and 1975

September 25, 2019

Today the Committee is meeting to consider two bills that have bipartisan agreement. The first bill, introduced by the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Richmond, is H.R. 4432, the “Protecting Critical Infrastructure Against Drones and Emerging Threats Act.” It requires DHS to conduct a threat assessment on unmanned aerial systems – UAS or drones – and other emerging threats that UAS technology presents to our critical infrastructure.

I am pleased that we are considering H.R. 4432 today, a timely measure, in the wake of recent drone attacks on key Saudi Arabian oil installations. America’s landscape is dotted with critical infrastructure that may be vulnerable to drone-based attacks. H.R. 4432 directs DHS to prepare an assessment of the terrorism threats associated with unmanned drones in the U.S. to help protect that infrastructure. To foster timely information sharing on drone threats, it requires DHS to establish a mechanism for owners and operators of critical infrastructure to voluntarily report suspicious drone activity in or around their facilities. I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for his leadership on this issue and would note that later today Committee Members will be having a classified update from DHS about drone threats. We are looking forward to that update.

The second bill, H.R. 1975 – the “Cybersecurity Advisory Committee Authorization Act,” sponsored by Mr. Katko of New York, seeks to improve cyber policymaking within CISA. Specifically, H.R. 1975 would ensure that CISA leadership has the benefit of hearing from State and local government and private sector organizations in a formalized way. CISA is responsible for protecting the Nation’s critical infrastructure from physical and cyber threats, which necessitates an “all hands” approach. H.R. 1975 seeks to ensure this approach by establishing a formal advisory committee made up of representatives from the defense, education, financial services, and healthcare industries, among others, to advise and make recommendations to the CISA Director. I also thank Mr. Katko for introducing this legislation.

As you know, we had planned to consider additional legislation today to establish a non-partisan commission to better understand how online platforms can be utilized in furtherance of domestic or international terrorism, other illegal activity that poses a homeland or national security threat, or to carry out foreign influence campaigns. Over the past several weeks, we have consulted with stakeholders from industry, academia, and other advocates on this legislation. We have also engaged with you – Ranking Member Rogers – and your staff to try to reach bipartisan agreement on the bill.

However, based on the feedback we have gotten, it is apparent that we need to redouble our efforts at engaging with industry and other stakeholders, most especially stakeholders engaged on privacy and civil liberties to ensure that we get this right. I look forward to continuing engagement with stakeholders to refine the bill to ensure that the Commission is designed to help improve our understanding of how bad actors exploit online platforms to recruit and carry out activity that makes our nation less secure while also protecting free-speech and privacy.

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