



One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2025

The Hon. Mark Green
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
US House of Representatives
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Green:

I write to request that you hold a hearing with Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department) Secretary Kristi Noem as soon as possible, but no later than March 14, 2025. As the Committee responsible for overseeing DHS and ensuring that its critical mission is faithfully executed, we have an obligation to take testimony, on the record, on the great many concerning statements Secretary Noem has made about Department activities and components since being sworn in on January 25, 2025.

Over the weekend, Secretary Noem was interviewed by Dana Bash on CNN. In the interview, the Secretary claimed, “Well, we can’t trust the government anymore.”¹ Whether the Secretary’s statement was just an attempt at fearmongering that backfired spectacularly or an open admission that the Trump Administration is putting the public at risk by actively dismantling the Federal government is anyone’s guess. That said, her comments on CNN last weekend - together with the statements she has made about dismantling DHS components such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)² and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA),³ her lack of concern regarding Elon Musk’s unchecked access to Federal networks and the personal data of millions of Americans,⁴ and her baseless accusations of corruption at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) - warrant further investigation by the Committee.⁵

Just two days ago, the Secretary acknowledged that Elon Musk and his DOGE team were rummaging through FEMA’s network but could not, with any specificity, explain why, noting only that President Trump

¹ Alex Galbraith, “*You are the government*”: CNN hose calls out Noem’s anti-government fear-mongering, Salon (Feb. 9, 2025), <https://www.salon.com/2025/02/09/you-are-the-government-cnn-host-calls-out-noems-anti-government-fear-mongering/>.

² Jonathan Greig, *Homeland Security nominee Kristi Noem bashes CISA, says agency must be ‘smaller, more nimble,’* The Record (Jan. 17, 2025), <https://therecord.media/kristi-noem-cisa-smaller-nimble>.

³ Ian Duncan, *Kristi Noem says she would recommend Trump ‘get rid’ of FEMA,* Wash. Post (Feb. 9, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/02/09/fema-shutdown-noem-trump/>.

⁴ State of the Union, *Noem says she is comfortable with Musk having access to Americans’ personal data,* CNN (Feb. 9, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/09/politics/video/kristi-noem-elon-musk-doge-sotu-digvid>.

⁵ Stephen Dinan & Kerry Pickett, *DHS secretary blames ‘corrupt’ FBI after leak about immigration sweep,* Wash. Times (Feb. 10, 2025), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/feb/10/homeland-security-secretary-kristi-noem-blames-cor/>.

had authorized the access.⁶ She seemed unaware that unbridled access to agency networks is highly irregular, that she has a responsibility to understand the security implications of that access to Federal networks in general, or that she is obliged under Federal law to protect her own Department's networks which should, at the very least, include understanding the purpose of Elon Musk accessing them.⁷ The Committee must ensure that the Secretary understands her cybersecurity obligations and is prepared to take cybersecurity seriously.

Additionally, following statements by President Donald Trump that FEMA is a "disaster" and might "go away," leaving states on their own to respond to and recover from hurricanes, wildfires, and other disasters,⁸ Secretary Noem said "Yes, get rid of FEMA the way it exists today."⁹ She offered no further explanation of what she anticipated changing at FEMA or how she would involve Congress in those efforts. Then, just this morning, President Trump doubled down on his intension to dismantle the Federal disaster response apparatus, saying: "FEMA should be terminated."¹⁰ FEMA has played a critical role in responding to disasters in the districts of both Democratic and Republican Committee Members, and we must ensure that the Administration does not undermine the Agency's ability to help State and local governments respond to disasters. The Secretary owes the Committee an explanation.

Other Trump Administration policies are also adversely affecting the Department, and it does not appear that the Secretary is aware of or willing to express to the White House the manner in which the President's policies are undermining the Department's ability to execute its mission. Notably, the President's hiring freeze is stalling the recruitment and onboarding of top talent, and the Deferred Resignation Offers are available to employees across the Department, including CISA, eroding capacity at a time when threats to homeland security are rapidly evolving.¹¹ Moreover, it is unclear whether the Department has complied with court orders blocking the President's Federal grant freeze, particularly as a Judge has had to order the Administration to comply with an existing order to lift the freeze after the Trump Administration ignored previous court orders.¹² Even if the Secretary is unable or unwilling to do so, we must evaluate the impacts of President Trump's dangerous policies on the Department and its workforce.

Finally, Secretary Noem appears just as committed to maligning Federal employees as her boss. Without evidence, the Secretary alleged the FBI leaked information regarding mass deportation activities in Los Angeles. In fact, she called the FBI "so corrupt" and suggested that the "crooked deep state agents" be prosecuted "to the fullest extent of the law."¹³ Baselessly insulting Federal law enforcement is no way to forge stronger interagency relationships or to ensure the FBI has the workforce necessary to effectively partner with the Department.

⁶ Aileen Graef & Veronica Stracqualursi, *Homeland Security Secretary Noem says DOGE team has access to agency data*, CNN (Feb. 9, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/09/politics/noem-homeland-security-doge-musk-cnn/index.html>.

⁷ 44 U.S.C. § 3554.

⁸ Alex Brown & Kevin Hardy, *Trump wants states to handle disasters without FEMA. They say they can't*, Stateline (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://stateline.org/2025/02/06/trump-wants-states-to-handle-disasters-without-fema-they-say-they-cant/>.

⁹ See Graef & Stracqualursi, *supra* n. 6.

¹⁰ Josh Wingrove, *Trump Calls for Abolishing FEMA, Expanding Battle Against Feds*, Bloomberg Government (Feb. 11, 2025).

¹¹ David DiMolfetta, *In reversal, CISA workforce now permitted to take deferred resignation offer*, NextGov (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2025/02/reversal-cisa-workforce-now-permitted-take-deferred-resignation-offer/402788/>.

¹² Sareen Habeshian, *Judge Warns Trump admin to comply with order lifting federal funding freeze*, AXIOS (Feb. 10, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/2025/02/10/trump-spending-freeze-judge-order>.

¹³ Dinan & Pickett, *supra* n. 5.

The Trump Administration's policies are undermining our homeland security posture, and the Secretary has given no indication she will advocate for the Department or its workforce. Congressional oversight is a constitutional requirement and will be a national security imperative this Congress. I look forward to working with you to schedule this important hearing without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member