

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 23, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

We write to demand a briefing regarding the suspension of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) employees for conducting a polygraph test on an individual seeking access to highly sensitive cybersecurity intelligence,¹ which we understand to be a standard practice for individuals seeking special access to such information.

Our adversaries have grown bolder in their willingness to use cyber tools as leverage to affect U.S. foreign policy and more capable in their ability to do so. This trend, coupled with the evolution of new technologies like artificial intelligence, has contributed to a threat landscape that can shift rapidly.

Accordingly, the Federal government has invested billions of dollars in programs – classified and unclassified – aimed at understanding adversary behavior and securing domestic networks. As you are hopefully able to appreciate, the most sensitive information related to those efforts is shared only with individuals with a need-to-know and, in some cases, who also pass a counter-intelligence polygraph.

Earlier this summer, Acting CISA Director Madhu Gottumukkala reportedly sought access to information that had been shared with CISA by another agency and had been designated as a controlled access program. That agency required that any CISA employees seeking access to the information have a need-to-know and pass a counter-intelligence polygraph test. CISA employees advised Acting Director Gottumukkala of these requirements when he sought access to the information and informed him that previous senior leaders did not pursue access to such information because it was not essential to their job. They also apparently raised questions regarding whether he had a need-to-know.² After a senior CISA official denied Acting Director Gottumukkala's initial request for access to the information because he lacked an urgent need-to-know, a second request was ultimately approved pending a successful polygraph test. Acting Director Gottumukkala failed the polygraph test.

Subsequently, on August 1, six career staff involved in the process had their access to classified information suspended for “providing false information to the acting head of the Cybersecurity

¹ John Sakellariadis, *Acting CISA director failed a polygraph. Career staff are now under investigation.*, Politico (Dec. 21, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/21/cisa-acting-director-madhu-gottumukkala-polygraph-investigation-00701996>.

² *Id.*

and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) regarding the existence of a requirement for a polygraph examination prior to accessing certain programs.”³ On August 4, the employees were placed on administrative leave.

Under your leadership, Department of Homeland Security employees are routinely subject to polygraph tests to identify journalists’ sources of information that is embarrassing to you.⁴ If you can justify the use of polygraph tests on employees to spare yourself or the Department embarrassment, certainly you can understand their use as part of routine counter-intelligence screenings aimed at securing our Nation’s most sensitive information. Moreover, Acting Director Gottumukkala’s persistence in seeking access to highly sensitive information he did not need-to-know, coupled with his failed polygraph test, raise serious questions about his fitness to lead CISA.

In any event, we demand that you provide a briefing on this incident no later than January 9, 2026. In addition, we demand that any derogatory information about any of the six career employees suspended in relation to this incident be removed from their personnel records.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



James A. Himes
Ranking Member
House Permanent Select Committee
on Intelligence



Eric Swalwell
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Cybersecurity
and Infrastructure Protection

³ *Id.*

⁴ Joe Sommerlad, *Kristi Noem Accused of Ramping Up the Polygraphy of DHS Staff to Root Out People Leaking Embarrassing Stories to the Media*, Independent (May 21, 2025), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/kristi-noem-polygraph-tests-dhs-b2755315.html>.

cc: The Honorable Andrew R. Garbarino, Chairman
House Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Eric “Rick” Crawford, Chairman
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Andy Ogles, Chairman
House Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection