



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Securing Operational Technology: A Deep Dive into the Water Sector

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In 2022, the city of Jackson in my district endured a water crisis, where over 150,000 of my constituents were left without a clean drinking water supply. While that crisis was caused by flooding and a sustained lack of investment in a resilient water and wastewater system, it highlighted the devastating impact any disruptions to the supply of water can have on a community.

As we see increased evidence of adversaries like Russia, Iran, and China seeking to breach the networks of critical infrastructure sectors like water, we must do more to strengthen our defenses and increase our investment in operational technology security. Fortunately, the Biden Administration has made strengthening OT cybersecurity a priority, and Director Easterly has specifically emphasized expanding support to target rich, resource poor sectors like water.

I hope this hearing will help us get a better understanding of how the Biden Administration's and Congress's actions in recent years have enhanced OT cybersecurity while also learning what more the Federal government can do to continue building on recent progress.

In order to achieve the level of security that matches the current threat landscape, we will need to ensure critical infrastructure owners and operators have the information and resources necessary to combat threats to their operational technology security.

I have been pleased to see that CISA has prioritized industrial control systems by including leading ICS security companies in the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative and that CISA has partnered with other Federal agencies to share alerts and advisories when vulnerabilities and threats emerge. Continuing to enhance information sharing that is timely and actionable will be essential to maximizing the value of CISA's expertise and relationships with critical infrastructure.

Additionally, a longstanding challenge for the water sector in particular has been a lack of resources to invest in cybersecurity. Congress stepped up in the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to increase investments across infrastructure, including in cybersecurity through the enactment of Representative Clarke's State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program. But, we know, as this funding begins to flow, that it only covers a fraction of the needs out there and will be split across multiple sectors.

We need to continue to explore innovative ways to expand federal assistance to resource poor sectors like water that have struggled and will continue to struggle to fund urgent cybersecurity improvements in the absence of greater Federal support. As the Federal government works to support critical infrastructure sectors, strong collaboration across Federal agencies will be a necessary component to maximize the expertise brought to bear on this effort.

The Biden Administration has been working to improve coordination between CISA and sector-risk management agencies like the EPA, including by hiring a dedicated water sector liaison at CISA, and I

hope this hearing will help us better understand how coordination across Federal agencies can continue to expand. Our distinguished group of panelists today have the broad range of experience and expertise that will help inform this subcommittee's work going forward, and I look forward to their testimony.

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