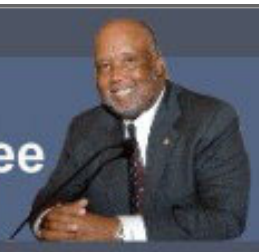
NEWS ALERT

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Iranian Cyber Threat to the U.S. Homeland

April 26, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee and Counterterrorism and Intelligence subcommittee joint hearing on "Iranian Cyber Threat to the U.S. Homeland":

"Today's hearing is our fourth examination of a threat from Iran. We have held two Subcommittee hearings and a Full Committee hearing. While I favor continuing and in-depth oversight, such oversight is not possible without witnesses who have access to current and timely information. In our four hearings on Iran, including this one, we have not had a single witness from this Administration. I think it would be helpful to hear this Administration's assessment.

As we examine the threat that Iran may pose to this nation's cyber security infrastructure, I am aware that the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center has said that a cyber attack from Iran is more likely than Iran waging a military attack on U.S. soil. Because this statement should be thoroughly examined in a forum in which allows unvarnished questions and candid answers, I am requesting that the Chairmen convene a classified briefing.

And while we do not know Iran's specific capabilities, we do know that there is a genuine threat to this Nation's cyber systems and networks. We know that the Director of the FBI has stated that in the not-too-distant future, cyber threats could surpass terrorism as the number one threat to the United States.

Therefore, it is imperative that we seriously examine the Federal government's role in securing cyberspace from malicious intrusions and dangerous attacks from foreign actors. And that is why, Mr. Chairman, I was troubled by last week's mark up of this Committee's cyber security bill. To protect America from cyber threats –including those from Iran, we need legislation that will accomplish three things:

- Address the growing cyber threat to critical infrastructure networks;
- Promote and enhance information-sharing between and among the private sector and the Federal government, while protecting the privacy and civil liberties of Americans using the Internet; and
- Solidify and enhance the Department of Homeland Security's role as the Federal government's lead for Federal network security and private sector cyber support.

These three actions could potentially secure the United States from a catastrophic cyber attack from Iran.
Unfortunately, the bill we marked up last week would not accomplish any of these things.

At the end of this week—which the Republican leadership has marketed as "Cybersecurity Week" - America will not have legislation that vests cybersecurity efforts in one domestic agency.

The American people will not have a cyber bill that protects the privacy rights of American citizens.

In short, despite the marketing of "Cyber Week," the bill which may pass this House, despite a veto threat from the White House, will not protect our critical infrastructure assets from those who may seek to unleash cyber chaos.

So, while I look forward to today's testimony, and thank the witnesses for their participation, I am disheartened that instead of producing the kind of legislation needed to keep this nation safe, House leadership produced a marketing gimmick."

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