



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

DHS Cybersecurity: Roles and Responsibilities to Protect the Nation's Critical Infrastructure

March 13, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “DHS Cybersecurity: Roles and Responsibilities to Protect the Nation's Critical Infrastructure”:

“Each week brings new reports of cyber breaches. Hackers are becoming more sophisticated. They are hitting Americans where we live, work, and play at an unprecedented rate and in new and very troubling ways.

Last month, President Obama signed an Executive Order entitled “Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity” that directed the Department of Homeland Security to establish a new voluntary program for critical infrastructure.

The issuance of this Executive Order is a positive step forward. It has the potential to foster unprecedented collaboration between the Federal government and the private sector on this very difficult homeland security challenge.

I look forward to hearing from you, Deputy Secretary Lute, about the Department's central role under this Order, as well as the progress DHS has made in recent years to build its cyber capabilities.

I also look forward to hearing from representatives of critical infrastructure sectors that are joining us today about the importance of fostering a close working relationship between industry and Federal government.

At my urging, Ms. Richardson of the American Civil Liberties Union is here to help us think about how we can structure that relationship in a way that protects the privacy and civil liberties of all Americans.

While the issuance of the Executive Order is a welcome development, it will take legislative action to fully address cyber threats and vulnerabilities to critical infrastructure.

I appreciate what the Chairman has said about his desire to focus on cybersecurity this Congress, but, as we saw in the 112th Congress, simply wanting to pass cybersecurity legislation is not sufficient.

Mr. Chairman, I know you share my desire to authorize DHS's cybersecurity programs and bolster our Nation's ability to ward off attacks to critical infrastructure.

However, I am afraid that some of our colleagues in the House have not seen the light.

Hopefully, the testimony we receive today will help this Committee make the case for moving cybersecurity legislation to the House floor.

Even as we begin work on our bill, we must not lose sight of the need to defend, pursue, and

exercise our jurisdiction.

Recently, another Committee introduced cyber legislation, H.R. 624, which is expected to see action in the House in April. That bill, for the first time, would authorize the Department's "National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center" but the Speaker did not refer it to this Committee.

Last week, I, along with the Ranking Member Clarke, sent you a letter urging you to insist upon a referral of that bill. Our Members deserve the opportunity to consider the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act before it goes to the Full House.

Before I close, I would note that this hearing is taking place at a time when the effects of arbitrary, across-the-board spending cuts are just beginning to be realized. I look forward to hearing from you, Deputy Secretary Lute, about how the sequester and the perpetual uncertainty around budgeting impacts DHS' ability to plan, prioritize, and execute its critical cybersecurity mission."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>