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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Facilitating Cyber Threat Information Sharing and Partnering with the Private Sector to Protect Critical Infrastructure: An Assessment of DHS Capabilities

May 16, 2013 (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 hearing entitled “Facilitating Cyber Threat Information Sharing and Partnering with the Private Sector to Protect Critical Infrastructure: An Assessment of DHS Capabilities”:

“Over the past few years, the cybersecurity mission of the Department of Homeland Security has undergone an unprecedented expansion in funding and a change in organizational structure.

Today, I look forward to hearing the testimony from some of the officials responsible for implementing these expanded programs and activities and overseeing this change in organizational structure and culture.

I also look forward to hearing about how these changes will assist DHS in its efforts to become - in perception and reality - the civilian lead for cybersecurity in the Federal sector.

Though once in doubt, it now appears that DHS is bringing together the necessary elements to solidify its leadership role.

In support of those efforts, last month, Chairman McCaul and I sponsored an amendment to cyber information sharing legislation, CISPA, that would establish a center within DHS as the Federal hub for information sharing.

I hope this amendment sent a clear signal that any cybersecurity legislation passed by Congress during this session should have a strong role for DHS as the Federal leader in areas where government and the private sector must work together to prevent cyber attacks and mitigate their impacts.

Today, I want to hear more about DHS’ human capital resources. It is my understanding that DHS, like all Federal agencies, is suffering from a shortage of cyber personnel.

As DHS works to ensure its role as the Federal lead for domestic cybersecurity, we cannot ignore that our nation’s ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from advanced cyber threats is a forward-looking endeavor that cannot succeed without sufficient, qualified personnel.

We cannot rely on other countries to develop our cyber workforce.

While we cannot predict what cyber threats may occur, we can certainly be prepared and be ready.

Be prepared and be ready is the philosophy DHS encourages the public to adopt for natural disasters.

Yet, when the on-coming disaster may be a man-made cyber threat, the Department seems to have adopted a “let tomorrow take care of itself” philosophy.

Surely, this is not acceptable.

DHS must adopt a preparedness philosophy in all aspects of its work. In the world of cyber threats, a part of preparation must be capacity building programs that include education, outreach, and awareness initiatives.

This year, as hundreds of millions of dollars are poured into EINSTEIN and continuous diagnostics programs, the Administration's budget request slashed funding for the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education by \$4.8 million, cutting the program by one-third.

These cuts will delay efforts to provide cyber outreach and education to 1.7 million high school students.

We cannot continue to complain about the lack of skilled cybersecurity professionals in the American workforce if we are willing to allow DHS to cut the funding it uses to develop the cyber workforce.

Again, let me say—we cannot rely on other countries to develop our cyber work force.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and hope that we can work together to restore this funding and ensure that DHS is properly building a defense-in-depth strategy to protect the Nation far into the future.”

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