

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP): Threat to Critical Infrastructure***

May 8, 2014 (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 “Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP): Threat to Critical Infrastructure”:

“Scientists tell us that it is likely that a powerful geomagnetic solar storm, capable of affecting parts of the U.S. and Canadian electrical grid could occur. When it will occur, we are not quite sure.

What we do know is that last year, 2013 was forecasted as the next period of elevated solar activity, known as “solar maximum”, and we are in a high activity part of a cyclical process.

The popularity of an EMP event occurring in the U.S. has taken on the dimensions of a doomsday – end of civilization as we know it – scenario, and it includes all sorts of catastrophic events surrounding possible solar storms, and other kinds of EMP attacks.

These stories are rampant throughout current media – fiction books have been popularized about it, the Internet has innumerable sites that tout the devastation to come, and it is the subject of late-night talk radio regularly.

Since I have been on this Committee, I have urged my colleagues not to use our positions of influence to promote fear in the public.

While the threat of an EMP event is real, I believe we need to use common sense, risk based scenarios and exercises to give us a picture of how to prevent or respond to an EMP event.

Many blame the current administration for their frustrations about EMP. However, no one from the federal government is here today to testify about the issue.

Today, we will not hear from government specialists and experts from the Department of Energy or Homeland Security on this issue.

It is the responsibility of this Committee to know the probability of such an event, and the likelihood and severity of the effects on the electric grid and other critical infrastructure.

What’s important to me is that in this time of increasingly tight budgets, and the current sequester budget for homeland security, we must depend on sophisticated risk analysis to guide us in making the tough decisions about our spending priorities.

Furthermore, we need to explore how we can leverage this risk analysis to sensibly prioritize our spending and especially make use of the existing public/private partnerships to deal with such a threat.”

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