

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Cedric L. Richmond (D-LA)
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and
Security Technologies

Hearing on “Emerging Threats and Technologies to Protect the Homeland”

February 12, 2015

In the past, Chairs and Ranking Members of this Subcommittee have found common ground on vital areas of policy that have helped protect our nation’s citizens, and have been focused on protecting our critical infrastructure. I look forward to continuing that tradition of bipartisanship with Chairman Ratcliffe.

My primary focus will be to identify, oversee, and improve the authorities within DHS to help them assist our nation’s critical infrastructure to find acceptable and achievable levels of security from a wide range of manmade threats and natural disasters.

We know that the privately-owned entities that make up the nation’s critical infrastructure; including our ports, energy networks, chemical manufacturers, transportation and financial sectors, and telecommunication providers, are vital to our societal and economic well-being.

My constituents know all-too-well what can happen when these systems fail. 10 years ago, the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, had a debilitating impact on national security, economic security, and public health and safety. Needless to say, it is in the national interest to ensure that such critical infrastructure is adequately protected.

What we do here in Washington affects how firefighters, police, EMS technicians, border and maritime security, and doctors and nurses, protect Americans every day, especially in times of disaster.

Aside from the physical critical infrastructure security issues, both manmade and natural, it will be necessary to do all we can to develop a workable cyber protection framework for critical infrastructure entities in order to protect the rest of our economy.

The President put forward a series of legislative proposals at the State of the Union that I think are a solid beginning for Congress to consider. These proposals would further refine and expand the authorities that DHS gained by last year’s cyber security bills that were originated in, and passed by this Subcommittee and Full Committee, the Senate, and signed by the President.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention the looming funding crisis at DHS. Although this crisis is mainly manufactured by my friends in the majority, it is real nevertheless. 16 days from now, the bulk of DHS’s management and support for the homeland security enterprise would be forced to close due to political gamesmanship.

We will hear testimony from the Congressional Research Service today that will outline the funding scenarios ahead of us, and their likely impact on the programs testifying before us. I sincerely hope that we all take heed to this sobering testimony and come together to find a solution. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you on the many complex challenges that face our Subcommittee.