



COMMITTEE ON
**HOMELAND
SECURITY**
DEMOCRATS

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, *Ranking member*

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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Examining DHS' Efforts to Strengthen its Cybersecurity Workforce
Joint Subcommittee Hearing
March 7, 2018

Recruiting and retaining a qualified cybersecurity workforce at the Department of Homeland Security is a national security imperative.

Every day, we learn more about the efforts of our adversaries – from Russia and Iran to North Korea and China – to use their cyber tools to attack our economy, our critical infrastructure, and the pillars of our democracy, including our election systems.

In the wake of this evolving threat landscape, public and private-sector critical infrastructure owners and operators look the Department of Homeland Security's National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) to share information on cyber threats, to provide cybersecurity assessments, and to deploy incident response teams following an incident, among other things.

Yet, when Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Communications Jeanette Manfra testified before this panel last October, she told me that 24 percent of the fully-funded cybersecurity workforce billets at NPPD were unfilled.

In 2014, Congress gave DHS hiring authorities on par with the Department of Defense to address cybersecurity staffing challenges. Although DHS clamored for these authorities for several years prior to 2014, the Department does not plan to fully implement them until April 2019 – five years after Congress authorized expedited hiring.

We cannot afford to waste that kind of time.

Last month, FBI Director Wray, CIA Director Pompeo, NSA Director Rogers, and Director of National Intelligence Coats, DIA Director Ashley, and NGA Director Cardillo all testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee and unanimously agreed that Russia would continue its election meddling efforts into the 2018 midterm elections.

Last week, NSA Director Rogers again confirmed that the Russian government is actively targeting U.S. election systems.

Secretary of State Tillerson also agrees that the Russians are targeting midterm elections, yet has not spent any of the funds Congress appropriated to the agency to address the ongoing threat to the integrity of our elections.

Congress granted the State Department \$120 million to counter Russian election meddling, including \$60 million to coordinate anti-propaganda efforts with agencies

like the Department of Homeland Security.

That said, NPPD has an important role to play in this space and has, in many ways, stepped up.

I am pleased that it has prioritized services for election administrators, and that all of the 14 requested risk and vulnerability assessments will be concluded by next month.

But I understand that NPPD had to shift resources to complete the assessments, and I am concerned that it will need more resources – and more trained cybersecurity professionals – to meet the ongoing obligations of the critical infrastructure subsector designation. As threats to the homeland continue to evolve, NPPD and its partners throughout DHS, will need a strong, qualified cybersecurity workforce.

Congress has given DHS the authorities and structures it needs to develop that workforce, and it is on DHS to implement them. Ultimately, as much as the increased demand for a qualified cybersecurity workforce poses a challenge, it also creates opportunities.

When DHS finally completes the process for coding its cybersecurity workforce, it will be able to target recruiting at more diverse talent pools – from community colleges to veterans' groups. I will be interested in learning what efforts DHS is undertaking to recruit untapped talent, as well as cultivate and retain its workforce.

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