

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“Cyber Insecurity: Hackers are Penetrating Federal Systems and Critical Infrastructure”**

April 19, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology Subcommittee hearing entitled “Cyber Insecurity: Hackers are Penetrating Federal Systems and Critical Infrastructure”:

“I’ve been tracking this issue for some time now. In October 2006, when the world first learned of the hacking incident at the Department of Commerce, I sent a letter to the Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity, Greg Garcia, asking several specific questions about the role of the Department in responding to this incident.

Unfortunately, I never received a response back from the Department. I understand that I’m not the only one being left in the dark when it comes to the Department’s efforts in cybersecurity. If I understand Chairman Langevin correctly, many federal agencies are waiting for the Department to provide them with timely intelligence and recommendations about hacking incidents at the federal level.

Many in the private sector are also telling me that the Department is failing to provide the guidance and partnership necessary to successfully secure cyberspace. It is clear that our government, working together with the private sector and academia, must do more to ensure that cybersecurity is a priority in our nation’s homeland security strategy.

In 1996, the United States government undertook the first national effort to secure our networks. Unfortunately, I don’t believe that we are any further along today in our efforts to secure cyberspace.

Programs and initiatives that were developed over the past ten years have been dismantled and, in certain instances, are just now being re-created by the government. We can see that this Administration views its priorities in cyberspace differently from the last Administration.

The most senior ranking official within the Administration exclusively responsible for cybersecurity has gone from being a Senior Advisor to the President to an Assistant Secretary position buried several layers down in the Department of Homeland Security bureaucracy. I’m glad to read in Mr. Dixon’s statement that ‘coordinating better cyber security practices across the Federal government’ is one of Secretary Chertoff’s ‘highest priorities.’

But this rings hollow to me when I think about how long it took him to appoint an Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity. I also wonder why the Secretary believes that this

Department will be able to coordinate better cyber security practices across the Federal government, when his own Chief Information Officer just received up a 'D' in the recent FISMA grades.

Finally, I'm wondering why the Secretary wouldn't send Mr. Garcia up on this first panel to testify. I can think of no better opportunity for him to work on coordinating better cyber security practices across the Federal government than sitting next to the State and Commerce Departments at this hearing."

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