

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Hacking the Homeland: Investigating Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities at the Department of Homeland Security”

June 20, 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 “Hacking the Homeland: Investigating Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities at the Department of Homeland Security”:

“I’d like to focus my comments this afternoon on a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great American essayist and poet who once said: ‘What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.’

Two months ago, Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity Greg Garcia spoke at the Computer Associates World Conference in Las Vegas. There, he told a captive audience several things:

Though security incidents result from the exploitation of defects in software design or code, they are also caused by users not fixing their configurations to their security requirements. Security incidents are also caused by insider problems stemming from poor employee training, inconsistent access control policy, and fragmented security implementation and patch management practices.

The Assistant Secretary asked the audience – as he has been asking audiences across this country – to perform risk assessments on their networks; establish security policies according to risk profiles; invest in and upgrade technology solutions, systems, and training; and continue to test, audit, and fix systems.

In light of the materials I’ve reviewed for this hearing, I think that Mr. Garcia probably should have given that speech to folks here in Washington D.C.

There are a lot of folks over in the CIO’s office who need to hear that message. How can the Department of Homeland Security be a real advocate for sound cybersecurity practices without following some of its own advice? How can we expect improvements in private infrastructure cyberdefense when DHS bureaucrats aren’t fixing their own configurations? How can we ask others to invest in upgraded security technologies when the Chief Information Officer grows the Department’s IT security budget at a snail’s pace? How can we ask the private sector to better train employees and implement more consistent access controls when DHS allows employees to send classified emails over unclassified networks and contractors to attach unapproved laptops to the network?

I am not suggesting that the Department discontinue its cybersecurity message to the public and private sectors. But what the Department is doing on its own networks speaks so loud that

the message is not getting across to anybody else.

It's not just the private sector that's getting double-speak from DHS. It's the rest of the Federal government too. 'Einstein' is the National Cybersecurity Division's sensor system that analyzes suspicious network traffic. Over a dozen Federal agencies use this system. Yet the CIO does not deploy Einstein across the Department. I ask Mr. Charbo today, what kind of message does that send about the Einstein program? If it's good enough for other Federal agencies, why isn't it good for DHS?

'Do as I say, not as I do' policy is a recipe for disaster, and if we are serious about the security risks facing our networks, then we need to start acting and stop posturing. I've spent some time reviewing Mr. Charbo's responses to our questions, and reviewing the numerous IG and GAO audits of his work. I am not convinced that he's serious about fixing the vulnerabilities in our systems.

And if he's not committed to securing our networks, I have to question his ability to lead the Department's IT efforts. I can't understand for the life of me why it takes outside auditors to tell the CIO and his contractors that these networks are insecure.

The American people are tired of hearing that getting a 'D' is a security improvement. I'm tired of hearing it.

The American people are tired of hearing their government say one thing but do another.

What happened to leadership? What happened to vision? What happened to accountability? What happened to excellence? In light of all of the evidence in front of us, I think the first thing that Mr. Charbo needs to do is explain to us why he should keep his job.

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