

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****Cybersecurity Recommendations for the Next Administration**

September 16, 2008 (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 “Cybersecurity Recommendations for the Next Administration”:

“Throughout the 110th Congress, you have established yourself as a leader in this field, and I want to commend you for your work. You have made a significant improvement in the security posture of Federal information systems and critical infrastructure systems.

We are here today to consider and discuss the CSIS Commission’s preliminary cybersecurity recommendations for the next Administration.

The Commission is composed of leaders in the field, in both the public and private sectors. It is a testament to Chairman Langevin’s knowledge and expertise in this field that he and the Ranking Member were asked to co-chair this Commission.

Let us be clear: cybersecurity is an issue of national security that must be immediately addressed in a comprehensive fashion. Public reports suggest that Federal networks have been under attack for years. These attacks have resulted in the loss of indeterminate amounts of information.

Regretfully, history will show that the delayed reaction by this Administration to the challenges in cyberspace has only made us more vulnerable. I think back to years past when more could have been done to avoid the troubles that we find ourselves in today.

For instance, the Administration drafted a high-level “National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace” in 2002 that presented problems and possible solutions to high level cybersecurity issues, but never mandated any changes required to improve security.

In 2003, the Administration eliminated its top advisor on cybersecurity – Richard Clarke – who was a key advisor to the President. Then, after Congress pushed for the creation of an Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity, DHS waited over a year to fill the position, and buried it four levels down in the bureaucracy.

And anybody who has followed this Committee’s oversight hearings knows about the delayed response by DHS’s Chief Information Officer in receiving intelligence reports and threat briefings.

GAO will report today on the Department’s lack of progress in several significant areas, namely establishing an alerts and warnings capability.

So many years we’ve been at it, and we’re still so far away. As the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, with oversight over this Department, I want to state clearly and for the record – that is unacceptable to me.

This is an issue of national security. We have to start looking beyond the past. We have to look beyond past mistakes – and find solutions to these problems.

I am proud that members of this Committee are taking a proactive approach to our national security when it comes to cyberspace, and I thank them – and the rest of the CSIS Commission – for their efforts. The incoming Administration will face a number of significant homeland security challenges.

I look forward to working with Chairman Langevin and the Ranking Member to ensure that the security of our Federal information systems and critical information infrastructure is addressed in a comprehensive fashion with the importance that it deserves. “

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