

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****“Reviewing the Federal Cybersecurity Mission”**

March 10, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Reviewing the Federal Cybersecurity Mission”:

“This is a particularly timely hearing, given the recent resignation of Mr. Beckstrom as Director of the National Cyber Security Center.

Some of our biggest challenges in Federal cybersecurity – reported by dozens of independent observers, including GAO and CSIS – have come as a result of ineffective leadership, unclear organizational structure, and poorly defined roles and responsibilities for agencies and the private sector.

This is why I – along with many of my colleagues – were optimistic when Mr. Beckstrom was brought on to lead the National Cyber Security Center. He has expertise in organizational structure. He has worked extensively with the private sector.

But Mr. Beckstrom did not have experience working miracles. And that is the unfortunate position that the previous Administration put him in. Without clear authority or budget, he was placed in a no-win situation. In his resignation letter, Mr. Beckstrom candidly described the control that is wielded by NSA over the cybersecurity mission today. This parallels the thoughts of some of our witnesses here today.

I don’t disagree with the public statements made recently by the DNI, who said that the NSA houses most of the cyber talent in the Federal government. But I don’t think the answer to our problems in cyberspace comes from giving control of the entire Federal cybersecurity mission to NSA.

I want to clearly state that this Committee believes that there should be a credible civilian government cybersecurity capability that interfaces with, but is not controlled by, the NSA.

According to GAO, DHS has not proven itself up to this challenge yet. From our work with DHS through the years, I don’t disagree. But there are pockets within DHS showing signs of improvement. US-CERT and the Control Systems Security Program are two of those programs that I believe are demonstrating progress.

I hope the Administration can strike the balance between civilian and military cybersecurity capabilities. We here in Congress are looking towards the Administration for leadership on this critical issue. I share the Chair’s optimism about the President’s commitment to cybersecurity, and I hope that at the end of the 60 day review, we here in Congress will have a clear understanding of the President’s vision for cybersecurity.”

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