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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Full Committee Markup of H.Res 235

April 5, 2017

The Russian government's interference campaign against our democracy is not 'fake news'. Earlier this year, the issuance of the Intelligence Community's assessment of the campaign brought to light what this Committee has been hearing about in our classified space since well before November 8th.

Speaking on behalf of the entire intelligence community, the Director of National Intelligence stated in the January assessment that:

1. "Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency";
2. "Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump;" and
3. "Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the US presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against US allies and their election process."

Since January, the Russian influence campaign and contacts between President Trump's inner circle and Russian operatives have become a "kitchen table topic" in American households. Americans want answers.

In fact, just last week, in a FOX News poll, 66 percent of respondents said they want Congress to investigate the Russian hacking and influence campaign.

Last Thursday, I introduced this resolution to ensure that the Committee received materials from the Department of Homeland Security to answer the following critical questions. What is the full scope of the hacking activities that the Russians took against our electoral systems? What, if any, operational impacts did these activities have on our electoral systems, including voter rolls and voting equipment? What information did DHS have to determine that the Russian activities did not directly impact vote tallying?

Approval of this resolution could jumpstart a Committee investigation.

Make no mistake, by directing an expansive cyber hacking and propaganda campaign against not only our democracy but also that of France, Germany and the Netherlands, Vladimir Putin has made himself enemy #1 of Western Democracy.

Like FBI Director Comey, I believe that Putin considers his efforts to be 'successful' and that we should expect Russia to continue to cause mischief covertly and overtly to further erode trust in Western Democratic political institutions.

While I support legislation to establish a 9/11-style independent investigative commission, I recognize that, at this time, there is not enough support on the other side of the aisle for it to advance.

Unless this Committee acts and commences an investigation that specifically addresses DHS' efforts to identify, address, and mitigate Russian interference, the only prospects we'd have for a House-led inquiry rest with the Intelligence Committee.

I do not need to tell you that the House Intelligence Committee has hit a very rough patch and is struggling to carry out its extensive investigation. Even if things get back on track in the Intelligence Committee and they are able to reach bipartisan conclusions, it seems unlikely that they will do a deep-dive into the Department of Homeland Security's efforts before, during, and after the Russian attacks.

As such, now is the time for this Committee to launch its own bipartisan inquiry. We have an opportunity today to restore Americans' faith that we can put partisanship aside and come together- as we have historically done- to seek the answers that the American public deserves.

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