



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Full Committee Markup

September 13, 2018

This week marked the seventeenth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Before that day, we could have never envisioned that passenger airplanes would be transformed into deadly missiles in the hands of terrorists who overtook cockpits and used their professional flight training to purposely crash the planes into the World Trade Center. The Democratic measures under consideration today take to heart what the 9/11 Commission explained was a major factor in the attack—a “failure of imagination.” The measures address the threats of an unconventional attack carried out by a drone or a cyber incursion.

First, there is H.R. 6620, a measure introduced by the Ranking Member of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee, Mr. Richmond. It seeks to ensure that critical infrastructure owners and operators can report to DHS when they observe nefarious drone activity over their facilities. While drones are emerging as a critical tool for good in the homeland space, particularly with respect to border surveillance and disaster response, their proliferation does not come without risk. As we saw recently in Venezuela, a drone can be transformed into a weapon of attack.

The second Democratic bill was introduced by our Senate colleague, Senator Hassan. S. 1281, the “Hack DHS Act of 2017” seeks to harness talent outside of government to build up our defenses against cyber threats. It does so by authorizing a new program where DHS would provide a financial reward to those who legitimately come forward to report vulnerabilities on public-facing DHS websites and applications to prevent exploitation by cyber terrorists, State actors, and criminal organizations. I look forward to the Committee taking timely action on these important measures.

Before I yield back, I would note that I am disappointed that the Committee is not expected to have Secretary Nielsen before the Committee this month. Members have a wide range of timely questions for the Secretary on a range of issues, from immigration enforcement to election security and disaster response. I look forward to working with you to ensure that in the little time we have remaining this Congress, our Members will be afforded the opportunity to pose those questions to the Secretary.

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