



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
The Counter-Ransomware initiative: Department of Homeland Security Efforts
November 17, 2021**

We are here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's work as part of the Biden Administration's whole-of-government approach to countering ransomware. Under President Trump, cybersecurity was not prioritized. Under President Trump, the position of cybersecurity coordinator was eliminated from the National Security Council even as we see ransomware emerge as a homeland security threat to our Nation's critical infrastructure.

Like with so many other national challenges, we lost ground during the Trump Administration with respect to preventing ransomware and our schools, cities, pipeline, water and others in critical infrastructures are paying the price. This year has already seen crippling and costly ransomware attacks that have disrupted Federal, State, and local government, our infrastructure, and more. Across the country, we have seen hospitals struggle to carry out their life-saving work when their systems were compromised. Many of the worst attacks originate from Russian soil, and cybercriminals often operate with tacit knowledge, and even approval, from Russian security services.

To his credit, President Biden is taking this threat seriously and has repeatedly and directly called on Vladimir Putin to act with respect to Russian hackers involved in ransomware attacks on U.S. interests. In October, he convened a two-day White House counter-ransomware summit with 30 countries to put further pressure on President Putin and announced that we "look to the Russian government to address ransomware criminal activity coming from actors within Russia." I am particularly pleased that President Biden is harnessing capabilities across the Federal government to prevent, respond, mitigate, and recover from ransomware attacks.

From what I know of the Department of Homeland Security and its capabilities, I believe that DHS is uniquely positioned to help address the threat posed by ransomware, prevent future attacks, and track down the criminals engaged in ransomware attacks. I am pleased that Chairwoman Slotkin and Chairwoman Clarke are leading on this critical issue by holding today's hearing and I look forward to the testimony from the witnesses and hearing more about collaboration between CISA, the U.S. Secret Service, and other DHS partners to protect our communities and critical infrastructure from ransomware attacks.

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