Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Ratcliffe (R-TX)
Homeland Security Committee

"Challenges of Recruiting and Retaining a Cybersecurity Workforce"

September 7, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

Good afternoon.

I would like begin by thanking our panel for taking the time today to testify. Your thoughts and opinions are very important as we oversee the Department of Homeland Security in meeting its cybersecurity workforce challenges.

Cybersecurity is one of the most daunting challenges of our generation, and as our adversaries grow in sophistication, so will the challenges associated with preventing their attacks. My colleagues on this committee have heard me say this often, but I'll say it again – America will only remain the world's superpower so long as it remains the world's cybersecurity superpower.

As the lead civilian agency for our federal cybersecurity posture, DHS factors as a critical piece of this equation. It is a great privilege to chair this subcommittee, and I look forward to our continued partnership with the private sector and the administration on these important cybersecurity issues.

Because inaction is simply not an option.

According to the Cisco 2017 Annual Cybersecurity Report, ransomware is growing at a yearly rate of 350% and the firm Cybersecurity Ventures predicts cybercrime will cost the world in excess of $6 trillion annually by 2021, making it more profitable than the global trade of all major illegal drugs combined. It is also estimated that the average cost of a data breach will be $150 million by 2020. Cyber-attacks are growing in frequency and sophistication, but the availability of qualified cybersecurity professionals to deal with these challenges is not keeping pace.

There have been several studies over the past few years documenting the growing shortage of cybersecurity professionals. In this ever-increasing connected world, the problem is only going to get worse. Today, one estimate, from the consulting firm Frost & Sullivan, is forecasting a shortage of a staggering 1.8 million cybersecurity workers worldwide by 2022. One industry organization estimates that 53 percent of organizations experience delays of 6 months or longer to find qualified cybersecurity candidates.

We know that the entire industry is facing an unprecedented shortage of cybersecurity workers at all levels of competency – from front-line defenders to CIOs. Against this backdrop, the

Department of Homeland Security must compete with the private sector to recruit and retain the best talent possible in order to carry out its cybersecurity mission and protect our critical infrastructure.

Unfortunately, DHS's issues are compounded by additional hiring challenges often felt by the Federal government. DHS must work to overcome slow hiring processes and workforce supply and pipeline issues in order to build the essential workforce required to meet its cyber mission. DHS must strategically plan for the training, recruitment and retention of its cybersecurity workforce.

The Homeland Security Committee passed several pieces of legislation that were signed into law to augment the cybersecurity workforce at DHS, including the Border Patrol Agent Pay Reform Act of 2014 that expanded DHS's hiring authorities, allowing the Department to better recruit and hire qualified cyber professionals. Unfortunately, these new authorities have not yet been fully implemented. This is an area where hearing from the experts before us today will provide valuable input as we conduct oversight of DHS's responsibilities and ensure that DHS has the human capital and resources necessary to carry out its important cybersecurity mission.

The Federal government supports a number of programs to recruit and retain its workforce. In particular, the CyberCorps: Scholarship-For-Service Program was authorized in the National Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2014 and focuses on recruiting and training the next generation of information technology professionals, industrial control system security professionals, and security managers.

Working with DHS, the National Science Foundation has awarded grants for the CyberCorps: Scholarship-For-Service program since 2011 to increase and strengthen Federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments' cyber workforce. As of January 2017, there were 69 active Scholarship for Service institutions, including 8 in my home state of Texas. CyberCorps has provided scholarships to 2,945 recipients, with 2,223 graduates serving Federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments and 623 students currently working toward that goal.

The recent interest my office has received from two and four year colleges in my district about participating in the CyberCorps program is encouraging. It reinforces that stakeholders of all sizes from all corners of the country want to be part of the cybersecurity workforce solution.

I look forward to a robust conversation with our distinguished panel of witnesses that will support our efforts in strengthening DHS's efforts to recruit and retain talented cybersecurity professionals.

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