

The Honorable Roger Wicker
The Honorable Jack Reed
Senate Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Rand Paul
The Honorable Gary Peters
**Senate Committee on Senate Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs**

The Honorable Mike Rogers
The Honorable Adam Smith
House Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Mark Green
The Honorable Bennie Thompson
House Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Brian Mast
The Honorable Gregory Meeks
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Jim Risch
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Tom Cotton
The Honorable Mark Warner
**Senate Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence**

The Honorable Rick Crawford
The Honorable Jim Himes
**House Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence**

The Honorable John Moolenaar
The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi
**House Select Committee on Strategic
Competition between the United States and
the Chinese Communist Party**

RE: Urgent Bipartisan Concern Over Dismantling of U.S. Cyber Defenses

Dear Chair Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, Chair Paul, Ranking Member Peters, Chair Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, Chair Green, Ranking Member Thompson, Chair Mast, Ranking Member Meeks, Chair Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Chair Cotton, Ranking Member Warner, Chair Crawford, Ranking Member Himes, Chair Moolenaar, and Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi:

Leaders across the political spectrum have consistently acknowledged an essential truth: foreign influence operations represent a direct assault on American sovereignty. Since the founding of our country, national security has served as a unifying imperative, transcending partisan divides in the shared mission of defending the United States from external threats. As President Reagan explained in an address to the nation in 1983, “We maintain our strength in order to deter and defend against aggression — to preserve freedom and peace.” This bipartisan commitment remains vital today as our adversaries grow bolder and more sophisticated in their cyber operations against American interests. However, as a coalition of 19 former defense officials, members of Congress, and national security leaders, we have become gravely concerned that recent dismantling of key infrastructure

is undermining our nation's cyberspace capabilities and creating dangerous openings for foreign adversaries to expand their influence and control.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed foreign adversaries systematically expand their cyber warfare capabilities with the explicit aim of undermining American democracy. Their tactics vary: Russia has engaged in direct cyber intrusions, forcing [local election officials to defend against](#) nation-level threats; China [has targeted critics](#) of the CCP, including members of Congress; and Iran has sought to amplify divisive content, [undermining Republican candidates](#) in recent cycles. These adversaries have disseminated false narratives over social media [to disrupt emergency response](#) and [infiltrated our telecommunications networks](#) to surveil the private communications of elected officials. These threats have been identified repeatedly in the DNI's Annual Threat Assessment, the DOD Cyber Strategy, the National Intelligence Strategy, CISA's Strategic Plan, the National Counterintelligence Strategy, the DHS Cybersecurity Strategy, and numerous congressional testimonies from intelligence community leaders.

Following significant Russian interference in the 2016 election, President Trump established CISA by signing legislation authored by current House Foreign Affairs Chairman Mike McCaul, strengthening our nation's digital defense capabilities. Similarly, the State Department's Global Engagement Center garnered robust bipartisan support throughout both the Obama and first Trump Administrations. The FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force launched with cross-party endorsement in 2017, while enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) intensified steadily across both Republican and Democratic administrations. Regardless of party, our nation's leaders have consistently agreed that foreign influence and cyber operations constitute a direct challenge to America's self-determination and independent governance.

Recent actions by the current administration, however, have critically compromised our national security and cyber defenses at precisely the moment when our adversaries are redoubling their offensive capabilities. Substantial [staffing reductions at CISA](#), the [disbanding](#) of the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force, and the decision to [weaken FARA enforcement](#) have created dangerous vulnerabilities in our security posture. The recent announcement that the United States will suspend offensive cyber operations against Russia comes amid reports of [increased Russian cyber intrusions](#) targeting critical infrastructure systems. This one-sided disarmament and restraint creates an advantage for adversaries at a time when strategic deterrence is most essential.

Congress must act decisively to rebuild our national defenses. The security of our critical infrastructure, the strength of our democratic institutions, and the integrity of our information ecosystem all depend on immediate congressional intervention. We call upon Congress to exercise its full oversight authority to ensure that the administration's cyber strategy prioritizes national security and maintains robust deterrence against foreign adversaries.

These actions are not partisan — they are imperative to protect American interests, regardless of which party controls the White House. As former national security leaders who have served administrations of both parties through periods of both peace and crisis, we stand ready to assist in developing the bipartisan solutions necessary to restore America's cyber resilience and reestablish our strategic advantage in this critical domain.

Respectfully,

The Honorable Michael Barnes (D-MD)

U.S. Representative (D-MD) (1979–1987); Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee (Chair, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs); Marine Veteran

The Honorable Mickey Edwards (R-OK)

U.S. Representative (R-OK) (1977–1993); Chair, House Republican Policy Committee; Member, Council on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Dave Emery (R-ME)

U.S. Representative (R-ME) (1975–1983); Member, House Armed Services Committee; Deputy Director, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1983–1988)

The Honorable Dick Gephardt (D-MO)

U.S. Representative (D-MO) (1977–2005); House Majority Leader (1989–1995); House Minority Leader (1995–2003); Member, House Armed Services Committee, Air Force Veteran

The Honorable James Greenwood (R-PA)

U.S. Representative (R-PA) (1993–2005); Member, Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense

The Honorable Chuck Hagel (R-NE)

Secretary of Defense (2013–2015); Chair, President's Intelligence Advisory Board (2009–2013); Chair, Intelligence Oversight Board (2009–2013); U.S. Senator (R-NE) (1997–2009); Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Vietnam War Army Veteran and Purple Heart Recipient

The Honorable Gordon Humphrey (R-NH)

U.S. Senator (R-NH) (1979–1990); Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee

The Honorable Bob Inglis (R-SC)

U.S. Representative (R-SC) (1993–1999, 2005–2011); Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee

The Honorable John LeBoutillier (R-NY)

U.S. Representative (R-NY) (1981–1983); Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee and Special House POW/MIA Task Force

The Honorable Patrick J. Murphy (D-PA)

Under Secretary of the Army and Acting Secretary of the Army (2016), U.S. Representative (D-PA) (2007–2011); Member, House Armed Services Committee and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Iraq War Army Veteran and Bronze Star Recipient

The Honorable Carol Moseley Braun (D-IL)

U.S. Senator (D-IL) (1993–1999); U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand (1999–2001) and Samoa (2000–2001)

Admiral Bill Owens

Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1994–1996); Vietnam and Gulf War Navy Veteran; Recipient of the Defense Distinguished Service Medal and the Navy Distinguished Service Medal (twice)

The Honorable Leon Panetta (D-CA)

Secretary of Defense (2011–2013); Director, Central Intelligence Agency (2009–2011); White House Chief of Staff (1994–1997); U.S. Representative (D-CA) (1977–1993); Army Intelligence Officer (1964–1966); Recipient of the Army Commendation Medal

The Honorable Denver Riggleman (R-VA)

U.S. Representative (R-VA) (2019–2021); Member, House Financial Services Committee; Air Force Intelligence Officer (1992–2007)

The Honorable Tim Roemer (D-IN)

U.S. Representative (D-IN) (1991–2003); Member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and 9/11 Commission; U.S. Ambassador to India (2009–2011)

The Honorable Claudine Schneider (R-RI)

U.S. Representative (R-RI) (1981–1991); Cofounder, Congressional Competitiveness Caucus

The Honorable Chris Shays (R-CT)

U.S. Representative (R-CT) (1987–2009); Member, House Homeland Security Committee

The Honorable Richard Swett (D-NH)

U.S. Representative (D-NH) (1991–1995); U.S. Ambassador to Denmark (1998–2001)

The Honorable David Trott (R-MI)

U.S. Representative (R-MI) (2015–2019); Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee