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House of Representatives

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Ranking Member

Subcommittee on National Security

"The EMP Threat: The State of Preparedness Against the Threat of an Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Event"

May 13, 2015 at 2pm in 2154 RHOB

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank you and Chairman Lummis for holding this hearing to examine our state of preparedness against the threat of an electromagnetic pulse event – also known as an E.M.P. I'd also like to thank our colleague, Mr. Franks of Arizona, and our other witnesses for helping this committee with its work.

As set forth in president Obama's 2015 national security strategy, a comprehensive national security agenda must prioritize efforts to address the top strategic risks to U.S. interests – including the possibility of a catastrophic attack on U.S. critical infrastructure. Similarly, the strategic plan developed by the department of homeland security for fiscal years 2014 through 2018 provides that we must enhance security for our nation's critical infrastructure against the threat of a terrorist attack by identifying key vulnerabilities and addressing them through the implementation of appropriate technologies.

In support of our shared responsibility to protect America against attack, we must make every effort to examine the extent of potential threats, such as an electromagnetic pulse event, to our homeland security. This oversight is even more critical given that the current budgetary climate requires congress to make very difficult choices in determining federal agency spending. Not only is the federal government still operating under sequestration, but congress recently passed a republican budget blueprint that contemplates cutting non-defense spending, including our homeland security budget, by nearly \$500 billion below the sequester-level spending caps.

While government officials, scientists, and other experts may disagree on the imminence of an electromagnetic pulse event, the E.M.P. commission established by congress in 2001 to assess the threat of an E.M.P. attack reported that our national electric grid and other U.S. critical infrastructure could be significantly disrupted by a sudden and high-intensity energy field burst. This could be large in scale and produced by a nuclear explosion. It could also be created through the use of batteries, reactive chemicals, and other non-nuclear devices or be the product of a natural magnetic storm.

According to the commission's 2008 report, *"because of the ubiquitous dependence of U.S. society on the electrical power system, its vulnerability to an E.M.P. attack, coupled with the E.M.P.'s particular damage mechanisms, creates the possibility of long-term, catastrophic consequences."*

A 2012 research paper prepared by a fire department in my congressional district and published by the national fire academy describes the impact that an E.M.P attack could have on local emergency services. As reported by the town of Walpole fire department, an E.M.P. strike would significantly disrupt local fire and

emergency medical services communications given their interdependence on the national electrical grid. It would also impact the town's fleet of electronically and computer driven emergency service vehicles.

In response to such concerns, the house passed H.R. 3410, the *critical infrastructure protection act*, by voice vote at the end of last year. This bill, introduced by Mr. Franks, sought to require the department of homeland security to include the E.M.P. threat in its national planning scenarios. While the bill did not pass the senate, DHS has indicated that the threat of an E.M.P. attack is very much on its radar. During recent congressional testimony, Ms. Suzanne Spaulding, undersecretary for the national protection and programs, indicated that DHS is currently partnering with private sector entities in the electric sector to determine how best to address the E.M.P. threat.

I look forward to discussing this issue with our witnesses in order to examine what additional steps we can take in order to better safeguard our national electric grid and other critical infrastructure. Thank you Chairman Desantis and Chairman Lummis – I yield the balance of my time.

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