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**Engel Statement on Russian Election
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February 6, 2018

2.06.18 RM Engel Opening Remarks on Cyber Diplomacy



- As Delivered -

WASHINGTON—Representative Eliot L. Engel, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, today delivered the following remarks at a committee hearing on American cyber diplomacy:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this hearing.

“To our witnesses, welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how the United States should improve its cybersecurity policy and address the cyberthreats we face from overseas.

“America’s adversaries are becoming bolder and more sophisticated as they pursue their aims in cyberspace. This is a challenge for our technology community, a new frontier for our diplomats, and a threat to our security. It’s also an economic hazard, with American businesses standing to lose out in the face of hostile and unscrupulous behavior in cyberspace.

“Iran’s cyberattacks on America’s infrastructure—including a dam near my district in New York—and North Korea’s attack on the entertainment sector underscored troubling vulnerabilities to this sort of tactic. We reached a 2015 agreement with China to prevent cyber theft of intellectual property, but Beijing still exerts more and more state control

over the Internet, denying its citizens basic freedoms and hurting American business. The United States is not working closely enough with likeminded governments to deter adversaries from stealing secrets or undermining an open and interoperable Internet.

“And of course, Russia’s cyberattacks were the centerpiece of its attack on American democracy during the 2016 election. On this last point, frankly, I’m stunned by the Administration’s utter failure to respond to these attacks.

“More than a year has gone by since the Intelligence Community revealed the extent of Russian meddling. Congress overwhelmingly passed new sanctions—new legislation to give the White House tools to punish those responsible. The law singles out those responsible for cybercrimes. It goes after the military and intelligence sectors that drove this attack.

“Yet the Trump Administration has not imposed a single sanction related to election interference mandated by the law. The decision to completely ignore Congress’s intent and blow off last week’s deadline for new sanctions is made that much worse by what Administration officials themselves admit: and that is, Russia is at it again. The CIA Director, a former member of Congress, a former colleague, Mike Pompeo has said so repeatedly, which calls into question the State Department’s claim that the threat of sanctions alone will deter bad behavior.

“I’m at a loss. We’re talking about the bedrock of American democracy, and this Administration seems intent on signaling to Russia and the rest of the world that it’s open season. Between the President’s constant denial of Russia’s involvement and his constant attacks on our own justice system, you could almost conclude that he would be fine with a repeat of what we saw in 2016.

“Well I’m not fine with it. If the President won’t take steps to protect American democracy, it falls to us as lawmakers. Last year, I introduced a bill with Mr. Connolly, the SECURE Our Democracy Act, which would specifically go after those who interfere with an American election from overseas. When we passed the sanctions package last summer, we put this bill aside, because we thought the President would use the tools we gave him to push back against Russian aggression. He didn’t, so now I think it’s time to reconsider this measure or something similar.

“Responding to Russia is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to our cyber policy. I also think we need to reverse course on the Trump Administration’s relentless assault on our diplomacy and development.

“Mr. Painter, I’m sorry that you were one casualty of the Administration’s attempt to hollow out the State Department when you were forced out of your role as Coordinator for Cyber Issues. This was a major blow to American leadership at a time when your expertise was needed the most.

“I was speaking with Mr. Keating just before, and we were talking—we were lamenting—about the fact about how the Administration has really not sent us the witnesses that we really feel that we could use, so they could give us the perspective from the executive branch.

“So I was glad to join Chairman Royce to introduce the Cyber Diplomacy Act, which would reinstate and elevate the position—your position, Mr. Painter. It passed the House a few weeks ago, and I hope the Senate acts on it soon.

“And I hope it sends a message to the Administration that we need to ramp up our diplomacy on cyber, not scale it back. We need to engage with friendly governments facing the same threats. We need to push back against countries that will exploit these tools to pilfer our intellectual property, to hack into our country’s most sensitive information, and to derail international norms to keep the Internet open and accessible.

“So I hope that our witnesses can shed additional light on these concerns, and share with this Committee their views on how the United States can lead on this issue.

“So I thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.”

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