

Open Hearing on Investigation of Russian Active Measures and Election Infrastructure:

Opening Statement of Rep. K. Michael Conaway

June 21, 2017

Thank you, Secretary Johnson, for appearing today. As you know, this Committee is charged with getting to the bottom of the facts regarding Russia's involvement in the 2016 election and what, if any, steps were taken by the U.S. Government to prevent such interference in our election. While our investigation seeks to get to truth of what happened during last year's election, it also seeks to provide recommendations for improvement. One focus of this Committee's investigation is the U.S. Government's response to Russian cyber activities during the 2016 election. According to the Intelligence Community's unclassified January 2017 assessment, Russian intelligence accessed elements of multiple state or local electoral boards. DHS also assessed that, thankfully, the systems Russian actors targeted were not involved in vote tallying. However, the prospect of any foreign adversary meddling in our election systems is extremely disturbing. Our free and open election system is the cornerstone of our democracy and the foundation of our self-governing republic. Any actions by a foreign adversary to access electoral systems threatens our basic freedoms. As Secretary of DHS, you were at the helm when your agency became aware of Russian cyber intrusions into state and local election systems, and you made the decision to designate election infrastructure as critical infrastructure in January 2017. I hope your testimony today will provide this Committee and the American public with a better understanding of what exactly happened, and what more could have been done to prevent the Russians from interfering with our election. While I commend your efforts to address the cyber threat emanating from Moscow and successfully safeguard the integrity of vote tallying systems, it is troubling that DHS and other agencies did not respond more quickly to Russian hacking. We are also here to talk about the future. Given all that we know about the growing threat posed by cyber intrusions, why do our election systems remain so vulnerable? What more can be done to address these weaknesses? I hope you will discuss these challenges—and assist this Committee in identifying solutions. With that, I recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Schiff, for five minutes, for any opening comments he would like to make.