

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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*Hearing on Foreign Cyber Threats to the United States*

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Mr. Chairman, I want to commend you for your leadership in promptly scheduling this hearing on foreign cyber threats. I would also like to welcome our witnesses – Director Clapper, Under Secretary Lettre, and Admiral Rogers. I appreciate your years of service and dedication to the nation.

While I understand that our witnesses will be discussing the cyber threats that many countries, including China and Iran, pose to our nation, I would like to focus for a few minutes on the widely reported instances of Russian hacking and disinformation that raised concerns regarding the election of 2016.

In addition to stealing information from the Democratic National Committees and the Clinton campaign, and cherry-picking what information it leaked to the media, the Russian government also created and spread fake news and conspiracies across the vast social media landscape. At the very least, the effect of Russia's actions was to erode the faith of the American people in our democratic institutions. These and other cyber tools remain highly active and engaged in misinforming our political dialogue even today.

There is still much we do not know, but Russia's involvement in these intrusions does not appear to be in doubt. Russia's best cyber operators are judged to be as elusive and hard to identify as any in the world. In this case, however, detection and attribution were not so difficult, the implication being that Putin may have wanted us to know what he had done, seeking only a level of plausible deniability to support an official rejection of culpability.

These Russian cyberattacks should be judged within the larger context of Russia's rejection of the post-Cold War international order and aggressive actions against its neighbors. Russia's current leaders and President Putin in particular, perceive the democratic movements in the former Soviet states, the West's general support for human rights, press freedoms, the rule of law and democracy, as well as NATO and EU enlargement as a threat to what they believe is Russia's sphere of influence.

Putin's Russia makes no secret of the fact that it is determined to aggressively halt and counter what it characterizes as Western encroachment on its vital interests. The invasion of Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, the aggression against Ukraine featuring sophisticated hybrid warfare techniques, the continuing military build-up despite a declining economy, saber-rattling in the Baltics and Baltic Sea, the authoritarian onslaught against the press, NGOs, and what remains of

the Russian democratic opposition, the unwavering campaign for national sovereignty over the internet and the creation of an “Iron Information Curtain” like China’s Great Firewall, and its aggressive interference in western political processes – all are one piece. Russia’s efforts to undermine democracy at home and abroad and destabilize the countries on its border cannot be ignored or traded away in exchange for the appearance of comity.

Furthermore, what Russia did to the United States in 2016, it has already done and continues to do in Europe. This challenge to the progress of democratic values since the end of the Cold War must not be tolerated.

Despite the indifference of some to this matter, our nation needs to know in detail what the intelligence community has concluded was an assault by senior officials of a foreign government on our electoral process.

Our electoral process is the bedrock of our system of government. An effort to manipulate it, especially by a regime with values and interests so antithetical to our own, is a challenge to the nation’s security which must be met with bipartisan and universal condemnation, consequences, and correction.

I believe the most appropriate means to conduct an inquiry is through the creation of a select committee in the Senate, since this issue, and the solutions to the problems it has exposed, spill across the jurisdictional divides of the standing committees on Armed Services, Intelligence, Foreign Relations, Homeland Security, and Judiciary. Failing that, our committee must take on as much of this task as we can, and I again commend the Chairman for his commitment to do so.

Therefore, I am pleased and grateful that his efforts will be extended and this energy will be invested on the matters that are so critical to the American people. I also want to applaud President Obama’s initial steps, publicized last week, to respond to Russia’s hostile actions.

General Clapper, Under Secretary Lettre, Admiral Rogers, we appreciate your urgent efforts to discover what happened and why, and to make these facts known to the President, the President-elect, Congress, and the American people. Although your investigation and report to President Obama is not yet public, we hope you will be able to convey and explain what’s been accomplished so far, including the steps already announced by the President. In addition, I am sure we will have many questions about how we are organized in the cyber domain, and what changes you have recommended going forward – subjects that President Obama referenced in his signing statement on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

These are difficult issues, but they are of vital importance to our nation, our security, and our democracy. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you in a bipartisan manner to conduct a thorough and thoughtful inquiry and to do more to address the cyber threats our nation faces more broadly by state and non-state actors. Thank you very much.

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