

FYI: Law 360 -- House Adds Cybersecurity Rules To Intelligence Authorization

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By Michael Macagnone

Law360, Washington (June 16, 2015, 7:58 PM ET) -- Days after news broke of a massive hack at the Office of Personnel Management, the U.S. House of Representatives added a number of measures to beef up federal cybersecurity in passing the annual intelligence authorization bill Tuesday.

The bill, which now goes over to the Senate, passed over Democratic objections to using wartime contingency funds to get around sequestration caps and restrictions on closing the Guantanamo Bay prison.

Both parties agreed the federal government needs to step up its efforts to address gaps in the federal government's computer security regime. Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., introduced an amendment that would require a report from the intelligence community on the extent of the hack and best practices to avoid future ones.

"We must make sure this does not happen again. We must make clear to the rest of the world that these acts will not be tolerated and there will be consequences," Moulton said.

The OPM hack has been in a glaring spotlight this week, as Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, said the agency's data security was "akin to leaving all the doors and windows open at your house," at a House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing Tuesday.

The hack may have affected as many as 4 million federal employees, and comes after many systems at the agency didn't comply with federal security mandates, according to the testimony.

On Friday, the OPM said it had discovered another breach — this one involving background investigations of current and former federal employees, as well as background checks of non-employees — during its investigation into the breach announced on June 4.

On a broader scale, an amendment from Reps. Steve Israel, D-N.Y., and Richard Hanna, R-N.Y., would require the Director of National Intelligence to report to the intelligence agencies on developing cybersecurity threats annually. Other amendments included measures to give grants to Hispanic-serving institutions that teach cybersecurity courses and DNI reports on the measurement of cyber threats.

The underlying bill authorizes funding for intelligence activities in 16 different agencies, from the Department of Homeland Security to the Army to the Justice Department. Although much of the bill is not public, it does contain sections granting greater review powers to the DNI comptroller general and specifically prohibits moving or releasing prisoners from Guantanamo Bay.

House leaders also found an out to get a vote on Trade Adjustment Assistance — programs providing relief to workers and firms displaced by trade — back on track after an uprising from Democrats defeated the measure last week and scuttled a larger legislative package that includes the renewal of trade promotion authority.

A procedural move from House Republicans Tuesday pushed the deadline to July 30 by attaching it to a motion to consider the intelligence bill.

--Additional reporting by Emily Field. Editing by Philip Shea.