

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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March 22, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

There is a real and credible threat that America's energy infrastructure may soon be attacked by malicious actors in Russia. With Russian aggression in Ukraine destabilizing global energy markets, recent reports of cyberattacks on our country's liquefied natural gas (LNG) producers, and intelligence reports warning of more attacks soon, it has never been more important to secure America's energy supplies. We are writing to learn more about the Department of Energy's (the Department's) work to assist the LNG industry in protecting itself from cybersecurity threats and resulting disruptions.

Yesterday, President Biden announced that the Russian government is exploring cyberattacks against key U.S. infrastructure, including the energy sector.¹ The announcement came days after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a bulletin warning the U.S. energy sector about network scanning activity from Russia-based IP addresses that is associated with previous attacks against critical infrastructure.²

Recent attacks on the United States energy industry underscore the fact that our country's LNG infrastructure faces grave threats. Over a two-week period in February 2022, hackers gained access to more than 100 computers of current or former employees of 21 major natural gas suppliers and exporters.³ Additionally, at least one major natural gas producer reported that cyberattacks have increased following Russia's February 24, 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and the

¹ The White House, Statement by President Biden on Our Nation's Cybersecurity, Mar. 21, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/21/statement-by-president-biden-on-our-nations-cybersecurity/>.

² CBS NEWS, *Russia Exploring Options for Potential Cyberattacks on U.S. Energy Sector, FBI Warns*, Mar. 22, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-cyberattacks-us-energy-fbi-warning/>

³ Jordan Robertson & Sergio Chapa, *Hackers Targeted U.S. LNG Producers in Run-Up to Ukraine War*, BLOOMBERG, Mar. 7, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-07/hackers-targeted-u-s-lng-producers-in-run-up-to-war-in-ukraine>.

Federal Bureau of Investigation expects the volume and methods of attacks to increase.⁴ Russia also has a history of trying to destabilize United States energy markets. A House Science Committee staff report in 2018 found hard evidence of Russian agents engaging in anti-U.S. energy activities online.⁵

Attacks on the United States' LNG infrastructure could inflict tremendous damage not only at home but also internationally. As you know, in response to Russia's attack on Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and a number of other countries imposed sanctions and export controls on Russia.⁶ As a result, some analysts have expressed concern that Russia could limit its gas exports to Europe in retaliation, should this conflict persist and relations between Russia and other nations continue to deteriorate.⁷ European Union countries and the United Kingdom rely heavily on imports for their natural gas supply, with Russia being the largest supplier of natural gas in the European region.⁸ In the face of Russia's threatening actions, continued ability to export LNG to Europe is critical. Though Europe imports most of its natural gas via pipeline,⁹ LNG imports have increased in recent years, with the United States emerging as the largest supplier.¹⁰ In short, adversaries could create dire energy insecurity with a disruption to United States LNG production and exports.

The Department plays a critical role in safeguarding our energy infrastructure. While other Federal agencies bear responsibility for elements of the LNG supply chain and related infrastructure, Congress designated the Department as the Sector Risk Management Agency for cybersecurity for the energy sector,¹¹ which includes the Oil and Natural Gas Subsector.¹²

We recognize that the Department has launched recent initiatives to address cybersecurity threats to critical electric infrastructure,¹³ and that the Biden Administration has focused on

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ H. COMM. ON SCI., SPACE, & TECH., *Majority Staff Report: Russian Attempts to Influence U.S. Domestic Energy Markets by Exploiting Social Media* (March 2018), available at <https://republicans-science.house.gov/sites/republicans.science.house.gov/files/documents/SST%20Staff%20Report%20-%20Russian%20Attempts%20to%20Influence%20U.S.%20Domestic%20Energy%20Markets%20by%20Exploiting%20Social%20Media%2003.01.18.pdf>.

⁶ COREY WELT, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., IN11869, *RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE: OVERVIEW OF U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS AND OTHER RESPONSES* (2022).

⁷ Sam Meredith, *Gas is Key in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict—and Supply Could Be Disrupted Around the World*, CNBC, Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/24/russia-ukraine-crisis-could-see-gas-supply-ramifications-for-the-world.html>.

⁸ See U.S. ENERGY INFO ADMIN., “*Europe Relies Primarily on Imports to Meet its Natural Gas Needs*,” Feb. 11, 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=51258>.

⁹ See *id.*

¹⁰ See U.S. ENERGY INFO. ADMIN., *Three Countries Provided Almost 70% of Liquefied Natural Gas Received in Europe in 2021*, Feb. 22, 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=51358#:~:text=Exports%20of%20LNG%20from%20the,Monthly%20reports%20and%20our%20own>.

¹¹ Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act § 61003(c)(2), 6 U.S.C. 121 note; William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 § 9002(c)(3) (applying the term “Sector Risk Management Agency”).

¹² DEP'T OF ENERGY, *ENERGY SECTOR-SPECIFIC PLAN 31* (2015).

¹³ DEP'T OF ENERGY, *Securing Critical Electric Infrastructure*, <https://www.energy.gov/ceser/securing-critical-electric-infrastructure> (last updated June 14, 2021).

increasing security measures for pipelines in the wake of the Colonial Pipeline attack.¹⁴ However, given the recent attacks on LNG producers and the precarious geopolitical climate, we request additional information on the Department's efforts to secure our LNG supply chain. Such an update will help us better direct and support the Department's cybersecurity research, development, demonstration, and commercial application activities. This request also builds on the Committee's existing efforts to better understand how the Department works with other Federal agencies with intertwined cybersecurity responsibilities.¹⁵

We ask that your office facilitate a briefing for Committee staff that addresses, but is not limited to addressing, the following questions:

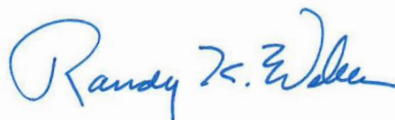
1. What specific Department programs or initiatives, if any, address cybersecurity challenges for producers and exporters of LNG? Which program offices within the Department participate in these programs or initiatives?
2. How does the Department engage with other relevant Federal agencies in preparing for and protecting against cybersecurity threats to the LNG supply chain?
3. How does the Department, including in coordination with other relevant Federal agencies, prepare for potential disruptions to LNG exports or the global LNG supply?
4. How does the Department engage with members of the LNG industry and other stakeholders to address cybersecurity concerns and remain informed of emerging threats?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please contact the Committee Minority Staff at (202) 225-6371 with any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,



Rep. Frank Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology



Rep. Randy Weber
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy

¹⁴ Press Release, The White House, Fact Sheet: Biden Administration Announces Further Actions to Protect U.S. Critical Infrastructure (July 28, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/28/fact-sheet-biden-administration-announces-further-actions-to-protect-u-s-critical-infrastructure/>.

¹⁵ Letter from Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chairwoman, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, and Frank Lucas, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, to Jennifer Granholm, Secretary, Department of Energy (May 19, 2022).

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

The Honorable Jamaal Bowman, Chair, Subcommittee on Energy.