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Information sharing to improve our cybersecurity

By Reps. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) and C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.)

April 10, 2013

http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/292745-information-sharing-to-improve-our-cybersecurity

A recent report issued by computer security firm Mandiant shined a bright light onto a dark truth we have known for years: The Chinese government is systematically and methodically stealing American intellectual property at a breathtaking pace and scope.

The Chinese are doing this to gain an artificial advantage in the global economy. Chinese Communist party leadership has learned from the collapse of the Soviet Union that the only way to compete with free, dynamic, innovative nations like ours is to have a strong economy of their own. The problem is that China decided to take a short cut. One manufacturer in the U.S., for example, spent $1 billion and ten years on research and development for a new product. In a matter of minutes, the Chinese had stolen the design and now can engineer and sell it in the global marketplace without having spent one day or one dollar on research and development. Pesticide formulas have been stolen, manufacturing blue prints, software, chemical formulas, you name it. The Chinese even attempted to steal the secret recipe for Coca-Cola. Extrapolate that out to the entire American economy and you have a major threat to our ability to compete in the world.

In an effort to protect our economy and our way of life, we have authored targeted, narrow legislation that permits the government to share classified threat intelligence and other cyberthreat information with the

private sector. In turn, the private sector would be authorized to share cyberthreat information with the government, creating a two-way street of information sharing. This will break down legal barriers written into law decades before the Internet age so the government can help protect private sector networks, which comprise a vast majority of the infrastructure.

We must mount a much stronger defense against these attacks, which starts by changing the law. We need simple, common sense legislation that enables the government and private sector to work together to protect America's vast networks of information and resources. Our bill, the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), is a critical first step in giving American employers a fighting chance against these relentless attacks. CISPA provides for an exchange of cyber threat information and it does so while protecting individuals' privacy and personal information.

CISPA, which passed the House of Representatives last year with a strong, bipartisan margin, makes information sharing entirely voluntary. No company has to participate if they choose not to, and no company is required to share information with the government. CISPA also requires oversight and reporting by the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community. The bill permits the government to only use and retain information shared by the private sector for five specific, narrow purposes. The bill requires private entities to act in good faith when using cyber threat information, in order to benefit from the liability protections contained in the bill, which are key to sending a green light that it is okay to share. And the bill does not create a new government surveillance program allowing monitoring of the Internet, but rather it protects the Internet from foreign hackers and attacks that threaten the very openness which has made the Internet great.

Recently the House Intelligence Committee held an open hearing to discuss the threat of cyber attacks and discuss potential solutions. The panelists from the business community agreed that our approach would be an important step in strengthening our defenses from these persistent attacks. And perhaps most importantly ours is an approach that enjoys bipartisan support and could actually get done. It is our hope now that the House and Senate can come together this year to approve our narrow but important legislation to protect the American economy. We expect the bill will pass our committee this week with an overwhelming bipartisan majority.

Unfortunately for every American, the Mandiant report was just the tip of the iceberg.

Rogers is chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Ruppersberger is the ranking member of the committee.