Potomac Officers Club Cyber Summit - April 9

- It's good to be back at the Potomac Officers Club. Sadly, too many people in this town love to bash the contractors who provide vital support to our government. We all know how unfair and inaccurate those slurs are, and it was important for Dutch and I to be here today to show our support for you all and the important work you do to help keep our government trained, equipped and running.

- There's probably no better example of that vital support you provide than the cyber-security field. Given the breathtaking pace of change in the technology and tactics of both the attackers and the defenders, we would be foolish to try to do everything in-house in the government.

- There are, of course, some very creative and hardworking people in our government, but the vast majority of cyber-security innovation is happening in the private sector and we need to tap into that expertise if we are to have any hope of staying ahead of the threat.

- I would like to say a word about the role of government in defending the private sector's networks. While federal agencies like NSA are very good when it comes to cyber, it will never be possible to scale their efforts to defend every corner of U.S. private sector networks. The vast majority of our cyber tools solutions must come from the private sector.

- I do believe, however, that the U.S. government, and our intelligence agencies in particular, have a unique value-added to offer when it comes to the classified cyber threat information they collect overseas about advanced foreign cyber hackers and their plans to attack the networks of American companies.

- Private companies sometimes get the benefit of that valuable intelligence information today, but the government lacks clear legal authority to grant more clearances and share that information more widely with the private sector.

- Congress also needs to update the law to facilitate more sharing from the private sector to the government. Voluntary, anonymized information sharing with the government gives our intelligence agencies important tips and leads to help them find advanced foreign cyber hackers overseas. This in turn allows the government to provide more effective cyber threat intelligence back to the private sector to help it protect itself.

- Congress also needs to update the law to allow better sharing of cyber threat information within the private sector, so that American companies can more freely share information about the threats they are facing and how they are coping with them.

- As we change the law to allow better cyber threat information sharing, we must ensure the privacy of all Americans is protected, and that any information voluntarily provided to the government is properly safeguarded. Any cyber threat sharing law we pass must give Americans confidence that it won't be misused to harm their privacy and civil liberties.

- We passed a cyber threat information sharing bill in the House by a strong bi-partisan vote of 288 to 127 last April, and we are now waiting for the Senate to act. That bipartisan House vote (92 Dems) is a clear indicator of strong consensus we have among Congress and industry, Republican and Democrat, Palo Alto and Wall Street about what needs to be done.

- The confusion caused by the NSA leaks has unfortunately added to the political headwinds that we will have to fight through to get the Senate to act and to get the President to sign meaningful cyber information sharing legislation.

- There are some who say we should give up any hope of ever passing cyber information sharing because of confusion and debate triggered by these NSA leaks.

- I know that most expectations for Congress are low these days, but I am not going to give us a pass for not attending to one of our highest Constitutional responsibilities – providing for the common defense.

- Congress must update the law to allow better cooperation when it comes to advanced foreign cyber threats like China and Iran. America's economic and national security is at stake, and I'm not ready to give up.

- One of the biggest problems Dutch and I face in Congress today is fighting myths about what the NSA really does. It is my hope that Congress will enact measures that improve confidence in the NSA and its collection programs.

- NSA employees are patriots who work hard to defend our country. They are doing work they were told to do by multiple Presidents, the Congress and the Courts, and they deserve our respect and esteem. We will build more transparency and oversight into our intelligence collection programs, but NSA's vital work must go on for the security of the U.S. and our allies.

- Most American companies are working hard to keep their networks secure, but they are being targeted every day by nation-state actors like China and Iran. That's not a fair fight. Congress needs to update the law to allow better cooperation when it comes to defending against these dangerous threats.

Thank you for your time today. Dutch is going to say a few words, but I look forward to your questions after that.