

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500-0005

Dear President Biden:

We write to express our support for your commitment to update the national cyber strategy, and to provide our specific recommendation that the new strategy provide a clear signal to adversary governments that behavior that violates norms in cyberspace will be met with consequences. Furthermore, the new strategy should communicate to prospective partners the value of working within a like-minded coalition to protect our shared interests and values in cyberspace.

We believe your efforts in June to define targets that are off-limits to President Putin is insufficient to curtail Russia's malign behavior. Your administration can change these dynamics. We urge you to reinforce our deterrent effect by clearly communicating how the United States will seek to change adversary behavior and shape the strategic environment. Backed with consistent actions, using cyber and non-cyber instruments of power, that message will signal our capability and resolve in defending the United States and our interests in and through cyberspace.

The unfortunate reality is that the United States has not successfully deterred numerous cyber-attacks. We do not believe this means that deterrence is impossible; rather it means that our deterrent strategy thus far has been insufficient, in part because our adversaries do not appreciate the consequences of malicious behavior. Moreover, unlike in the nuclear era, effective deterrence cannot be defined as a complete absence of attacks. Instead, our goal must be to reduce the overall harm caused by attacks by decreasing their magnitude and frequency, disrupting adversary operations, and increasing our resilience to those attacks that—unfortunately and inevitably—hit their mark.

An important step on the path to securing digital infrastructure is to ensure that U.S. cyber strategy is clear to adversaries and allies alike. The U.S. can reinforce deterrence in cyberspace by making a declaration of the types of costs that the U.S. will impose on governments that violate norms of behavior in cyberspace—including knowingly allowing other actors within their territory to conduct internationally wrongful acts—and the benefits it will confer on those that behave responsibly. When supported by clear and consistent action, this signal of our intent will reduce the effects of cyber-attacks that threaten Americans' digital lives and livelihoods.

We appreciate the selection and establishment of Mr. Chris Inglis as National Cyber Director, and we eagerly await the publication of your national cyber strategy as an important next step to further enhance our nation security in cyberspace.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Angus King Jr. (I-ME)
Co-Chairman
Cyberspace Solarium Commission



The Honorable Mike Gallagher (WI-08)
Co-Chairman
Cyberspace Solarium Commission