Opening Statement
Ranking Member Mitt Romney
U.S. SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EMERGING THREATS AND SPENDING OVERSIGHT
"SECURING THE NATION: MODERNIZING DHS'S MISSION-CRITICAL LEGACY IT SYSTEMS."
MAY 31, 2023

Thank you, Chair Hassan, for holding this hearing. I appreciate the witnesses being here to discuss how we can improve DHS's IT modernization efforts. This effort is critical to national security, as bad actors and adversaries constantly seek to access our government systems. Just last week, it was reported that a Chinese state-sponsored group known as "Volt Typhoon" targeted U.S. critical infrastructure sectors. I'm interested to hear from our witnesses about how the modernization of IT systems could help mitigate vulnerabilities to cyber-attacks across Federal networks. We cannot afford to continue operating systems that are unable to keep up with the evolving threats we face.

While meaningful steps have been taken in recent years, there is more work to do, especially as emerging technologies like artificial intelligence can be weaponized in cyber-attacks by our adversaries. We cannot continue to sit back and play defense while China and Russia ramp up these attacks.

Our government must also work to responsibly modernize IT systems to save taxpayer money. According to GAO, the U.S. government spends more than $100 billion each year on the operation and maintenance of its IT systems. If we spend that much money on IT, the systems need to work. If they don't, we need to quickly replace them.

I'm interested to learn why it is such a challenge for the government to upgrade its IT in comparison to the private sector, particularly when the data held by government agencies is so sensitive. Why isn't this happening faster?

Thank you, Madam Chair.