



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

April 6, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy:

I write to request that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hold a hearing to address the reported actions of foreign actors and criminals who are infiltrating the cellphone activity in the nation's capital and perhaps elsewhere.

As you know, the Department of Homeland Security recently wrote to Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) confirming that it had discovered "anomalous activity in the National Capital Region" of unauthorized cellphone-site simulators, which can be used to track a user's location data through mobile phones and can intercept cellphone calls and messages. DHS further wrote that its National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) "believes the use of these devices by malicious actors to track and monitor cellular users would be unlawful and threaten the security of communications, resulting in safety, economic, and privacy risks." Moreover, DHS also admitted that "NPPD is not aware of any current DHS technical capability to detect" these devices.

These devices are used to track individual cell phones and can cost as little as \$1,000, making them widely accessible. Spying of various kinds by foreign powers, as well as by the United States, has always been used in intelligence gathering. However, illegal spying on a broad swath of citizens, by either a foreign body or criminal actors, has always been unacceptable. Moreover, encryption has been a demonstrated way to prevent these devices from hacking into cell phones. Congress and the federal government have an obligation at least to warn residents about the risks of eavesdropping and encourage them to adopt encryption measures.

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I believe a hearing to examine what the government must do to stop unnecessary spying is critical to ensuring that everything possible is being done to protect the privacy rights of American citizens. I hope you agree that a hearing is in order.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Holmes Norton

Cc: The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform