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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

March 7, 2002

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
AND FACILITIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY READINESS
OVERSIGHT PANEL ON TERRORISM
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
FIRST VICE CHAIR
CHAIR, HEALTH TASK FORCE

The Honorable Ed Garza
Mayor
City of San Antonio
PO Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

Dear Mayor Garza:

For years, cyber terrorism has posed a real and credible asymmetric threat to our national economic and national security. Following September 11, the number of cyber attacks has increased dramatically, highlighting the need for preparation and vigilance. Despite the increased efforts to detect, prevent and deter cyber attacks, the United States' critical infrastructure still faces a potential "electronic Pearl Harbor" that would have catastrophic consequences. Determined and skilled cyber terrorists menace our nation's communications, banking, utilities, transportation, law enforcement and military infrastructure, and we are not adequately prepared for this threat.

One of the best ways to identify our nation's critical infrastructure vulnerabilities is a realistic simulation of a cyber terrorist attack. In June 2001, the "Dark Winter" exercise tested the numerous challenges that the federal, state and local governments would face during a biological attack on the American homeland. A similar exercise is needed to fully examine the vulnerabilities of our nation's critical infrastructure as well as current capabilities to detect and respond to a cyber terrorist attack.

I propose that the San Antonio region sponsor an exercise, aptly titled "Dark Screen," to test the San Antonio-area capabilities to prevent, detect and respond to a cyber terrorist attack, and its ability to coordinate with local, state and federal authorities. Unlike other forms of terrorism, a cyber attack can be launched from one location but have immediate state, regional or national effects. Because of this insidious reality, it would be necessary to include representatives from private industry and local, county, state and federal government that would be affected, or who have capabilities to detect or respond to any cyber terrorist attack.

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This exercise is essential to assess San Antonio's ability to prevent, detect and respond to a cyber terrorist attack. In addition, it could serve as a national model to demonstrate how governmental or regional entities could collectively fight cyber terrorist attacks. San Antonio, as "Cyber City USA," is the right city to lead the nation in demonstrating how to prevent, detect and deter a cyber terrorist attack.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this important project. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ciro D. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail at the end.

Ciro D. Rodriguez
Member of Congress

rb/2084451