CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS; APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Rachel Liang, Designated Federal Officer, President’s National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), opened the NIAC’s Quarterly Business Meeting (QBM) for March 4, 2021, and welcomed participants. She then took roll of NIAC members and provided a brief overview of the NIAC’s purpose and history. Ms. Liang added that one speaker had registered to speak during the public comments portion of the meeting. Ms. Liang then turned the meeting over to Ms. Constance Lau, NIAC Chair.

Ms. Lau welcomed participants and noted this is the NIAC’s first meeting with the new Administration. She stated it is a great opportunity for the Council to meet the new representatives from the National Security Council (NSC) and discuss the Nation’s most important critical infrastructure issues. Ms. Lau mentioned that events over the last year including the recent energy issues in Texas, the pandemic, and the SolarWinds attack, showed the vulnerability of the nation’s software supply chain. Ms. Lau emphasized how important it is for critical infrastructure to keep operating to ensure that the nation continues to function, and communities remain safe.

Ms. Lau provided details of the agenda. First, Mr. Richard H. Ledgett, Jr., NIAC member, would moderate a panel discussion that would explore vulnerabilities in the software supply chain. The panel would also discuss how the Critical Infrastructure Command Center (CICC), recommended in the 2020 NIAC report: Actionable Cyber Intelligence: An Executive-Led Collaborative Model, could have helped address the SolarWinds incident. Next, Dr. Beverly Scott, NIAC Vice Chair, and Ms. Jan Allman, NIAC member, would give an update on the Workforce and Talent Management (WFTM) Study. Finally, NIAC members and the NSC representatives would discuss the Administration’s critical infrastructure priorities. Ms. Lau turned the meeting over to Dr. Scott to provide her opening remarks.

Dr. Scott welcomed the representatives from the new Administration and the NIAC members who had recently joined the Council. She praised the essential critical infrastructure workers for supporting everyone over the past year and added that she is looking forward to the meeting’s planned discussions. Dr. Scott then turned the meeting back to Ms. Lau.

Ms. Lau introduced Ms. Caitlin Durkovich, Senior Director for Resilience and Response at the NSC and turned the meeting over to her for her opening comments.

Ms. Durkovich thanked Ms. Lau and Dr. Scott for their continued leadership and the NIAC members for their hard work on the Council’s studies and recommendations. She stated that vulnerabilities in the Nation’s critical infrastructure is a focus for the NSC and said that the Administration plans to undertake several initiatives to modernize and protect it. Ms. Durkovich noted how recent incidents like the cyber-attack against the Florida water system and power supply disruption in Texas can affect other sectors such as communications and transportation. She added that critical infrastructure cannot be looked at as 16 separate sectors but as an
interconnected and interdependent ecosystem. Ms. Durkovich said she is excited to learn more about the cybersecurity supply chain and WFTM studies as well as future dialogues with the Council. She then turned the meeting back to Ms. Lau.

Ms. Lau asked Mr. Brandon Wales, Acting Director, Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to give his opening remarks. Acting Director Wales thanked NIAC members for their service and continued dedication to the Council’s mission. He noted that Mr. Alejandro Mayorkas had recently been confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security and that Mr. Nitin Natarajan, who had recently supported the Workforce and Talent Management Study as a Study Group member and had previously been a liaison to the NIAC from the NSC, was recently appointed as Deputy Director of CISA. Acting Director Wales then turned the meeting over to Mr. Natarajan to introduce himself.

Mr. Natarajan thanked Ms. Lau and Dr. Scott for their leadership on the NIAC. He stated that he is looking forward to working with the new NIAC members and noted that addressing critical infrastructure is a joint effort with Federal, state, local, tribal, territorial government and private sector partners.

Acting Director Wales said that he is looking forward to working with the NIAC to study how the Nation can get ahead of critical infrastructure problems instead of reacting to them. He added that CISA will be working closely with the NSC to make sure that the Government can take action on NIAC recommendations to mitigate risks. He then turned the meeting back to Ms. Lau.

Ms. Lau thanked Acting Director Wales for his and DHS’s help through this transition. She then asked the NIAC members if they had any corrections or objections to the draft December 10, 2020 NIAC QBM minutes. The Council members expressed no concerns and the minutes were approved.

**Cyber Supply Chain Panel Discussion**

Mr. Ledgett opened the Cyber Supply Chain Panel Discussion and introduced the panelists: Mr. Christopher Butera, Senior Technical Director, Cybersecurity Division, CISA; Mr. Michael Daniel, President and Chief Executive Officer, Cyber Threat Alliance; and Mr. J. Rich Baich, NIAC member and CICC Study Co-Chair. Mr. Ledgett provided a recap of the SolarWinds incident. He then began the discussion by asking the panel what they saw as the biggest threats to critical infrastructure and software supply chains.

Mr. Butera stated that the software supply chain compromise was only the initial intrusion vector for the SolarWinds attack, but it provided the attacker with a wide range of potential victims. He said that supply chain risks will continue to grow as Government and industry become increasingly digitized. Mr. Butera noted that these vulnerabilities can be exploited in a variety of ways to adversely impact critical infrastructure systems. Mr. Butera added that supply chain security is still only one aspect of a defense in depth approach. Mr. Daniel noted the reason supply chain attacks like SolarWinds are attractive to our adversaries is because they bypass network security.

Mr. Baich stated that companies cannot solely depend on the Government to be the first line defense against cyber-attacks; individuals and corporates must hold themselves accountable. He
noted that FireEye had been the first to detect the attack. He said an important factor for supply chain risk is to respond as fast as possible and disseminate the threat. Mr. Ledgett replied that it is unreasonable to expect an individual entity to be able to cover all areas where a threat could be and that the Government and private sector must work together.

Mr. Baich stated that if the CICC, as described in the 2020 NIAC report, was fully established when the SolarWinds attack occurred, it could have systemically assessed the threat and developed tools to help mitigate its impact on critical infrastructure. He said that the private sector could have driven additional data collection techniques that may have resulted in earlier warnings of risk and exploitation. Mr. Baich added that even if the CICC did not yet have the capacity to respond directly to the attack, it could still have helped quickly disseminate information on the threat across the critical infrastructure sectors.

Mr. Ledgett stated that because the SolarWinds attack was launched from inside the United States, the attack was not visible to U.S. foreign intelligence cyber surveillance systems. Mr. Ledgett asked the panelists what they thought of the likelihood of us detecting something similar in the future, and how would that occur? Mr. Michael Wallace, NIAC member, said that both the private and public sectors must do more to detect these threats. He stated the public sector should continue efforts to increase the ability of our network defenders to share and correlate information across the domestic-foreign divide and that the private sector networks need to segment their networks and have multi-factor authentication.

Mr. Butera said it is important to have more zero trust principles applied to networks to stop the techniques used in SolarWinds going forward. Mr. Baich added that prioritization and understanding what mitigation strategies to execute on are important. Mr. Butera said he believes different organizations are at different capability levels, so some may need to start with basics and that it is important for them to assess their own risks and level of maturity.

Mr. Baich stated that the best way for companies to disclose information about attacks and vulnerabilities is to collectively prioritize the most important security factors. Mr. Wallace agreed and stated that there should be incentives for private sector companies to share information with the Government. Mr. Butera said that CISA believes that one person’s detection can be another’s prevention. He noted because CISA anonymizes any company information it receives, the agency can get information to their broad stakeholder base while protecting the company’s privacy, intellectual property, and critical infrastructure.

Mr. Wallace stated that the difference between nation-state attackers and cybercriminals is that the criminal groups are looking for money and a quick return on investment, so they are not going to spend a lot of time trying to get into a network. He said nation states are willing to be patient, bring more capabilities, and target entities that criminal groups are uninterested in.

Mr. Ledgett asked if there were any questions for the panelists from the NIAC members. Dr. Scott said she wanted to enforce the importance of companies looking closely at the basics of their cyber security protocols and processes in place to monitor and assess vulnerabilities.

Mr. William Terry Boston, NIAC member, asked if there had been cases where hardware has been tampered with in operational systems. Mr. Wallace said hardware tampering is hard to scale but looking at the activities that suppliers are implementing in cybersecurity would be beneficial.
One participant asked if companies that experienced the Solar Winds attack had continuous monitoring. Mr. Butera replied that all companies can work on improving continuous monitoring of their networks and get visibility at the individual host level. He said that most organizations compromised during the attack had continuous monitoring capabilities in place.

Ms. Allman asked if funding will be available for medium to small businesses in the manufacturing sector to upgrade their cybersecurity. Mr. Wallace stated that these businesses may want to outsource their cybersecurity upgrades the way they outsource other business activities like accounting.

Mr. Ledgett thanked the panelists.

**WORKFORCE AND TALENT MANAGEMENT STUDY UPDATE**

Dr. Scott thanked the members of the WFTM Working Group, and the tremendous support provided by the Study Group, noting that moving forward the Working Group and Study Group will be combined. She invited all the NIAC members to participate in one or two of these meetings directly. Dr. Scott then turned the meeting over to her study Co-Chair, Ms. Allman, to provide the Study update.

Ms. Allman outlined the study’s four framing questions:

1. What are the major trends or changes currently transforming the workforce and what steps need to be taken to prepare for these changes?
2. How do we ensure critical infrastructure workers have the skills needed to operate, repair, or restore infrastructure in an emergency and in steady state?
3. What are some of the ways to train and/or develop the needed skills in the existing workforce?
4. How can stakeholders shape the workforce and education systems to meet the demand for certain skillsets to operate critical infrastructure?

Ms. Allman stated the group took these focus areas and taskings from the NSC to gain relevant insights into the issues from sector specific and industry experts.

Ms. Allman reviewed the key drivers that affect critical infrastructure workforce:

- The need for current and relevant metrics to be collected and made available to interested parties;
- Funding pathways at all levels needing to be reexamined;
- Diversity, equality, and inclusion must be addressed;
- Critical infrastructure career paths need to be available to the full population;
- Nationally coordinated approach to workforce training needs to be evaluated; and
- Credentialing requirements and lack of portability are limiting factors to mobility and ability to attract skilled talent.
- Education and training should be included in the curriculum from Kindergarten to high school to apprenticeships and targeted technical training through college degrees.
Ms. Allman stated these insights were found through 40 working and study group interviews and panel discussions. She referenced an example of a recent discussion NIAC members had with members of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee (NSTAC) regarding their 2017 *NSTAC Report to the President on an Emerging Technologies Strategic Vision*. Ms. Allman said the session highlighted the need for emerging technologies to support critical infrastructure which emphasizes the necessity for the workforce to continue to develop in-depth understanding in the areas such as cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

Ms. Allman noted other organizations the Working Group or Study Group had interviewed as part of their research:

- Results for America;
- The North American Building Trades Union;
- The Urban Institute;
- A former commissioner of Bureau of Labor and Statistics;
- The Port of Los Angeles; and
- The Lumina Foundation regarding its work with the Credential Engine.

Ms. Allman stated the study group’s report is set to be delivered by the end of March. Ms. Allman said over the next quarter the working group will continue to collect, synthesize, and refine valuable information it has received into a clear, concise, and actionable framework with recommendations.

Ms. Allman stated she is encouraged by the work being done and is looking forward to reporting again at the next QBM. She thanked the Working Group members, Study Group members, DHS and the analytical support team. She then asked if NIAC members had questions.

Ms. Lau stated that there are a few new NIAC members and to ensure if they are interested in participating in the study, they can do so. Ms. Lau added that Mr. Steve Gatena, NIAC Member, has recently become involved. While not a new NIAC member, Mr. Carl Newman has also joined the group. Dr. Scott stated they are delighted both have joined.

Ms. Lau thanked Ms. Allman and Dr. Scott.

**NIAC Member Roundtable Discussion**

Ms. Durkovich thanked the participants of the last two studies for their continued work. She said she is looking forward to this roundtable discussion as it will provide an opportunity to review what the agenda will be moving forward with CISA. Ms. Durkovich stated the Administration’s priority is to focus on leveraging American ingenuity to modernize infrastructure. Her focus is to work with colleagues to ensure infrastructure is secured. Ms. Durkovich said she hopes to have a conversation about how the NIAC can inform the legislative and funding process as money is made available to modernize and rebuild infrastructure, and to help define what it means for infrastructure to be resilient. She said that infrastructure does not fit neatly into the 16 sectors anymore, so we have to make sure there is a vision that accounts for its interconnected and interdependent nature, and that each sector is on the same page.

Mr. Benjamin Fowke, NIAC member, discussed the lessons learned from the Winter Storm Uri. He stated that the nation will continue to embrace and become increasingly reliant on renewable
energy sources. However, Mr. Fowke emphasized that there will still be a role for other power sources to ensure there is redundancy in the system. He added the supply chain needs to be examined regarding fuel stock and that affordability and reliability are important. He said that, in the interim, natural gas is needed as a backup to renewable energy and stated resiliency needs to be more defined given the types of weather events the country has seen recently.

Ms. Durkovich asked Mr. Fowke a few questions:

- If traditional sources are eliminated how do we ensure the reliability of the grid?
- How do you think about resilience and what is the definition of it to you?
- Are you able to measure or evaluate the return on investment when storms like we recently encountered occur?

Mr. Fowke replied that he thinks they need to do more scenario planning. He gave further examples for ways to improve such as: hardening the grid, building more transmission lines, and spending money on winterizing.

Mr. William Fehrman, NIAC member, said he agrees with everything Mr. Fowke stated and went on to say the NIAC should look at changing the structure of our studies and determine how often the Government implements the recommendations in the Council’s reports. He noted that, if the NIAC’s recommendations were implemented, the issues that occurred in Texas probably would not have been as severe. Mr. Fehrman stated that the NIAC’s Government stakeholders may need to be engaged in recommendation development to help ensure they are implemented. He noted that the CICC report is key to Cyberspace Solarium Commission recommendations. Ms. Lau responded saying it is not so much about recommendations but about the actual uptake and implementation of them. Mr. Wallace stated he believes there should be a better way to track NIAC recommendations to ensure they are being implemented and followed up on.

Mr. Morley stated he thinks the future focus study and other NIAC recommendations have been prescient of some of the issues that have occurred recently. He believes there are ways for the water and electric sectors to collaborate to find a reasonable solution moving forward.

Mr. Morley said that there are concerns that were revealed in the chemical supply chain that need to be investigated. He mentioned that as companies increasingly modernize their processes, they become vulnerable to new cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities. Mr. Morley referenced CISA Alert (AA21-062A) “Mitigate Microsoft Exchange Server Vulnerabilities” that came out recently that included information and mitigating strategies on vulnerabilities, observing that some of the information may be too complex for companies without dedicated cyber experts to understand and implement. He stated that the advisory assumes a certain level of technical understanding that may not always exist in smaller businesses or entities. Mr. Morley said that the primary focus should be elevating and advancing stakeholder knowledge and building their capacity to address challenges, noting that technology is a part of the equation.

Mr. Boston, NIAC member, stated that electricity is a lifeline. He added that, during the 2020 Texas crisis, the pipes that provide fuel to natural gas power plants were freezing, so thought needs to go into how to harden the pipe systems. Mr. Boston referenced a recent recommendation from the National Academy of Engineering, Science, and Medicine that states a reliable structure needs to be set up for gas pipelines. He noted that a topic also included in this recommendation was to think about the supply chain for manufacturing extra high voltage
transformers in the United States and how to design inverters able to withstand an electromagnetic pulse created by solar flares.

Ms. Allman stated that, for the Department of Defense (DOD), the implementation of the Cybersecurity Maturity Model for businesses is becoming critical. She mentioned that her company builds warships for the U.S. Navy, working with businesses small and big alike. She is concerned that medium or small size businesses with niche specialties will no longer be able to compete in the U.S. under the new cybersecurity rules. She noted that it is important, when talking about critical infrastructure resources, to consider whether they are sourced in the United States or from elsewhere at a lower cost.

Mr. George Hawkins, NIAC member said he supports the statements Mr. Morley made and added that one of the largest infrastructure sectors buying power is the water industry. Because of this, water operators also fear extreme weather.

Ms. Durkovich referenced the water incident that occurred in Florida and said that the Administration has been assessing and examining the impact to the water sector. She said she pulled recommendations from a report NIAC created in 2017 that stated there should be a policy process to drive water and wastewater resilience. The Government should look at increasing funding, investment, and incentives to improve water infrastructure resilience. Mr. Durkovich added that she highlighted Mr. Hawkins’ statement that sectors need to collaborate.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mr. John Palatiello, Miller Wenhold Capitol Strategies, introduced himself, explaining that he is involved in the surveying, mapping, and geospatial community and has managed a variety of trained professional organizations, including the National Society of Professional Surveyors, the United States Geospatial Executives Organization, and the Subsurface Utility Engineering Association. Mr. Palatiello encouraged the Council to consider the importance of location information, surveying, mapping geospatial data to almost all forms of critical infrastructure. He said that according to estimates by the American Public Works Association, an underground utility line is hit somewhere in America every 60 seconds. He noted that location data is underpinning virtually all the 16 critical infrastructure sectors and that they are reliant on surveying and mapping. Mr. Palatiello offered to work with the NIAC to improve critical infrastructure resilience, sustainability, and security. He said it is important to keep the “where” of critical infrastructure in mind. Mr. Palatiello thanked the participants for the opportunity to speak.

**CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Durkovich thanked Ms. Lau and Dr. Scott for their leadership and the entire NIAC for their continued excellent work on advancing security and resilience of the Nation’s infrastructure. She stated she hears their concerns about recommendation implementation, so she has asked CISA to provide her a list of all 300 NIAC recommendations and where the Government stands on them. Ms. Durkovich said she will think about how the Administration can leverage the recommendations to address the President’s priorities and think about how to define the next study.
Acting Director Wales said CISA asks the Council to make recommendations on how to improve infrastructure security and resilience, but at times they are not advanced throughout the Government as much as they should be. He stated that CISA will work closely with Ms. Durkovich to encourage follow up on these issues. He added that the conversation was thought-provoking and there is room for additional work between the Government and private sector to tackle resilience issues, to be better prepared for the next incident, and to mitigate risks ahead of time. Acting Director Wales noted that the discussions from the meeting lends itself to continued discussions on future NIAC studies.

Dr. Scott added that in thinking about future reviews in the context of such unprecedented challenges and change, it would be extremely helpful to have some collective national strategic thinking and work to help guide future “normal” scenario building.

Ms. Lau thanked Dr. Scott and stated that she, Dr. Scott, and Ms. Durkovich will get together to discuss how to move these issues forward. Ms. Lau said some of the follow-on quick tasks might bring prior recommendations to implementation. She then thanked NIAC members for joining the meeting and hopes they will be able to attend the next NIAC QBM.

Ms. Lau then adjourned the meeting.
MARCH 4, 2021 NIAC QBM PARTICIPANTS LIST

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
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The President’s National Infrastructure Advisory Council
Approved Meeting Minutes for the March 4, 2021 Quarterly Business Meeting

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