Bipartisan Calls from Congress for Resignations over OPM Data Breach

June 16, 2015 â€“ There were bipartisan calls from the House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform today for the resignation of Katherine Archuletta, the head of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), over the data breach announced last week. Although the number of people exposed in the breach is still not known, it could be as many as 21 million.

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Representatives from both sides of the political aisle seemed to be flabbergasted at times by some of the details that come out in testimony. For instance, the OPMâ€™s Inspector General had recommended that the agencyâ€™s network be shut down for a time last year because of security issues but that Archuletta had rejected the idea saying that it would interfere with OPMâ€™s mission. As it turns out, by the time recommendation was make, Chinese hackers had already penetrated the agencyâ€™s computer network and were actively accessing data. Upon hearing this, committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz said "You failed utterly and totally. They recommended it was so bad that you shut it down and you didn't."

When asked if the records of CIA and other intelligence agency personnel had been stolen, Archuletta said that she would only address the issue in a closed intelligence hearing. Even so, it became clear during the testimony that the extent of the breach was significantly larger than first reported by the Obama administration.

Based on the testimony, it is now believed that the hackers may have been able to access vetting information used by federal law enforcement agencies to do background investigations for security clearances. Thatâ€™s significant because it includes names, addresses and other highly personal information of people living outside of the United States who are related to security clearance holders and applicants. It would give China the ability to track down those relativesâ€¦ especially if they live in Chinaâ€¦ and use them as leverage for spying against the US.

At several points in the testimony, representatives asked Archuletta to resign but she declined.

One of the people testifying, Andy Ozment (DHS Undersecretary for Cybersecurity) said that the agency believes that it has now been able to purge affected government computers of the hackers but he added that he couldnâ€™t be 100% sure of that.

After the hearing, Rep. Elijah Cummings said, â€œThe United States of America is under attack. Sophisticated cyber spies, many from foreign countries, are targeting the sensitive personnel information of millions of Americans. They are attacking our government, our economy, our financial sector, our health care systems and virtually every single aspect of our lives."
byJim Malmberg
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