



TEXAS EAGLE FORUM

February 2024

Dear Texas Eagles,

The primary season is reaching its height, as elections in Texas approach on March 5th. If it is at all possible, we hope you will wait to vote until Election Day, as our founding fathers intended. Throughout history, election days were meant to be a great coming-together of the body politic to share in our civic duty and exercise our right to have a say in how we are governed. Now more than ever, with how fast the world is changing, voting on Election Day is the best way to ensure your vote is as informed as possible.

While we are a non-partisan educational organization, we assume most of you agree with our stand on issues and will vote Republican in the Primary. If you are not signed up for our Alerts, we have posted our recommendations and endorsements on the TEF website. We recommend that you use the drop down menu to add yourself to our Alerts list, as we may add - or, on rare occasions, even delete - an endorsement.

Today, Biden's open border and other destructive policies are jolting more people awake across the country. Serious problems were exposed during the Covid years, including what was being taught in our public schools and revealing tyrannical emergency powers laws on the books in several states. We were happy to see friends and family wake-up when these issues started hitting home. Many are now patriotic activists who work alongside us to fix these problems.

We must help the newly engaged to understand that we have well-thought out, common sense solutions to these issues. We must encourage them to help elect the best candidates to office and to stay engaged after elections are over.

We hope you will make plans to attend your local precinct convention after Election Day. Dates and times vary, so we suggest you reach out to your local county Republican party office for information specific to your location. As you attend your precinct convention, or your senatorial or county conventions, you may present TEF Resolutions that will impact the Party Platform at the State Convention in May. We will be posting instructions for presenting resolutions on our website.

We also hope many Eagles will work their way to the State Convention in San Antonio, May 23-25 (committee meetings begin May 20th). In order to be a delegate to the convention, you must attend your precinct convention, and senatorial district and/or county conventions for opportunities to request to be a delegate. Delegates help update the party platform and rules, elect State Republican Executive Committee (SREC) members, the Republican National Committee (RNC) Committeemen and women, along with the party chair and vice-chair. It is a great opportunity to recharge your batteries with like-minded folks and be ready for the all-important presidential election in November.

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If you are new to attending the Convention and have questions on how to become a delegate, please email us at txefemail@gmail.com. Be sure to include a phone number, so we can call and give you some guidance, if possible.

Although we spent many hours working to vet candidates to determine if they were worthy of an endorsement, we did not turn our back on other issues. This month's *Torch* contains an excellent exposé on the unacceptable failure of our elected officials to provide critical protections for the infrastructure that keeps us alive and healthy. While they argue over Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirements, redefine the word "sex," and shovel fake refugees across our border while handing them taxpayer-funded door prizes, we must speak up for our Country's greatest needs, including a closed border and rock-solid protection for our power and water systems.

As supporters of TEF and subscribers to *The Torch*, please let us know if you need any extra copies of a particular issue to share with friends. Our articles are written by experts in their fields and are well-researched and highly educational. They make excellent teaching material to share with family, friends, neighbors, and within your professional network.

We appreciate you standing with TEF as we continue to do all we can to preserve our God-given rights as American citizens. God bless you, and God bless Texas!

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindi Castilla".

Cindi Castilla
President
Texas Eagle Forum

THE TORCH

TEXAS EAGLE FORUM

February 2024

Texas - and Texans - Must Lead on Infrastructure Security

By Tommy Waller, *Center for Security Policy*

When it comes to protecting America's critical infrastructure, such as our electrical grids, water treatment systems, and military installations, from attacks by our adversaries abroad, the U.S. government has been MIA for decades.

Over forty years ago, in May 1981, the GAO published a report entitled "Federal Electrical Emergency Preparedness Is Inadequate," warning that the nation's electric power systems were "very vulnerable to disruptions from acts of war, sabotage, or terrorism," and that the "Federal Government is not now prepared to handle a long-term national or regional disruption in electric power."

Fast-forward twenty years to 2013 and the coordinated attack on PG&E's Metcalf transformer station in California, which brought the lack of grid physical security to the attention of Congress. At the time, the electric utility industry argued *against* the need for a physical security standard, but the government ordered the industry to write one anyway. However the resulting standard exempted most facilities from actually complying and required no actual physical security measures be taken. Not surprisingly, physical attacks against the electric grid continued.

A decade later, after attackers used rifle fire to take down two electrical grid substations in Moore County, N.C., leaving 40,000 citizens without power in December 2022, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) – the U.S. agency responsible for approving the physical security standards for the nation's bulk electric system– announced a joint technical conference with North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the organization responsible for developing grid reliability standards and enforcing compliance, to discuss physical security.

Yet again, the electric utility industry went on record to state that no further enhancement of grid security standards was necessary. For years, this has been the



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predictable response from the people who are supposedly in charge of grid safety.

Physical Attacks are Shockingly Commonplace

According to data submitted to the Department of Energy by the electric power industry, physical attacks have resulted in electric disturbances in 1,072 cases from January 2010 through June 2023 – a rate of nearly 1.5 attacks per week. At the same time, the vulnerability of the grid has been covered widely by the media and even through documentaries such as the award-winning film “Grid Down, Power Up.”

Imagine if the auto industry deliberately refused to use data from their excellent crash simulators and crash dummies to make cars safer? Wouldn't that be criminally irresponsible? It's an analogy that should be on the minds of the Commissioners at FERC. Yet over the past nine years, FERC has declined to order a fundamental overhaul of an obviously ineffective physical security standard despite numerous formal complaints and petitions.

Fortunately, a few proactive members of the Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) formed the Resilient Power Working Group (RPWG) to assist critical infrastructure owners with determining methods of ensuring back-up power in the case of a regional or widespread failure of the power grid.

Consisting of members from across numerous federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profits, and private industry, the RPWG created “Resilient Power Best Practices for Critical Facilities and Sites,” a document which “supports emergency and continuity managers with guidelines, analysis, background material, and references to increase the resilience of backup and emergency power systems during all durations of power outages.” It is among the best informational products our government has recently produced in this area, even if these best practices are not mandated.

Cyber Attacks on Water Treatment Systems

The U.S. electrical power grid, while still lacking many safeguards, does have better cybersecurity standards than the water system.

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) has been pushing for “infrastructure funding and finance mechanisms” to enhance U.S. water infrastructure for years, due to its age and insufficient funding.

AWWA has also called for policies “that advance physical and cybersecurity in effective ways while securing information about potential vulnerabilities.” But obvious and potentially life-threatening vulnerabilities of our water systems to cybersecurity threats remain.

In November 2023, an Iranian hacking group, Cyber Av3ngers, targeted the industrial control system (ICS) of the water system in Aliquippa, P.A., in what may have been a test case for future attacks. The hackers had targeted and infiltrated one of the station's Unitronics programmable logic controllers (PLCs), which are responsible for monitoring water pressure for customers in Aliquippa, and nearby Racoon and Potter Townships.

The cyberattack does not appear to be specifically focused on water systems, as Unitronics provides control systems to a variety of critical infrastructure, not just water. According to a November 2023 search on Shodan - a search engine that lets users search for various types of servers connected to the internet - there are more than 220 Unitronics systems in the U.S. and over 1,800 worldwide. Thus, there are plenty of systems for Cyber Av3ngers to target.

Unitronics is headquartered in Israel, which is a likely reason for why the Iranian group targeted a system physically located in the United States. The Aliquippa attack comes in the middle of an ongoing war where Israel is up against Hamas and other Iranian proxies in the Middle East. Indeed, Cyber Av3ngers claims to have successfully hacked 10 similar water systems in Israel. Based on Cyber Av3ngers' track record and open hatred of Israel, it is likely they will continue to target Unitronics control systems in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Malware and our Military

Disruption to civilian daily life is by no means the only way our country would be impacted if any major part of our critical infrastructure is crippled by a successful terrorist attack. As a report for the U.S. Air Force Electromagnetic Defense Task Force (EDTF) explains, America's military could be completely “subdued” in the event of a long-term outage of the electrical grid. Unfortunately, it is very possible that malware can be used to disable our critical infrastructures.

The discovery last year of Chinese malware deeply embedded in computer networks connected to U.S. military bases, which one congressional official called a “a ticking time bomb,” should be a major national security wake-up call. Experts interviewed by *The New York Times* say “disruption, not surveillance, appears to be the objective” of these latest cyber penetrations. The placement of this malware is a calculated move on the part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and harkens back to Sun Tzu's admonishment that “the skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting.”

If such malware was to be used to turn off power and communications, even temporarily, it would present a major escalation in terms of cyberwarfare. Unfortunately, despite



numerous petitions from grid security advocates, there is still no requirement by the federal government for the electric utility industry to defend against malware. In 2017, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) said it would “decline” to mandate measures to detect, mitigate and remove malware from electrical grid systems.

Chinese Supply Chain Threats

At the port of Houston in the summer of 2019, the Trump Administration’s Department of Energy seized a massive Chinese-manufactured transformer and transported it under federal escort to Sandia National Laboratories. The transformer was inspected and, while the exact findings are highly classified, Latham Saddler, President Trump’s former Director of Intelligence Programs at the National Security Council, reported “They found hardware was put into the transformer that had the ability for somebody in China to switch it off.”

On May 1st, 2020, President Trump declared a “Grid Security Emergency” and issued Executive Order 13920 “Securing the United States Bulk-Power System,” which was meant to stop the importation of these transformers. At the time, the U.S. grid contained about 300 Chinese transformers.

On President Biden’s first day in office, he suspended Trump’s order, opening the floodgates to the importation of more transformers from China.

Members of the Center for Security Policy’s Secure the Grid Coalition have filed formal complaints on this matter with FERC, which have been largely ignored. On February 16th of this year, we filed an additional warning to FERC that our nation has now imported 449 Chinese transformers. Thus far, there seems to be no appetite in the Biden Administration for addressing this looming threat.

The Time to Act is Now

The seriousness of this most recent Chinese malware and supply chain threats should raise concern for all Americans, especially those in uniform and those who own, operate, and regulate our critical infrastructures. Given the increasing aggressiveness of communist China toward kinetic warfare in

the Pacific, the CCP’s rapidly increasing threats to American critical infrastructure, and the slow federal response, it would be prudent for states and communities to adopt more aggressive measures to mitigate these threats and prepare their populations.

The specter of war in Europe and growing instability in the Middle East resurrects memories of a past when Americans took seriously the notion that conflicts abroad could come violently home, and in the most catastrophic of ways. Given the lack of will at the federal level among industry leaders and regulators, more will need to be done locally to protect our critical infrastructures and to prepare in the event of such an attack.

Louisiana state Senator Barry Milligan has authored multiple forms of legislation to protect his state’s critical infrastructure from nefarious Chinese tech companies that serve as entry points for Chinese cyberwarfare. Louisiana’s Public Service Commissioner Eric Skrmetta has authored directives to the state’s utilities “to cease purchasing, and including, any foreign produced devices in electric utilities from specified jurisdictions” which included China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran.

The good news is that these Louisiana leaders were following the example of Texas State Senator Tan Parker who, while in the Texas House in 2021, passed the “Lone Star Infrastructure Protection Act” which prohibits Texas businesses from entering into an agreement relating to critical infrastructure in the state with companies tied to those same countries. It is unclear, though, whether that law is addressing Chinese transformers already in the Texas grid, or new ones being imported.

Texas state Senator Bob Hall has worked tirelessly to secure the Texas grid against EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attacks and other hazards such as solar weather. But his bipartisan Senate Bill 330, which would have established a Texas Grid Security Commission, died in committee last April. Thus, much more must be done in Texas.

In Texas, the legislative fight for grid security has been an uphill battle with many more losses than wins, due to an undue influence of the electric utility lobby. But the courage, commitment, and perseverance of these leaders are setting an example for citizens and state leaders alike across America - and even inspiring some Texas utilities to innovate. CenterPoint Energy has invented one of the most promising technologies to protect substations against EMP. It’s long past time the rest of Texas’ utilities take similarly prudent steps.

But they won’t do it without hearing from the people.

Lt. Col. Tommy Waller (USMC Ret.) is the President and CEO of the Center for Security Policy. He served on multiple deployments during his twenty years of service. Mr. Waller holds a BA in International Relations from Tulane University.



Biden Administration is Treading on Texas' Sovereignty

Democrat accomplice media have been misrepresenting nearly everything about Texas' efforts to secure the border. Coverage of the Eagle Pass standoff provides an apt illustration of the inaccurate reporting surrounding the supremacy clause and the disregard for Texas' sovereignty. Eagle Pass is the border town in Texas where, earlier this month, Gov. Greg Abbott declared an emergency and seized control of Shelby Park. Under the governor's directive, the Texas National Guard then limited access to the park, including by federal Border Patrol agents. Members of the legacy press are framing the supremacy clause as bestowing on the Biden administration an automatic win in every disagreement with Texas. But the clause does no such thing. If the Biden administration actually owns the property at issue, it could have said that long ago and proven it, but it didn't. Instead, DHS merely invoked the supremacy clause, even though neither the Constitution nor federal law provided Border Patrol with the right to compel access to Shelby Park.

SOURCE: Margot Cleveland, The Federalist, February 1, 2024.

Conservatives Successfully Defeat McConnell's Border Deal

Conservatives are united on a singular fact: President Biden could secure the border if he simply enforced the laws on the books. Rather than focusing on these goals, Republican Leader, Mitch McConnell and Senator James Lankford attempted to negotiate a disastrous border proposal with Senate Democrats and the Biden White House last month. When details were leaked, Conservatives made their disapproval known. McConnell's deal was deeply insufficient at controlling the historic and unprecedented number of illegal crossings facilitated by the Biden administration and would have enshrined programmatic amnesty into law. Worse, it seemed the deal would do serious harm to a future president's ability to enforce order at the border. The House has passed H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023. The bill makes necessary changes to the law to provide for more robust, streamlined enforcement, and critically, has the accountability mechanisms necessary to make sure the law is enforced. "We urge all conservatives to stand united behind the House passed H.R. 2, which will actually secure the border."

SOURCE: Conservative Action Network, Eagle Forum Press Release, January 31, 2024.

The 15-Minute Trap

Fifteen-minute cities are popping up everywhere, and the World Economic Forum is wildly enthusiastic about them. Billed as "greener, cleaner and safer," these new "green" cities, which make services accessible to residents within 15 minutes of their homes, are supposed to "save the planet" and help all humanity. Instead, they are nothing more than a way for them to restrict, coerce, fine, punish, surveil, and limit the fundamental right of freedom of movement for residents. Oxford, England, which has declared a 'climate emergency,' is hoping their 15-minute cities will help achieve the Council's 'Net Zero Carbon Oxford' vision by 2040. The Oxford government will graciously allow residents to leave their 15-minute city a maximum of 100 times a year, but then they must first register their car, which is tracked throughout the city via smart cameras. Oxford residents are furious over council plans to turn the city into '15-minute' controlled zones. They have been brushed away by the Council, which has ignored their displeasure.

SOURCE: Amy Mek, Eagle Forum Report. January 15, 2024.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Conservatism proper is a legitimate, probably necessary, and certainly widespread attitude of opposition to drastic change."

~ Friedrich Hayek

GREAT AMERICAN QUOTE

"A people can only be free, happy and great in proportion to the virtue and intelligence of the people."

- Stephen F. Austin

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