Protection of the US from Electromagnetic Pulse Attacks

Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen’s Statement on Executive Order to Protect the US from Electromagnetic Pulse Attacks

It was reported from Washington on 27 March that President Donald J Trump signed the Executive Order on Coordinating National Resilience to Electromagnetic Pulses (EMP), the first-ever comprehensive whole-of-government policy to build resilience and protect against electromagnetic pulses, or EMPs, which are temporary electromagnetic signals that can disrupt, degrade, and damage technology and critical infrastructure systems across large areas.

In the words of the US Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen M Nielsen: ‘EMP
c0%0Aps pose a potential threat to our nation’s critical infrastructure, and this
c0%0Aexecutive order will advance our national goal of increased resilience across
c0%0Aall infrastructure sectors.

c0%0ADHS remains committed to working with our interagency partners to ensure a
c0%0Amore resilient, prepared America by reducing the risk of EMP events. DHS is
grateful for the president's leadership on this critical issue and continued
commitment to protecting our country and keeping Americans safe.’

The executive order outlines DHS’ lead role in implementing the following activities:

• Provision of timely information on credible EMP threats and events to
  stakeholders;

• Taking a risk-informed approach to understand and enhance resilience to
  the effects of EMP across all critical infrastructure sectors, including
  coordinating the identification of national critical functions and
  prioritization of associated critical infrastructure at greatest risk to the
  effects of EMP;

• Coordination of response to and recovery from the effects of EMP on
  critical infrastructure;

• Consideration of EMP scenarios as a factor in preparedness exercises;
• Conduct of R&D to better understand and more effectively model the effects of EMP on national critical functions, and then develop technologies and guidelines to protect this critical infrastructure;

• Maintenance of a survivable means to provide necessary emergency information to the public during and after an EMP event; and

• Development of quadrennial EMP risk assessments, with the first risk assessment delivered within one year of this order.

It is understood that the executive order will foster increased resilience to EMP events through better data gathering, testing, risk assessments, and private sector coordination. It directs departments and agencies to coordinate and streamline efforts, while fostering an environment that promotes private sector innovation to strengthen our critical infrastructure.

DHS last year announced the Strategy for Protecting and Preparing the Homeland against Threats from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) and Geomagnetic Disturbance (GMD), which laid out a clear vision and an approach for DHS to take to protect critical infrastructure and prepare to respond and recover from potentially catastrophic electromagnetic incidents.

The strategy also reflects a consensus Intelligence Community assessment of the EMP threat posed by our nation’s adversaries. Primarily focused on Departmental activities, the DHS strategy recognizes the importance of continued close collaboration with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial decision-makers, sector-specific agencies, and private sector critical infrastructure owner-operators.