

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
Subcommittee on Oversight
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
NIST's Physical Security Vulnerabilities: A GAO Undercover Review
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Thank you Chairman LaHood and Chairwoman Comstock for calling this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for being here this morning.

I will keep this brief. The National Institute of Standards and Technology is a national treasure. From Nobel prize-winning research, to their leadership in standards development benefiting U.S. businesses across every sector of our economy, to their role in accelerating advanced manufacturing on U.S. shores, to their central role in improving cybersecurity in both the government and the private sector, I know of no other agency that has such a big and widespread impact with such a relatively small budget. NIST's leadership in measurement science and their work in cybersecurity and so many other important areas of technology is unimpeachable.

Today, however, we will learn in some detail about how NIST has not applied the same rigor and discipline to the physical security of its facilities. A new report from GAO, being released with this hearing, identifies several weaknesses in NIST's policies and procedures for physical security. The GAO report further discusses the challenges caused by the fragmentation of oversight of NIST security between NIST and its parent agency, the Department of Commerce.

GAO makes a number of recommendations to both NIST and Commerce on how to improve physical security on the two NIST campuses in Gaithersburg, MD and Boulder, CO. Those recommendations are not prescriptive; rather they lay out or reference a clear process for the development of action plans and timetables to address each identified weakness in current policies and procedures. While it is premature to ask NIST and Commerce for detailed plans, I certainly expect to hear from them today how they plan to proceed in addressing each of GAO's recommendations, and what steps they have already taken.

I want to thank each of the witnesses for being here this morning. This hearing isn't as fun for anyone as the science and technology focused hearings we're more used to in the Research and Technology Subcommittee, but it is no less important. I take our oversight responsibilities seriously, and I believe the agencies before us take their security seriously. I look forward to learning more about the agencies' security plans going forward.

I yield back the balance of my time.