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DAILY NEWS

GW's National Security Archive compares party platforms on cybersecurity policy

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The National Security Archive at George Washington University has analyzed Democratic and Republican party platforms on cybersecurity, an exercise that provides insight into the Democrats' 2020 priorities in cyberspace but is something of a time capsule for the GOP, which decided against updating its 2016 policy documents when it scrapped plans for an in-person national convention this summer.

"The exercise is not as straightforward as it might seem," the National Security Archive acknowledged in a Monday release. "So, while we have tried to compare the platforms issue by issue, given the chronological difference between them, there are some cases where one may address a specific topic but the other does not. For example, while the Democratic platform speaks to election cybersecurity, the Republican platform says very little about the topic, which is understandable because it was crafted before the 2016 election."

The **analysis** notes GOP 2016 platform language that's supportive of the "defend forward" strategy subsequently developed by the Pentagon, as well as actions "to cause diplomatic, financial, and legal pain, curtailing visas for guilty parties, freezing their assets, and pursuing criminal actions against them."

Along those lines, White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien noted in comments over the weekend that Treasury has just designated five Iranians for sanctions, and that the U.S. last week imposed sanctions on members of the Russian military intelligence service GRU.

"One of the problems we have with both Iran and Russia is that we have so many sanctions on those countries right now that there's very little left for us to do, but we're looking at every potential deterrence we can on those countries as well as others, including China and some countries that have not yet been mentioned that are trying to influence Americans on how to vote. It's unacceptable," O'Brien said Sunday, according to the pool report.

The 2016 Republican platform supported "active defense" -- referred to by critics as "hacking back" -- a controversial concept that has supporters and opponents in both parties and in the business community. The GOP platform also endorsed ensuring law enforcement has access to data on encrypted devices, and spelled out opposition to net-neutrality rules that were ultimately scrapped by a GOP-led Congress and the Federal Communications Commission leadership elevated by President Trump.

The Democrats' platform calls for protecting "privacy and data rights while continuing to support and enable

innovation and improve accessibility in the technology sector."

"The platform asserts that Democrats will update the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights, initially drafted by the Obama administration in 2015, to include data breach protections for consumers, students, employees, and patients. The original draft was roundly criticized from privacy advocates and technology companies alike," according to the analysis.

On election security, the National Security Archive analysis notes the Democratic platform affirms plans to "increase investments to help state and local governments upgrade election technology, including cybersecurity technology."

The analysis quotes the platform as saying: "Democrats will also increase oversight of private election vendors to ensure voting systems are secure and worthy of voters' trust," and notes "These priorities are mirrored in the 'Securing America's Federal Elections Act,' a bill introduced by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) which passed the House along mostly party lines in June 2019, but was subsequently blocked in the Senate. The proposed legislation includes 'grants for obtaining compliant paper ballot voting systems and carrying out voting system security improvements,' as well as additional 'voting system cybersecurity requirements.' The SAFE Act proposes that by the date of the regularly scheduled November 2022 general election, 'each State shall seek to ensure that any voting machine used in such election and any subsequent election for Federal office is manufactured in the United States.'"

House Republicans cited the mandate on states as they lined up in opposition to the legislation, which **passed the House last year** but never advanced in the Senate. -- *Charlie Mitchell (cmitchell@iwpnews.com)*

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