

American Free Press

VOLUME XXI • NUMBER 21 & 22 • MAY 17 & 24, 2021 • AMERICANFREEPRESS.NET • POSTMASTER: DO NOT DELAY • MAILED MAY 14, 2021 • \$3.00

HACK ATTACK

• Infrastructure security should be Biden priority

By the AFP Staff

While the Biden administration seeks trillions in taxpayer money to throw at absurd programs such as subsidizing the purchase of electric cars, real infrastructure in the United States continues to deteriorate. The latest evidence of this came about when gas stations up and down the Eastern seaboard went dry because foreign hackers were able to exploit vulnerabilities in a major gas supplier to shut down one major pipeline that provides nearly 50% of the gas for the East Coast.

Colonial Pipeline runs the largest fuel pipeline in the United States, delivering over 45% of all gas used in the eastern United States. The company was taken down over the weekend of May 7-9 following a so-called ransomware attack by a gang of criminal hackers that calls itself "DarkSide." Ransomware attacks involve disruptions of computer programs carried out via scrambling and encrypting data. They are usually perpetrated by independent criminal gangs that hold systems or data hostage until the owner pays a hefty ransom for their release.

While there was no threat of a total shutdown during the attack, the disruption did lead to dramatic price increases up and down the coast as well as many gas stations temporarily running out of gas, leading to significant "gas pains" for mil-



lions of baffled Americans.

The trouble speaks to a broader problem in the United States, though, as it relates to infrastructure that is in desperate need of modernization. This was but one of many wake-up calls for officials, who have been neglecting U.S. infrastructure for decades.

These types of cyberattacks are problematic because they can be easily carried out and cause considerable damage to systems that are vital to operating everything from hospitals to police departments to nuclear powerplants and airlines—even dams and drawbridges.

For over a decade, the federal government, as well as state and local governments, have been aware of cyberattacks like the one that occurred, but, so far, have done little to upgrade the vital

infrastructure needed to ensure their security from brazen cybercriminals.

The Biden administration should be spearheading vital infrastructure upgrades but is instead seeking to spend \$2 trillion on what has been described by critics as a bonanza of pork. According to House Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), only 6% of the massive infrastructure bill the Biden administration is advancing actually funds true upgrades while the remaining 94% go to other programs, much of which President Joe Biden and his people call "human infrastructure."

How long will it be before hackers shut down security at a nuclear power plant or take over and open draw bridges at the height of rush-hour traffic? Security officials have already detailed the country's vulnerabilities that go far beyond crumbling highway systems, bridges, and dams, so it should surprise no one when and if something terrible happens.

The problem, today, however, is that it looks like the Biden administration is more interested in enriching its donors and supporters rather than truly addressing the country's failing infrastructure, something this newspaper has been documenting since we first began publishing in August 2001. ★

THE INSIDE SCOOP



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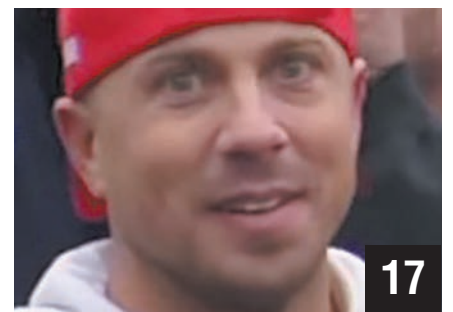
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