

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Review of International Section 214 Authorizations to Assess Evolving National Security, Law Enforcement, Foreign Policy, and Trade Policy Risks*, IB Docket No. 23-119; *Amendment of the Schedule of Application Fees Set Forth in Sections 1.1102 through 1.1109 of the Commission's Rules*, MD Docket No. 23-134, Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (April 20, 2023).

The growth and importance of international telecommunications cannot be overstated. Our seas are crisscrossed with subsea cables sharing data and information among nations throughout the world. Many offer service across our borders with Canada and Mexico, and thousands of providers have filed for Commission approval to offer U.S.-international telecommunications services. This growth has led to tangible benefits to the United States and its people. However, consistent with an ever-evolving national security landscape and increased threat profile from adversarial countries, we must also be mindful of our obligation to protect the United States and its people from threats from international providers. To highlight the risk and need to act, recently I authored an [op-ed](#) with Senator Gary Peters on the need to protect our communications infrastructure from threats in our networks.

We've previously taken important steps to revoke and reject some international section 214 authorizations and applications. These actions only further highlighted the need for the Commission to take a fresh look at its international 214 rules. I think this item hits the right balance.

First, it's overdue for the Commission to update our records regarding international 214 authorization holders, including whether those authorized are actually providing service. We must also understand who owns the carriers that have international 214 authorizations. I strongly believe in data-driven policy. This one-time information collection is appropriately designed to provide the data necessary to move forward.

Second, we absolutely should be considering either a renewal or periodic review process for these authorizations, consistent with our rules for other Commission licenses and authorizations. In doing so, we should be collecting proper information that will allow the FCC and our national security colleagues to determine whether an international 214 authorization continues to serve the public interest or poses a national security risk. As national security officials would say, we must ensure that we control "the haystack." We must be on top of the data, including its collection, so that we can start to begin to identify any potential needles.

Third, I strongly believe, consistent with my past efforts to require similar cybersecurity and risk management baseline requirements for providers participating in the Universal Service Fund and Emergency Alert System participants, that requiring baseline cybersecurity requirements for all providers is important. The proposal in this item balances the need to ensure that communications infrastructure is protected without being overly prescriptive in proposing one particular pathway to do so.

Fourth, we already require providers of advanced communications services to report on whether they have purchased, rented, leased, or otherwise obtained communications equipment or services listed on our Covered List. There's no reason why applicants seeking to provide international services should not have to identify whether or not they do the same. The equipment and services on the Covered List have been deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States. We need to know when they are deployed for services entering the country.

Last, we propose to collect cross-border facilities information. This would lead to a much more complete understanding of the infrastructure that reaches our soil, as well as the related issues that I have frequently spoken about, including data centers and other services that allow access to U.S. communications and the personal information of American citizens.

I look forward to reviewing the record that develops, and on engaging with stakeholders to ensure that any rules find the proper balance between protecting our infrastructure and supporting continued growth and innovation. I am particularly heartened to see that the Department of Justice, Department of Defense, and Department of Homeland Security strongly support the FCC's effort,¹ and I will continue to work with our government partners to mitigate risks from international 214 authorizations. This item strikes a careful balance of proposing rules necessary to fulfill our statutory obligations, while right-sizing the burden to industry as much as possible. I thank the Chairwoman for her leadership, and my colleagues for supporting my edits to the item in achieving that goal.

I'm confident that these proposals will help ensure that no needle falls through the haystack, and that all Americans are more secure. I thank the Commission staff that worked on this item, and strongly support it.

¹ Letter from Devin A. DeBaker, Chief, Foreign Investment Review Section, National Security Division, Department of Justice, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, IB Docket No. 23-119 (Apr. 12, 2023).