SASC Completes Markup for FY21 NDAA

NDAA 2021

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senators Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), announced that the Committee had advanced the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021 on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 25-2. During the subcommittee and full committee markups of the legislation, the Committee considered 391 amendments and adopted 229 bipartisan amendments. The bill now heads to the Senate floor for consideration.

Tech companies ask Congress for nationwide Facial-Recognition technology laws

WASHINGTON — This week, three technology juggernauts — Amazon, Microsoft and IBM — all said they will not sell facial recognition technology to police and other law enforcement agencies. Amazon’s Ring subsidiary has partnerships with over 1,300 police departments in the United States. The company stated this week it will put a one-year hold on sales of its facial recognition technology to law enforcement, in hopes of giving Congress time to “implement appropriate rules.”

Amazon stated in their blog they will continue to allow organizations like Thorn, the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and Marinus Analytics to use Amazon Rekognition to help rescue human trafficking victims and reunite missing children with their families.

Amazon advocates that governments should put in place stronger regulations to govern the ethical use of facial recognition technology, and in recent days, Congress appears ready to take on this challenge. A one-year moratorium might give Congress enough time to implement appropriate rules.

Microsoft’s announcement followed IBM and Amazon, in the wake of anti-racism protests around the world in response to the death of George Floyd. Microsoft’s decision adds to the pressure on lawmakers to respond to protests focusing on racial injustice and police brutality. Studies have shown that commercial facial recognition algorithms frequently misidentify minorities and people of color.

Technology companies have rapidly expanded their partnerships with law enforcement agencies in recent years, providing them with sophisticated surveillance tools and drones that have raised concerns about supply chain security, citizen privacy, and discrimination. Some want to help craft new laws. For BigTech, reformed facial-rec is far better than an outright ban.

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— Sources: Amazon, IBM, Microsoft, Department of Interior
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