

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI

Re: *January 30, 2018 Preliminary Report on the Investigation into the False Emergency Alert in Hawaii.*

On January 13, 2018, at approximately 8:07 AM, many people in Hawaii received an alert on their mobile devices and through their television and radio stations warning of an imminent ballistic missile attack. In the minutes that followed, panic-stricken citizens called their families to say what they believed were their last words, and some even resorted to jumping into manholes to find shelter. But 38 minutes later, a follow-up alert was sent out notifying everyone that it was a false alarm. It was a mistake. There was no missile strike. Instead, the only thing that struck the island was outrage—and rightly so.

That same day, I instructed the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to start a full investigation into this event, focusing on two key questions: What went wrong? And what needs to be done to stop a similar mistake from happening in the future?

As today's preliminary investigative report demonstrates, the Bureau has made a lot of progress in less than two-and-a-half weeks. And its presentation this morning makes clear that many things went wrong in Hawaii. I don't say this for the purpose of casting blame or disparaging Hawaiian officials. We simply need to identify the problems in order to fix them—not just in Hawaii, but anywhere else where they may exist.

In my view, here are the two most troubling things that our investigation has found so far: (1) Hawaii's Emergency Management Agency didn't have reasonable safeguards in place to prevent human error from resulting in the transmission of a false alert; and (2) Hawaii's Emergency Management Agency didn't have a plan for what to do if a false alert was transmitted.

Every state and local government that originates alerts needs to learn from these mistakes. Each should ensure that it has adequate safeguards in place to prevent the transmission of false alerts, and each should have a plan in place for how to immediately correct a false alert.

The public needs to be able to trust that when the government issues an emergency alert, it is indeed a credible alert. Otherwise, people won't take alerts seriously and respond appropriately when a real emergency strikes and lives are on the line.

Today's preliminary report is not the end of our work on this issue, but the beginning. In the weeks to come, the Bureau will produce a final report on this incident. And the FCC will work with federal, state, and local officials to explore appropriate actions and/or develop best practices. We want to minimize both the chances of future false alerts being issued as well as the impact of any such false alerts.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses who have cooperated with our investigation. I'd also like to thank Senator Brian Schatz and Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa of Hawaii for speaking with me. And most of all, I'd like to thank the Bureau staff for the expertise, speed, and tenacity they have brought to bear on this important task. Justin Cain and James Wiley were our dogged on-the-ground investigators in Hawaii, along with Field Agent Ryan Hagihara, and they have been ably supported and assisted by Rochelle Cohen, Greg Cooke, Lisa Fowlkes, Megan Henry, and Nicole McGinnis.