

FCC now says there were no cyber attacks during net neutrality comment period

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The partisanship in the battle over net neutrality continues, with FCC Chairman Ajit Pai pointing fingers about a claimed attack on the agency's servers during the critical public-commenting period before the Republican-controlled FCC repealed federal net neutrality rules.

As online comments to the Federal Communications Commission surged in early May 2017 after HBO talk show host John Oliver urged people to make their voices heard, the agency claimed it was hit with a DDoS (distributed denial of service) attack. Pai said Monday he has seen the unreleased report from an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General into the matter, which apparently shows there was no such attack.

"With respect to the report's findings, I am deeply disappointed that the FCC's former Chief Information Officer (CIO), who was hired by the prior Administration and is no longer with the Commission, provided inaccurate information about this incident to me, my office, Congress, and the American people," Pai said in a statement Monday. "This is completely unacceptable."

That former CIO, David Bray, is now with the San Francisco-based People-Centered Internet. A spokesman for the group said Tuesday that the [inspector general](#) has not asked for Bray's side of the story.

"Dr. Bray has not been contacted by the FCC IG and has not seen their reported findings," the spokesman said. "There has not been any

outreach to ask what he had seen, observed, or concluded during the events more than a year ago in May 2017."

FCC Inspector General David Hunt's office has not returned this news organization's request for comment Tuesday.

FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, the only Democrat left on the agency, released a statement Monday: "The Inspector General Report tells us what we knew all along: the FCC's claim that it was the victim of a DDoS attack during the [net neutrality](#) proceeding is bogus. What happened instead is obvious—millions of Americans overwhelmed our online system because they wanted to tell us how important internet openness is to them and how distressed they were to see the FCC roll back their rights."

Net neutrality is the principle that all online traffic should be treated equally. The FCC repealed Obama-era net neutrality regulations in December despite polls showing majority public support—among Democrats and Republicans—for the rules. The FCC received millions of public comments before it repealed the rules, but the process was marred by the claims of DDoS attacks and accusations from both sides that some of the comments were fake.

The inspector general's findings are bound to come up during next Thursday's hearing by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation regarding FCC oversight.

"Looking forward to the FCC coming to the Senate to answer questions about this disturbing development," tweeted Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., who's a member of the committee, Tuesday.

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