



U.S. Leaders Cite Partnership as Key to Cybersecurity

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As the cyber threat intensifies over time from exploitation to disruption to destruction, responsible U.S. agencies and industries can fight back using cooperation and transparency, the commander of U.S. Cyber Command said here yesterday.

Army Gen. Keith B. Alexander, who also serves as director of the National Security Agency, was part of a panel on cybersecurity at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars.

“For the last 10 years, what we’ve seen on our networks has been essentially exploitation, [such as] theft of intellectual property and crime,” the general said. “Over the last few weeks, we’ve seen distributed denial-of-service attacks, so we’re seeing the threat grow from exploitation to ... disruption, and my concern is it’s going to go from exploitation and disruption to destruction.”

He defined destruction as physical harm to computer devices on a network that would cause the networks to fail, or the loss of a significant amount of data that would impair the ability of a company -- a stock exchange or a power grid -- to operate.

“I believe that’s coming our way,” Alexander said. “We have to be out in front of this for a whole host of reasons. The Defense Department’s reason is that we depend on critical infrastructure to do our jobs. We depend on the power grid, [and] we depend on the Internet to operate.”

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