U.S. cybersecurity called "alarming"

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The United States' information technology infrastructure is "highly vulnerable to terrorist and criminal attacks," an expert has said.

The IT infrastructure includes air traffic control systems, power grids and financial systems.

"The country's problem with cybersecurity is very serious, and is going to get worse in the next five years before it gets any better," Cliff Lau, chairman of the Research and Development Policy Committee of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers-USA, told Today's Engineer.

"I would say the situation not only is alarming, but is almost out of control," Lau said.

Study author Barton Reppert, who interviewed two members of the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee, noted that 100,000 known viruses and worms exist, and that some major end-users are throwing out infected systems rather than trying to fix them.

Nevertheless, according to the advisory committee, there is little federal budgetary support for fundamental research to address the security vulnerabilities of the civilian IT infrastructure, including defense systems.

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