

# US adviser says cybersecurity must be joint effort

April 23 2009, By JORDAN ROBERTSON , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- The challenge of protecting the government's computer networks is too big for any one agency to handle alone, a top adviser to President Barack Obama said Wednesday. That suggests the administration doesn't intend to consolidate control of U.S. cybersecurity under a single department like the National Security Agency, as some have feared.

The comments by Melissa Hathaway, in her first public appearance since completing a still-secret 60-day study on the nation's computer security, were light on details but offered some hints on how the administration plans to address the turf wars and confusion surrounding the country's patchwork cybersecurity policies.

Hathaway didn't offer any specifics about her findings or proposals in her talk at the RSA security conference in San Francisco. She said those will be released in the "coming days" after the administration reviews her report.

The fragility of the world's digital infrastructure is "one of the most serious economic and national security challenges of the 21st century," Hathaway said, and the responsibility for locking down networks in the U.S. "transcends the jurisdictional purview of individual departments and agencies."

"Although each agency has a unique contribution to make, no single agency has a broad enough perspective to match the sweep of the challenges," she added.

Hackers, identity thieves and spies are stepping up their attacks on the nation's [power grids](#), military networks and other government networks loaded with [sensitive data](#), as evidenced by the number of break-ins that have come to light in recent months. Meanwhile, the administration has struggled with how to organize the nation's cyberspace programs.

In a sign of the turmoil, the head of the nation's cybersecurity center - Rod Beckstrom - resigned in March, blaming a shortage of money and a clash over whether the NSA should control cyber efforts. Suggestions from intelligence officials that the NSA should coordinate the country's overall [cybersecurity](#) effort have triggered protests over whether it's appropriate to give such control to spy agencies.

NSA director Keith Alexander, also speaking at the security conference, said the NSA wants to be inclusive.

"We do not want to run cyber security for the U.S. government," he said. "That's a big job. It's going to take a team to do it."

The Pentagon is planning to reorganize its military efforts on cyber issues and create a new military command to focus on protecting its computer networks, U.S. officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

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