Senators: Move carefully on Pentagon Cyber Command

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(AP) -- Senators said Thursday they will move cautiously on a new military command to tackle cyberthreats, citing questions about how the U.S. would conduct electronic warfare.

The U.S. hasn't fully developed policies on how to respond to cyberattacks that are routed through neutral countries or the computers of innocent Americans, several senators said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the nomination of Lt. Gen. Keith Alexander to head the Pentagon's Cyber Command.

Technology has outpaced the development of policies to guide computer-based combat, said the committee chairman, Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich.

Levin asked Alexander about how he would respond to various cyberthreat scenarios, and said operations to combat such attacks "could have broad and damaging consequences."

Alexander agreed that an attack against America's privately operated power grid, launched from another country but routed through the computers of unsuspecting U.S. citizens, poses difficult questions that the Pentagon and other agencies are trying to answer.

Alexander said the new command is "not about an effort to militarize cyberspace," but is about safeguarding the integrity of the networks and improving the way the U.S. defends itself in cyberspace.

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