

China backs international efforts to secure cyberspace

May 4 2010, by Chris Lefkow

China supports international efforts to secure cyberspace but believes each nation's "Internet sovereignty" must be respected, a top Chinese official told a cybersecurity conference on Tuesday.

"China, like many other countries, is very much concerned about cybersecurity," said Liu Zhengrong, deputy director general of the [Internet](#) Affairs Bureau of China's State Council Information Office.

"China faces severe cybersecurity threats," Liu told participants here in the Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit, a gathering of government and business leaders from some 40 countries hosted by the EastWest Institute think tank.

"International cooperation is very much needed to safeguard international cyberspace," Liu said.

But, the Chinese official added, the "Internet sovereignty of each country needs to be respected" and "different national and cultural conditions" taken into account.

Liu declined to answer repeated questions about cyberattacks last year on [Google](#) which the Internet giant said originated in China and led to the California company's decision to stop censoring Web search results in China.

"The Chinese government firmly opposes cyberattacks in any form and

Chinese law clearly states that anyone will be held liable for hacking," he said.

Liu said China itself was a "a major victim of cyberattacks and network viruses" and had laws in place to deal with hackers.

"Internet-related crimes (in China) are showing a steady upward trend," Liu said. "We suffer big economic losses from [hacking](#) networks, viruses -- around one billion dollars a year."

"In 2009, Chinese law enforcement authorities investigated about 48,000 cases, a 37 percent increase over 2008," he said.

Liu also said that while China has a dynamic Internet population of more than 400 million users and millions of bloggers there is no "absolute freedom" on the Web.

"I don't think there is absolute freedom in this world," he said. "When you are speaking on the Internet you must abide by laws and respect the other's lawful rights."

The Chinese government operates an extensive system of Internet censorship -- sometimes dubbed the "Great Firewall of China" -- aimed at filtering out any information deemed politically sensitive or harmful.

China's state press on Tuesday quoted a top propaganda official as urging lawmakers to push through tough legislation to stop "hostile forces" abroad from using the Internet to achieve their aims.

China needed laws that would step up monitoring for "harmful information" and block "overseas hostile forces from infiltrating through the Internet," Wang Chen, vice head of propaganda, was quoted as saying by the Xinhua news agency.

Last week, [China](#) tightened its controversial state secrets law, holding Internet and mobile phone operators responsible for informing on their customers.

Some 400 government officials, business leaders and cybersecurity experts are attending the summit featuring three days of discussions on ways to protect the world's digital infrastructure from electronic threats.

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