Computer-security event seeks to spur int'l talks

May 2 2010, By JORDAN ROBERTSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- As governments around the world amass armies of hackers to protect their countries' computer networks and possibly attack others, the idea of getting officials together to discuss shared threats such as cybercrime is challenging.

"You just don't pick up the phone and call your counterparts in these countries," said retired Lt. Gen. Harry Raduege Jr., former head of the federal agency responsible for securing the military's and the president's communications technologies. "They're always guarded in those areas, and they're always wondering if there's some other motive" behind the outreach.

So the idea behind an international security conference in Dallas this week is to get government officials, industry executives and others talking, informally, about where they might find common ground.

The Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit, organized by the EastWest Institute think tank, is different from some other big security conferences in that the focus isn't on hackers showing off their latest research or security-technology vendors connecting with customers.

"It's reaching across the table," said Raduege, who is honorary chair of the conference. "It's not official U.S. policy that's going to be put out there, but it's an opportunity to exchange ideas of the possible."

Scheduled speakers include Howard Schmidt, the White House's

cybersecurity coordinator, as well as other influential cybersecurity officials from the [European Union](), Canada, Japan, India and China. Also on the agenda are the CEOs of AT&T Inc. and computer maker Dell Inc. and executives from Microsoft Corp. and Huawei Technologies Co., China's biggest maker of telecommunications equipment.

Dialogue among them is important as concerns rise about computer warfare between nations and the potential damage that can be caused from computer attacks.

As more computers get connected to the Internet - Intel Corp. estimates there are 1 billion PCs worldwide on the Web - they're used for more sensitive things, such as online banking and even remotely controlling critical infrastructure, such as power plants.

Underscoring the threats: recent attacks on Google Inc. that caused the Internet search leader to move its search engine out of mainland China, and the revelation last year that spies hacked into the U.S. electric grid and left behind computer programs that would let them disrupt service.

The Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit, which runs Monday through Wednesday, is substantially smaller than other security conferences. Although more than 400 government officials and industry executives from 30 countries were expected to attend, that pales in comparison with the thousands who have attended the annual Black Hat and DefCon conferences in Las Vegas, which focus on hackers' demonstrations of their latest research.

Still, Dmitri Alperovitch, vice president of threat research at computer-security software maker McAfee Inc., said the conference "has a lot of potential because of the stakeholders that are involved."

"I think it's going to be a first step," said Alperovitch, who is

participating on a panel talk on national security. "Right now we have situations where many countries are speaking past each other. The Google attacks are a great example of that. That's just not productive or helpful to any country, and I think having a frank and open conversation between all parties is critical."

Citation: Computer-security event seeks to spur int'l talks (2010, May 2) retrieved 19 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2010-05-computer-security-event-spur-intl.html