

Cybersecurity summit kicks off with calls to action

May 4 2010, by Chris Lefkow



A customer is seen browsing the internet at a cybercafe in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Securing cyberspace needs more public-private cooperation and a greater ability to identify and punish perpetrators, officials and business leaders said as a conference got underway.

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"We have an incredibly threatening environment out there right now," US Homeland Security Deputy Undersecretary Philip Reitinger said at a

dinner kicking off the first World Cybersecurity Summit in Dallas Monday.

"If we let our attention waver for a second we're going to be in a world of hurt," Reitingger said, calling for a sustained focus on cybersecurity and not just "Band-Aids."

Udo Helmbrecht, executive director of the European Network and Information Security Agency, said it was the "responsibility of governments to make a legal framework" to help tackle threats in cyberspace.

"We need to see that it's a global threat," Helmbrecht said, that requires a "global approach."

The Worldwide Cybersecurity Summit, hosted by the EastWest Institute think tank, features three days of discussions on ways to protect the world's [digital infrastructure](#) from electronic threats.

Some 400 government officials, business leaders and cybersecurity experts from China, France, Germany, India, Russia, the United States and three dozen other countries are attending the gathering, which is being held in the wake of cyberattacks on [Google](#) which the [Internet](#) giant said originated in China.

"Technology is definitely outpacing the creation of law and policies," said Kamlesh Bajaj, chief executive of the Data Security Council of India.

"If you look at global cyberattacks, many of them remain unresolved," Bajaj said. "The law enforcement effort leaves much to be desired.

"The Internet is said to be the perfect platform for plausible deniability,"

Bajaj continued. "Attribution is a major problem. This problem has to be solved and it's an international problem."

Michael Dell, chairman and chief executive of US computer giant Dell, agreed that the ability of [cyber criminals](#) and others to easily hide their tracks on the Web was a major problem and one that needs to be addressed.

"We have an enormous number of bad actors who are able to be completely anonymous," he said. "Can you think of any secure system where people can operate anonymously?"

"These are important questions for governments and societies to answer," Dell said. "But I think ultimately if you have a perpetuation of anonymous actors and an increasingly pervasive set of systems that are critical to infrastructure and commerce and everything else in the world this is a bad accommodation."

Dell also said governments and businesses will need to work together. "It's not just the private sector -- we need all parties to be involved in this," he said.

Without identifying specific countries, Dell added that "those nations that don't pursue these issues aggressively may find themselves as less desirable locations to do business or to do business with."

Reitinger said recognition was needed that "we're trying to do is run our economy, our critical services, on an Internet ecosystem that is fundamentally insecure."

"That doesn't mean it's not great, that it doesn't give us a lot of benefits but it wasn't designed to give us the security we need," he said.

"It's important not to demonize the technology," Reitingger cautioned.
"The vast majority of the people using the Internet are good people, it's just too hard to secure yourself and too hard to protect your family.

"We need both public-private partnerships and advanced technology to make that easier to do," the US Homeland Security official said.

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