# NATO networks vulnerable to cyber threat: US

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NATO's military networks are not fully protected against cyber threats and the alliance must make good on a pledge to erect a virtual wall by 2012, US Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn, pictured in 2009, warned.

NATO's military networks are not fully protected against cyber threats and the alliance must make good on a pledge to erect a virtual wall by 2012, a top US defence official said Tuesday.

US Deputy Defence Secretary William Lynn warned at the end of a two-day visit to Brussels that the cyber threat was "maturing" from an espionage and disruption tool to a destructive force against vital infrastructure.

"I think the discussion for NATO at this point, the threshold step is we need to be able to protect our own military networks, and frankly we're

not there yet," Lynn told journalists after meetings with European Union and NATO officials as well as the private sector.

The Pentagon's number two recalled that NATO had made the battle against cyber threats a priority at a summit in November, when leaders agreed to bring the NATO Cyber Incident Response Center to full operational capability in 2012, three years earlier than previously planned.

"The first step for NATO is to protect its own networks. We need concrete steps, we need to move to the full operational capability for the NATO Cyber Incident Response Center, which is basically making good on the promise from Lisbon to pull that forward from 2015 to 2012," he said.

Lynn said he was "optimistic that we will make good on the high-level commitments," but called for a private-public partnership to face up to the threat, which could spawn viruses that would destroy transport and financial systems.

"The cyber threat is still maturing, I don't think we're at the final stage of what that threat might look like," Lynn said.

"History would tell you that somebody will take it to the extreme.

"I think that's a significant reason to act now to get ahead of that kind of threat, so you've started to put appropriate protections in for your critical networks before the threat matures," he added.

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