

# China sets up military cyber-warfare team: report

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China's military has set up an elite Internet security task force tasked with fending off cyberattacks, state media reported Friday, denying that the initiative is intended to create a "hacker army".

The People's Liberation Army has reportedly invested tens of millions of yuan (millions of dollars) in the project -- which is sure to ring alarm bells around the world among governments and businesses wary of Beijing's intentions.

"[Cyber attacks](#) have become an international problem affecting both civilian and military areas," the Global Times quoted China's defence

ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng as telling a rare briefing this week.

"China is relatively weak in [cyber-security](#) and has often been targeted. This temporary programme is aimed at improving our defences against such attacks."

The 30-member "Cyber Blue Team" -- the core of the PLA's cyber force -- has been organised under the Guangdong [military command](#) in the country's south, and will carry out "[cyber-warfare](#) drills", the newspaper said.

The United States, Australia, Germany and other Western nations have long alleged that hackers inside China are carrying out a wide-range of cyberattacks on government and corporate computer systems worldwide.

But in a commentary, the Global Times hit out at "some foreign media" for interpreting the programme as a breeding ground for a "hacker army".

"China's capability is often exaggerated. Without substantiated evidence, it is often depicted by overseas media as the culprit for cyberattacks on the US and Europe," the paper said.

"China needs to develop its strong cyber defence strength. Otherwise, it would remain at the mercy of others."

China's military has received annual double-digit increases in its budget over much of the last two decades as it tries to develop a more modern force capable of winning increasingly high-tech wars.

In 2007, the Pentagon raised concerns about a successful Chinese [ballistic missile](#) test strike on a satellite, a weapon that could be used to knock out the high-tech communications of its enemies.

US computer firm McAfee said in February that hackers from China have also infiltrated the computer networks of global oil companies, stealing financial documents on bidding plans and other confidential information.

According to US diplomatic cables obtained and published by WikiLeaks, the United States believes that China's leadership has directed hacking campaigns against US Internet giant Google and Western governments.

In one cable, the US embassy in Beijing said it learned from "a Chinese contact" that the Politburo had led years of hacking into computers of the [United States](#), its allies and Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

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