

# FBI director: Cyber-threats will become top worry

March 2 2012, By MARCUS WOHLSEN , Associated Press

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(AP) -- The director of the FBI told an annual gathering of cyber-security professionals on Thursday that the agency needs the private sector to help combat what he believes is becoming the nation's No. 1 threat.

FBI Director Robert Mueller reiterated his testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in January that [cyber-threats](#) would surpass terrorism as the country's top concern.

"We are losing data, we are losing money, we are losing ideas and we are losing innovation," Mueller said at the [RSA Conference](#) in San Francisco. "Together we must find a way to stop the bleeding."

The dangers posed by organized [cyber-crime](#), rogue [hacktivists](#) and computer breaches backed by foreign governments have become a focus for the FBI.

Counterterrorism is still the agency's top priority, but the agency has retooled to prepare for Internet-based aggressors, Mueller said. Cyber-squads in every FBI field office now monitor for crimes ranging from mortgage and health care fraud to child exploitation and terror recruiting, he said.

Mueller's comments came as federal agencies and lawmakers wrangle over who should take the lead in defending against the digital enemies that have become a major talking point for national security officials this

year.

The rising interest in cyber-defense could mean good business for many in the audience for Mueller's speech. The [director](#) said private companies often are the first to see cyber-threats emerge.

Mueller also sought to reassure businesses that fear the bad publicity they might face if they report to law enforcement that they were the victims of a cyber-attack. He said the agency would respect companies' privacy and work not to disrupt their daily operations.

"We do not want you to feel victimized a second time by one of our investigations," he said.

Mueller said the time would soon come when no company could boast it was immune from digital incursions: "There are only two types of companies: Those that have been hacked, and those that will be."

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