Cyber-attack could knock out British military

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A soldier from the Royal Artillery looks on as a Rapier missile defence system, deployed to provide air security for the Olympics, is shown to members of the media at Blackheath in London on May 3, 2012. The British military's dependence on information technology means it could be "fatally compromised" by a cyber-attack but the government seems unprepared, lawmakers warned Wednesday.

The British military's dependence on information technology means it could be "fatally compromised" by a cyber-attack but the government

seems unprepared for such an event, lawmakers warned Wednesday.

Parliament's defence committee heard evidence that cyber-attacks could disrupt military communication and information systems, radars and satellites, and leave combat units such as airplanes or ships dysfunctional.

But in a new report, the MPs expressed concern that the government did not have a back-up plan in the case of a failure of technology, instead focusing on averting such attacks in the first place.

"The evidence we received leaves us concerned that with the armed forces now so dependent on information and communications technology, should such systems suffer a sustained cyber-attack, their ability to operate could be fatally compromised," the report said.

"Given the inevitable inadequacy of the measures available to protect against a constantly changing and evolving threat... it is not enough for the armed forces to do their best to prevent an effective attack.

"In its response to this report the government should set out details of the contingency plans it has in place should such an attack occur. If it has none, it should say so—and urgently create some."

Junior defence minister Andrew Murrison denied the government was complacent, saying it was investing £650 million ($1 billion, 800 million euros) over four years in the national cyber security strategy programme.

"The UK armed forces and the equipment and assets they use are amongst the world's most modern and advanced, so of course information technology plays a vital role in their operation," he said.

"Far from being complacent, the Ministry of Defence takes the

protection of our systems extremely seriously and has a range of contingency plans in place to defend against increasingly sophisticated attacks although, for reasons of national security, we would not discuss these in detail."

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