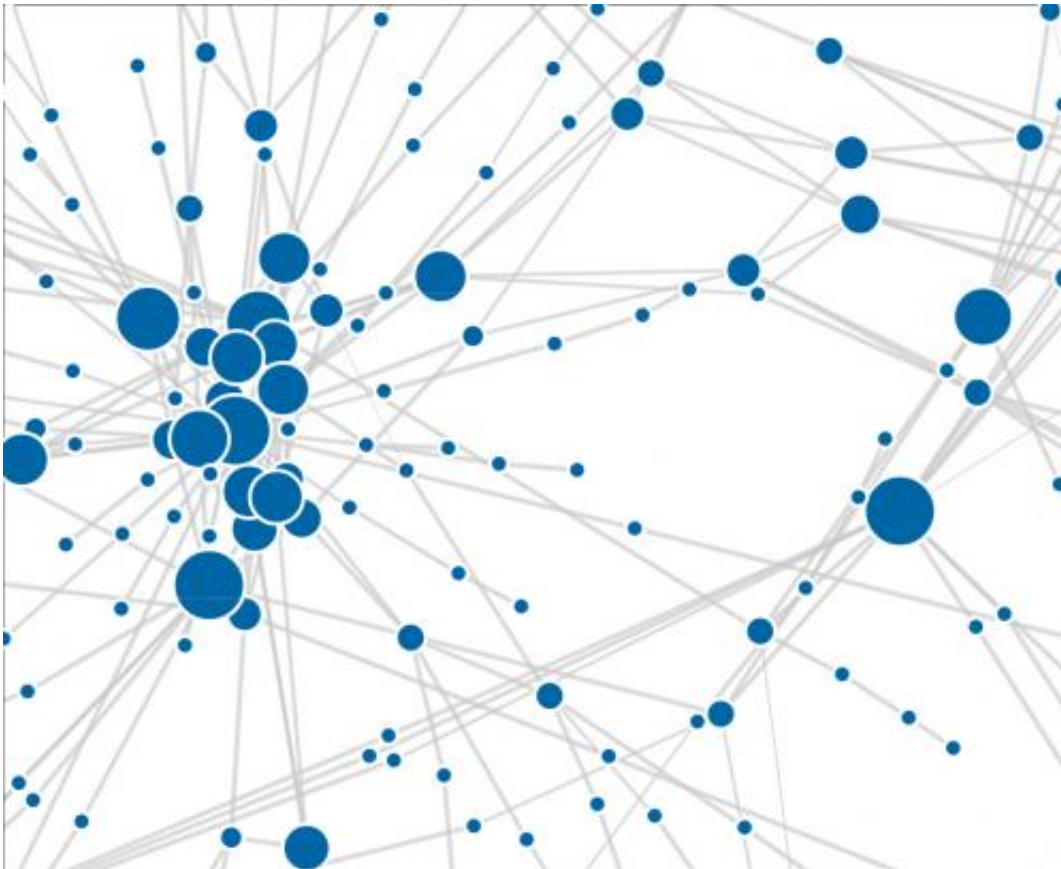


DARPA looking to manage cyber-wars with Plan X - videogame type software

May 29 2013, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org) —DARPA has been not-so-secretly working on a way to allow less technically proficient cyber troops to engage in cyber wars. The answer is apparently Plan X, a hardware and software platform

solution that allows people that are not technically proficient in cyber warfare to engage using software that resembles a videogame. As part of its [official announcement](#) and [call for proposals](#), the agency has outlined a specific type of product that it believes will give the U.S. a clear advantage in engaging in cyber warfare.

[Cyber warfare](#) has become the new battleground between advanced nations. Headlines describing cyber attacks by people in China on facilities in the United States have become commonplace. And news that the U.S. government was behind a cyber attack against computer systems in Iran involved in processing uranium made clear that the U.S. is not just interested in defending itself against cyber attacks, but plans to carry them out against others as well.

One major problem with engaging in cyber warfare, at least up until now, is the limited number of people with the technical know-how required to engage in cyber attacks or to help in defending against them. For that reason, DARPA began looking for ways to allow those with less training to watch for attacks, take action against them and to initiate attacks against others. Plan X was announced in May of 2012—its aim is to develop new technologies to better understand, plan and manage missions in cyberspace on large scale networks that are constantly changing.

Wired magazine has taken an interest in Plan X, devoting a lot of resources into finding out just how it might work and what it might look like once finished. Contributing editor, Noah Shachtman [reports](#) that the system is currently being run on a Samsung SUR40 Touch Table (as demoed at DARPA headquarters last October). It was designed by Frog Design—the company that designed the Sony Walkman. Shachtman notes that the design resembles World of Warcraft in some ways—network topologies are displayed, along with icons that represent tools, or weapons. The system is meant to demonstrate "missions" for the

end user to undertake. Each mission is outlined (as created by a human in charge) by the system and describes what "weapons" are available for use to accomplish goals. Once engaged, the user moves through the network either looking for ways to defend against possible attacks by others, or to reach a target to unleash an attack. The idea, he notes, is to allow the user of the system to engage with other cyber soldiers or entities without having to learn how things work at a deeper level. That, he says, will give [DARPA](#) confidence that the U.S. is fully capable of engaging successfully in cyber warfare now and in the future.

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