

# China's president heads cybersecurity body

February 28 2014, by Christopher Bodeen

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(AP)—Chinese President Xi Jinping has put himself in charge of a new body to coordinate cybersecurity, in a sign of Beijing's concern over its vulnerability to online attacks and its desire to retain tight control over the Internet.

Reports in state media Friday said the central Internet security and information leading group will draft policy for boosting the country's defenses, as well as expanding and improving Internet access.

"Efforts should be made to build our country into a cyberpower," Xi was quoted as saying, calling for more innovation in the industry and improvements to Internet access and connection speeds.

Online opinion must be properly guided, while the Internet should help spread "mainstream values and positive energy," Xi said. With a population of 1.3 billion, China has 618 million Internet users, the most of any country, although much of the rural population remains gravely underserved.

"No Internet safety means no national security," Xi said, adding that without boosting Internet access there can be "no modernization."

No details were given about the group, one of several broad-based coordinating agencies nominally led by Xi and other top leaders. Reports on Thursday's inaugural meeting at which Xi delivered his remarks did not mention any specific new initiatives.

The U.S. accuses China's army and China-based hackers of launching attacks on American industrial and military targets, often to steal secrets or intellectual property. China says it likewise faces a major threat from hackers, and the country's military is believed to be among the biggest targets of the U.S. National Security Agency and the U.S. Cyber Command.

Between January and August of last year, more than 20,000 China-based websites were hacked and more than 8 million servers hijacked by zombie and Trojan programs controlled from overseas, the head of the Cabinet's Information Office, Cai Mingzhao, told a conference in November.

Zombie and Trojan attacks were up 14 percent over the same period in 2012, Cai said. He estimated that China's economy was losing tens of billions of dollars to cyberattacks every year.

Virginia-based Internet security company Mandiant drew attention last year when it issued a detailed report tracing attacks on 141 companies to a hacking unit in Shanghai that experts believe is part of the Chinese Army's cyber command. The Chinese government denied the accusations.

Partly as a response, a U.S.-China joint cybersecurity working group was established and has already met once to foster cooperation against third party threats. China has enthusiastically promoted the idea of international cooperation on cybersecurity, but its proposal for a set of rules governing online behavior has been rejected by the U.S. as opening the door to greater regulation and censorship.

China's authoritarian communist government heavily polices the Internet for content deemed politically subversive, as well as sites promoting gambling, pornography and other illegal topics. Much foreign content is

blocked, including social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. However, that hasn't prevented China's government and state media outlets such as national broadcaster CCTV from maintaining a lively presence on such blocked sites.

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