

US bolstering cyber defense with new corps: NSA chief

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The US military is building a new cyber defense corps that can be used to protect the nation and possibly for offensive purposes, the commander of the unit said Tuesday.

National Security Agency director Michael Rogers, who also heads the US Cyber Command, said the 6,200-member unit should be fully operational by 2016, to bolster defenses against hackers and state-sponsored cyberattacks.

Rogers told a cybersecurity conference that the unit would be able to assist in protecting against cyberattacks on "critical infrastructure," which includes computer-controlled power grids, financial networks, transportation and other key sectors.

"We need to all recognize that our information systems are collectively under assault by a wide variety of actors who are interested in penetrating those systems for a variety of reasons," Rogers told the Billington Cybersecurity conference.

The unit would also bolster protection of the Pentagon's own computer systems and help improve the cyber capabilities of US military command centers around the world, the US Navy admiral said.

"We need to assume there will be a cyber dimension in almost any scenario we are dealing with," he added.

Asked whether this unit would have offensive capabilities, Rogers said, "I am trying to ensure that the Department of Defense has a full spectrum of capability if the decision is made to employ it."

The comments are in line with previous policy statements that Washington could use cyberwarfare tactics if approved by the president.

US officials have not publicly acknowledged using cyberwarfare but many observers believe Washington played a role in the Stuxnet worm that targeted Iran's nuclear program.

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