

US cyber summit aims to boost defenses, mend fences

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US President Barack Obama seeks to rally support for cybersecurity efforts and rebuild trust eroded by leaks on surveillance in a visit Friday to Silicon Valley.

At the White House [cybersecurity](#) summit in Palo Alto, Obama was expected to announce executive action intended to improve how information on cyber threats is shared between companies and with the Department of Homeland Security.

The more than 1,000 people expected to attend the summit will include technology company executives, police, academics, students and privacy advocates, according to national economic council director Jeffery Zients.

Apple chief executive Tim Cook was to speak just ahead of the president.

"The summit is really an opportunity to take stock of where we have been and point toward where we need to go, since we are at an inflection point of continuing to have cyberspace be a strategic asset not just for us but for the world," White House cybersecurity coordinator Michael Daniel said during a briefing with the press on Thursday.

Using all tools

Topics targeted at the summit will include sophisticated attacks sponsored by nation-states, and ways to "use all the tools in the US government's tool box" while working with the private sector to tackle the problem, according to White House officials.

"It is not appropriate for all network security to be carried out by the government; it is not even physically possible," Daniel said.

"But, that does not mean that companies are going to be left to fend for themselves."

Some technology companies will use the summit to announce steps being taken to improve online security with techniques such as multi-factor authentication that requires more than a password to access accounts.

Joining the effort will be companies ranging from tech giants such as Intel and Apple, as well as financial firms like US Bank and AIG and retailers including Walgreens and QVC.

Firms will also unveil steps being taken to improve how information about cyber attacks is shared with other companies and the government so defenses can be unified, according to Daniel.

The summit comes following failed efforts over the past few years to pass cybersecurity legislation that would allow for better sharing of threats without fear of liability.

Sessions will include focuses on improving cybersecurity practices at businesses, collaborating on defenses, and ways to make online payments more secure.

"Cybersecurity is one of the most important national issues we face," Zients said.

"Companies are not just protecting networks but customers, and when companies suffer data breaches it is the customers who are affected."

The US has an opportunity to use cybersecurity as a competitive advantage in the global marketplace by "getting it right" so the country is a preferred place for banking, data storage, smartphone technology and more, according to Zients.

"This is really important to our position in the world economy; that we lead in cybersecurity," Zients said.

Healing the rift

Part of the reason the White House is holding the summit in Silicon Valley is to close a rift opened when a massive US online surveillance program was exposed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden.

Snowden is wanted by the United States on espionage charges. The fugitive was granted asylum in Russia, where he has a three-year residency that allows him to travel abroad.

"Obviously, there have been tensions," Daniel said. "But, I think the only way to get at that is to continue to have dialogue and engage—that is part of the reason we are coming out here."

Points of contention include whether people should be able to encrypt email, texts, and other online exchanges in ways that governments or police can't crack.

"Ultimately, encryption is one of our most important cybersecurity tools, and we can't allow the short-sighted worries of some law enforcement officials to undermine the longer-term goal of creating a truly secure

Internet, which in itself will help to prevent countless crimes," said New America Foundation Open Technology Institute policy director Kevin Bankston.

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