

Pentagon eyes recruiting cyber talent through National Guard

April 14 2015, by Lolita C. Baldor

The Defense Department still doesn't have the capabilities and resources needed to defend against a major cyberattack from another nation or other tech-savvy criminals, Pentagon officials told members of a Senate panel Tuesday.

But officials said they are looking for more creative ways to attract high-tech experts into the military and the department, including beefed up National Guard and Reserve recruiting in places like California's Silicon Valley.

Eric Rosenbach, the principle cyber adviser to Defense Secretary Ash Carter, told senators that the Pentagon wants to find ways to bring talent into the department without individuals having to go through one of the military services.

"We're thinking about ways we can get new pipelines or tunnels of talent into the department from non-traditional places," Rosenbach told the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on emerging threats.

Rosenbach said he expects Carter to have more to say on the matter next week, adding that the Pentagon chief is willing to spend more money on cybersecurity if needed. So far, about half of the planned 133 military cybersecurity teams are in place, with the remainder set to be ready by the end of September 2016.

Air Force Lt. Gen. James K. McLaughlin, deputy commander at U.S.

Cyber Command, said the military services are making sure that all Guard and Reserve troops are trained to the same standards and expertise levels as the active duty, so that they can be used in an emergency when more forces are needed.

Rosenbach and McLaughlin were blunt when asked about the ongoing cyberthreats to the nation. They acknowledged it's a bit easier to deter attacks from nations such as China and Russia than more rogue countries such as North Korea or Iran.

They told the panel that a big challenge is keeping up a persistent level of training, exercises and mission certification for the military's cyberforce.

Rosenbach also said that even though the U.S. has the ability to launch a cyberattack against an enemy, officials should try to avoid taking that step because America would be vulnerable to a counterattack. The U.S., he said, "is a glass house," and officials need to avoid launching cyberattacks that would only escalate hostilities.

"I'm very worried about how vulnerable we are, and that someone would then follow our example and just try to show the U.S. that they could also take down part of the infrastructure to demonstrate that," Rosenbach said during a hearing Tuesday. "So, I think a cautious approach where we're conservative and we try to keep things stable is quite important.

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