

US cyber commander says hackers to 'pay a price'

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The US strategy of "deterrence" for cyber-attacks could involve a wide range of responses, potentially including the use of conventional weapons, the nation's top cyber-warrior said Monday.

Admiral Michael Rogers, who heads the US Cyber Command as well as the National Security Agency, told a Washington forum that the idea of cyber-deterrence is evolving but that there are many ways to get that message across.

"Because an opponent comes at us in the cyber domain doesn't mean we have to respond in the cyber domain," Rogers told a cybersecurity forum at George Washington University.

"We think it's important that potential adversaries out there know that this is part of our strategy."

He said the US administration demonstrated this recently by ordering economic sanctions against North Korea following a damaging cyber-attack against Sony Pictures.

Asked whether conventional military weapons could be used to respond to attacks in cyberspace, Rogers said that many options are on the table.

"It's situational dependent," he said. "What you would recommend in one scenario is not what you would recommend in another."

Rogers added that responding in cyberspace is complex because of the different kinds of attacks and motivations, coming from individual hackers, organized crime or nation-states.

But he noted that there are "ways to apply pressure against a wide variety of actors from individuals to groups to nation-states" to get the message across that "you don't want go down this road and if you do, you need to know there is a price to pay."

The comments come following an epidemic of cyber incidents against US firms and growing concerns that attacks could target "critical infrastructure" such as power grids or [air traffic control](#).

Rogers has spoken of the idea of deterrence before, but said US policy is still evolving to respond to potential threats.

He said the general policy of [deterrence](#) is based on the idea of conveying the message to potential attackers that they will not succeed or that "the price they will pay will far outweigh any benefit."

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