

Beijing calls reports China involved in US hack 'irresponsible'

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Beijing on Friday labelled as "irresponsible" reports that Chinese hackers were behind a massive cyber-attack on personal data of millions of current and former US federal employees.

The US government on Thursday said that hackers accessed the [personal](#)

[data](#) of at least four million current and former [federal employees](#). Officials told US media that China was suspected.

"Cyber-attacks are generally anonymous and conducted across borders and their origins are hard to trace," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said at a regular briefing.

"Not to carry out a deep investigation and keep using words such as 'possible' is irresponsible and unscientific," he added.

"As a result of the incident," uncovered in April, the US Office of Personnel Management said it "will send notifications to approximately four million individuals."

It added that additional exposures "may come to light."

The government's personnel department handles hundreds of thousands of sensitive security clearances and background investigations on prospective employees each year.

It was not immediately clear whether the hack affected President Barack Obama, other senior government officials or the intelligence community.

The Washington Post and other US media cited [government officials](#) as saying that Chinese hackers were behind the breach.

"We have seen a lot of media reports and opinions like this recently," Hong said.

The Chinese embassy in Washington countered that such attacks would not be allowed under Chinese law.

"Chinese laws prohibit cyber-crimes of all forms. China has made great

efforts to combat cyber-attacks in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations," embassy spokesman Zhu Haiquan said.



US Admiral Michael Rogers, who heads the National Security Agency and US Cyber Command, has said that future attacks could prompt a response with conventional weapons

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security are said to be leading an investigation into the attack. The FBI in a statement said it "will continue to investigate and hold accountable those who pose a threat in cyber-space."

The government said it will, through a third party, offer \$1 million in identity theft protection services at no cost.

"Protecting our federal employee data from malicious cyber-incidents is

of the highest priority," Office of Personnel Management director Katherine Archuleta said.

Her agency said the intrusion may have begun late last year and "predated the adoption of the tougher security controls".

The new measures include restricting remote access, screening business connections and deploying anti-malware software.

Major Breaches

The incident is the latest in a series of major breaches that have shown the vulnerability of the [federal government](#).

Last year Russian hackers are believed to have accessed unclassified computer systems at the White House and State Department.

Hackers stole information on 100,000 taxpayers from online computers of the US Internal Revenue Service.

The United States has struck an increasingly strident tone about cyber-attacks in recent months.

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