

Pentagon invites hackers to attack its websites

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"Hack the Pentagon" will give cash awards and other recognition to vetted participants who can identify weaknesses on the Pentagon's public web pages

Ever wanted to hack Uncle Sam? Provided you are American and can pass a background check, you can go right ahead, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

The US Department of Defense is inviting vetted hackers to test its cybersecurity under a pilot program that is the first of its kind in the

federal government.

Called "Hack the Pentagon," the so-called bug bounty program will give cash awards and other recognition to participants who can identify weaknesses on the Pentagon's public web pages.

"I am always challenging our people to think outside the five-sided box that is the Pentagon," Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said.

"Inviting responsible hackers to test our cybersecurity certainly meets that test. I am confident this innovative initiative will strengthen our digital defenses and ultimately enhance our national security."

The pilot program is modeled after similar competitions conducted by major firms to improve network and product security.

The Pentagon announced the initiative while Carter visited Silicon Valley in California on Wednesday.

It is his third visit to the world's tech heartland and he has repeatedly stressed the need for the Pentagon to innovate and work with tech partners.

Carter also announced plans to establish a "Defense Innovation Advisory Board" that will be chaired by Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Alphabet, Google's parent company.

The board will give Pentagon leaders independent advice on ways to address "future organizational and cultural challenges, including the use of technology alternatives," Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said in a statement.

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