

Web boss sees risk of multiple internets

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Customers are seen logging onto the internet in an inner city internet cafe in Sydney. Clandestine efforts by some countries to create alternative versions of the Internet for political ends could put the Web at risk, says the man responsible for organizing the network.

Clandestine efforts by some countries to create alternative versions of the Internet for political ends could put the Web at risk, the man responsible for organizing the network told AFP Wednesday.

Rod Beckstrom, the CEO of ICANN -- the firm which oversees how the [Internet](#) is organized -- said unnamed nations had tried to create parallel networks, but he expressed confidence they would eventually stick with the global-used original.

"It has been done," said Beckstrom. "We don't speculate about who is doing it, it is really their private business."

Beckstrom heads the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#), a California-based firm which controls a master list of [domain names](#) and IP addresses known as "the root," which is crucial to all Internet use.

The blogosphere has been awash with accusations that China and Russia are developing alternative Internet roots, which would mean requests would bypass the [ICANN](#) system.

"People want to test their own capabilities to do these things and update their [root zone](#) files," said Beckstrom. "Some are concerned maybe for security reasons and some want to have alternatives in case any regional problems might arise and others might have political objectives."

Stressing ICANN's goal was "to keep everyone talking at the same table," Beckstrom admitted problems would arise if countries duplicate top level domains -- like .com, .cn or .net -- with new Web addresses.

"Conflicts would start to develop if we had a top level domain, and someone starts using a top level domain with different addresses and assignments. If it starts creating a conflict globally, that could be a problem," he said.

"That has not occurred and I think that is unlikely," said Beckstrom, defending ICANN's independence in the face of accusations that it serves US interests.

"I think the network effect of the Internet tends to keep people wanting to use the root," he said.

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