

Hagel to broach topic of cyberthreats with Chinese

31 May 2013, by Lolita C. Baldor

(AP)—Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel will meet with members of a Chinese delegation this weekend and likely talk about ongoing cyberthreats amid new reports that China used computer-based attacks to access data from dozens of Pentagon weapons programs and other defense technologies.

Speaking to reporters on his plane en route to Singapore on Thursday, Hagel said that the U.S. must find ways to work with the Chinese and other countries to develop rules of the road and a better understanding among nations for the use of cyber.

"These are issues that we're going to deal with, frame up, put right at the top of the agenda," said Hagel, who is expected to have the brief meeting with the Chinese on the sidelines of a session at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an international security conference. "There's only one way to deal with these issues—that's straight up."

Hagel also noted that cybersecurity will, for the first time, be the topic at a dedicated session in next week's NATO meeting for defense ministers. World leaders have long been talking about the need to set international standards and come to some broad agreements about the responsible use of cyber technologies.

Hagel's comments came on the heels of a report by the Defense Science Board that said nearly 40 Pentagon weapons programs and almost 30 other defense technologies were compromised by cyber intrusions. The report said that some of the intrusions appeared to be "attributable directly to the [Chinese government](#) and military."

Other U.S. and private cybersecurity reports have made similar assertions, while also noting that in some cases the breaches emanated from within China, but it was not certain they were directed or sanctioned by the government.

Officials have been warning for years about China's cyber espionage efforts aimed at U.S. military and high-tech programs. But as the U.S. looks to grow its military presence in the [Asia Pacific](#), worries increase that China can use the information to blunt America's military superiority and keep pace with emerging technologies.

America's expanded focus on the Asia Pacific will also be a key theme this weekend for Hagel, who makes his first trip to Asia as defense chief. He is also expected to assure allies in Asia that despite America's ongoing budget crisis, the U.S. remains committed to shifting more military troops and assets to the region.

"We're on track," Hagel told reporters, adding that the Pentagon is moving ahead with "every measurement of that commitment" to refocus on the Asia Pacific.

He also said he expects to meet with China's minister of defense in August in the U.S., but details have not yet been worked out.

Former defense chief Leon Panetta spoke to the Singapore conference last year, describing plans to assign 60 percent of the Navy's fleet to the Pacific even as he acknowledged ongoing budget problems.

Congress has been unable to agree on any plan to avoid automatic budget cuts that will slash about \$487 billion in defense spending over 10 years. Already this year, the military services have had to curtail flight and combat training, ground some Air Force squadrons and delay or cancel some ship deployments.

And the Pentagon has announced it will furlough about 680,000 civilian employees for up to 11 days through the end of the fiscal year, allowing only limited exceptions for the services to avoid or reduce the unpaid days off.

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