The U.S. defense intelligence chief warned Tuesday that America's technological edge over China is at risk because of cybertheft.


He's declined to say publicly whether that has affected U.S. defense capabilities.

"I do not believe we are at this point losing our technological edge, but it is at risk based on some of their cyber activities," Stewart told a House Armed Services Committee hearing on worldwide threats.

Stewart's comments underscored the strains between the U.S. and China over cyberespionage. Last May, U.S. authorities indicted five Chinese military officials over allegations they targeted big-name American makers of nuclear and solar technology.

China denied the allegations.

Then in September, the Senate Armed Services Committee reported that hackers associated with the Chinese government repeatedly penetrated the computer systems of the U.S. Transportation Command, showing vulnerabilities in the U.S. military's system to deploy troops and equipment in a crisis.

Beyond the cyber tensions, China's military buildup poses a challenge to America's post-World War II predominance in the Asia-Pacific region, although both the U.S. and China have sought to tamp down talk of rivalry between the established world power and the rising one.