

Experts make push for cybersecurity coordination center

By Andrew Noyes, [CongressDaily](#) 05/22/09

President Obama should create a national cybersecurity coordinating center with public and private sector representation that can provide near real-time warnings and share threat data with government and industry stakeholders about high-tech attacks against critical infrastructure, a panel of experts said Thursday.

The National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee formally approved the proposal after meeting earlier in the day with Obama and senior advisers.

Juniper Networks CEO Kevin Johnson chaired the committee that wrote the report. He said the new 24-hour monitoring center would build upon initiatives like the Homeland Security Department's U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team and the National Coordinating Center for Communications, which is part of the interagency National Communications System that houses NSTAC.

Former President George W. Bush asked the group to study the issue last year and members determined that the nation's ability to respond to growing, complex cyber threats is inadequate, Johnson said. Assaults against U.S. government and privately-managed utilities like the Internet, the electrical grid and water supply could be "severe or catastrophic," he said.

Speaking to the group, Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano endorsed the idea of real-time alerts about computer-based attacks. Creating "a living, breathing partnership" between government and business stakeholders is crucial, she said. Cybersecurity is "one of the deep and emerging areas where we need to make more robust our systems, protections and our public-private collaboration," Napolitano said.

The secretary said she will look to NSTAC to help implement recommendations of the administration's 60-day cybersecurity review, which are expected to be made public soon. Melissa Hathaway, the top adviser to Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair whom Obama tapped to conduct the audit, attended the meeting but did not brief the group on her report during the public session.