



Obama calls for better security for computers

President lays out broad goals for dealing with cyber threats

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WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama says the nation for too long has failed to adequately protect the security of its computer networks, and he will name a new cyber czar to take on the job.

Obama made the announcement at the White House Friday, surrounded by a host of government officials and White House aides. The president called it "a transformational moment" for America and said he will soon pick the person he wants to head up a new White House office of cyber security.

Obama said the stepped up security is overdue. He also said that while the newly interconnected world offers great promise, it presents significant peril as well. The president declared: "Cyberspace is real, and so is the risk that comes with it."

The president is creating the cyber czar as part of a long-awaited plan stemming from a review he ordered shortly after taking office.

Obama laid out broad goals for dealing with cyber threats while depicting the United States as a digital nation that needs to provide the education required to keep pace with technology and attract and retain a cyber-savvy work force. He also called for a new education campaign to raise public awareness of the challenges and threats related to cyber security.

The administration, however, will not dictate how the government or private industry should tighten digital defenses. Critics say the cyber czar will not have sufficient budgetary and policy-making authority over securing computer systems and spending.

The cyber czar will be a special assistant to the president and will be supported by a new cyber directorate within the National Security Council. The president said the cyber czar would also work with the National Economic Council.

Government and military officials have acknowledged that U.S. computer networks are constantly assailed by attacks and scans, ranging from nuisance hacking to more nefarious probes and attacks. Some suggest that the actions at times are a form of cyber espionage from other nations, such as China.

Obama did not announce who will get the job during Friday's unveiling of the review. Officials close to the issue say a handful of experts — both in and out of government — are under consideration.

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