

US lawmaker slams China for cyber spying

DOUGLAS BIRCH - Associated Press - Associated Press

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee on Tuesday accused China of waging an unprecedented campaign of cyber espionage aimed at stealing some of the most important U.S. industrial secrets.

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., said Chinese efforts to pilfer the United States' technological know-how via the Internet have reached an "intolerable level," and called on the U.S. and its allies to pressure Beijing to stop. He made his remarks during a congressional hearing.

Few intelligence insiders have discussed such concerns so bluntly. China is both a major U.S. economic partner and the nation's biggest foreign creditor.

Rogers said the corporate victims of cyber spying, when they were willing to discuss it at all, are also reluctant to point the finger at China out of concern they could become the target of retaliatory attacks.

"In Washington there has been this big dance around the 800-pound gorilla in the room, and that is Chinese industrial espionage," Rogers told The Associated Press in an interview after the hearing. "Listen, this is thievery. At the end of the day, it is stealing."

China has said that allegations of cyber espionage against U.S. companies were groundless, and the sources of Internet attacks are notoriously difficult to pin down.

Experts said the pace and scale of cyber attacks are increasing, and that the most sophisticated and effective attacks are mounted by criminal organizations and governments. Defense systems in particular are targets, and cyber raiders have stolen data about U.S. fighter jets, missile systems and unmanned drones.

McAfee Inc., a leading Internet security firm, recently published a study of Operation Shady Rat, a hacking campaign that targeted more than 70 governments, international institutions, corporations and think tanks over the past five years. McAfee said the AP was among the organizations hacked.

Rogers and other experts also said U.S. intelligence agencies are keeping too much secret about details of cyber espionage secret, instead of using the information to help corporate targets defend themselves.

Gen. Michael Hayden, former head of the CIA and the National Security Agency, told Congress there is too much secrecy within the government cyber community, due to privacy concerns and what he called a "classified culture" at NSA and elsewhere.

"I think this information is horribly over-classified inside the government," Hayden

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said.

A security expert, Kevin Mandia of Mandiant Corp., said that in more than 90 percent of the attacks that his company investigated, victims didn't even know they were under cyber assault until the Pentagon, FBI or another government agency told them.

After the Internet search giant Google was the target of attacks in January, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked China to investigate Google's claims it had been targeted by China-based hackers. Google said hackers had tried to access Google's proprietary software as well as the email accounts of Chinese human rights activists.

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