

Get the #1 most recognized
trust mark on the web



[About Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Contact Us](#) [Subscribe](#) **New!** [Editorial](#) [Tech Briefs](#)

[POLICY](#) [MANAGEMENT](#) [EXEC TECH](#) [WHO & WHERE](#) [THE HILL](#) [AGENCIES](#) [OPINION](#) [RESOURCES](#) [EVENTS](#)

Click here to receive FCW magazine for FREE!

[Share](#) [Share](#) [Tweet](#) [G+](#)

[ADVANCED SEARCH](#)

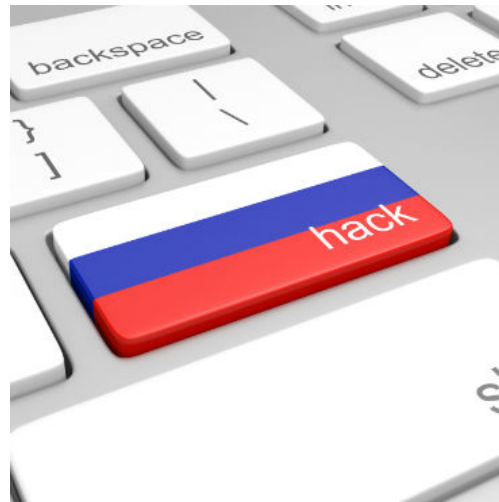
Congress

Senators hone in on Russia's cyber capabilities

By Sean D. Carberry Feb 09, 2017

The U.S. does not fully understand Russia's cyber capabilities and lacks a playbook to respond to future Kremlin-directed cyberattacks, said witnesses at a Senate hearing on U.S.-Russia challenges.

In a wide-ranging hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Feb. 9 that covered growing tensions and flashpoints between Russia and the U.S., senators and witnesses returned repeatedly to Russia's cyber threats to the U.S. and its allies.



"Russia's ability to wage information warfare has been greatly aided by its heavy investments in cyberspace, where the United States remains ill-equipped to counter or deter its aggressive probing," wrote Julianne Smith, director of the Strategy and Statecraft Program at the Center for New American Security in her prepared statement.

Retired Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, agreed that Russia's hybrid warfare capabilities continue to grow and that it is increasingly using cyber, information operations and other means to influence politics and elections in the U.S. and Europe.

"What I haven't seen among the western nations who are under this attack is a strong, unified voice of indignation, outrage and to bring force to this," he said.

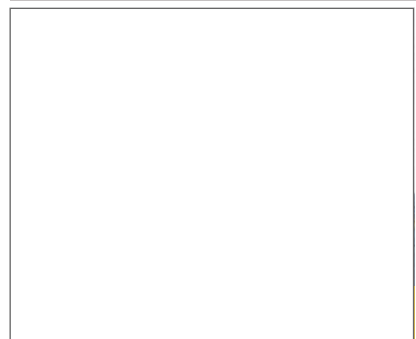
He said that nations must unify to send a message to Russia and to undermine its global propaganda efforts. He argued that to this point, the U.S. hasn't stepped on the information warfare battlefield.



SEE INSIDE
Get Total Visibility
With Vision ONE

ixia

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



THE FEDERAL
100
March 30, 2017
Grand Hyatt Washington

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

[Advertisement]



The advertisement features the Cisco logo on the left and the FedRAMP logo on the right. The main text reads "Don't Risk IT!" in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "Rely on:" followed by two bullet points: "Cisco WebEx Web Conferencing (FedRAMPSM-Authorized)" and "Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solutions (FedRAMP IN PROCESS)". The background is a light blue gradient.

A number of senators repeated calls for an independent investigation into Russia's campaign to disrupt the U.S. election. The witnesses agreed that policymakers and the public need a deeper understanding of exactly what Russia did and how.

Breedlove and Smith agreed it was essential to complete an investigation in order to better inform policy going forward.

The hearing touched on Russia's ongoing military activities in Ukraine, its support for the Assad regime in Syria and its efforts to upend elections in France and Germany with an eye towards destabilizing Europe, NATO and the transatlantic partnership.

Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) compared the current situation to the Cuban missile crisis, where photos of a looming offshore threat demanded a U.S. response.

Isakson argued that the concreteness and ability to visualize the threat of Russian missiles allowed for a more clear discussion of policy options, unlike the situation with the Russian cyber threat.

"We understood a little better how to address the Cuban missile crisis because it was a decisively military feeling thing, and we had very decisive military responses," Breedlove said. "The cyber thing is even more scary to me because we haven't really defined what is an attack, we haven't really defined how we're going to respond."

Smith said that the day before the hearing, she and Breedlove had participated in a tabletop military exercise that used playbooks of tactical options for dealing with conventional threats.

"The minute the team had to deal with a potential cyber hack that had been inserted into the game ... there's no order of battle," she said. "We don't know what the toolkit looks like, we don't have a proper way to assess the threat, to figure out what tools we'll use to deter it, to detect it."

"We're getting better," she added. "The United States is certainly far ahead of many other countries around the world, but we still are far too clumsy in our response and our ability to respond to this challenge."

She said U.S. bureaucracy is simply too large and not agile enough to deal with cyber threats and Russia's information warfare.

"If we're going to win this information war and really come at Russia with a much more effective approach, we're going to have to figure out ways in which we can lash up the skillsets that we have in the private sector, build better trust there to assess our vulnerabilities and then connect with our allies to do so," she said.

Smith and Breedlove both argued for making a greater effort to reassure NATO allies that the U.S. stands resolute with them in the face of Russia. Committee Chair Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) agreed that the U.S. needs to coordinate with NATO on how to counter attacks from Russia.

"NATO's been wrestling with what an Article 5 attack is, so we don't need to just understand for our own good what a weaponized cyber attack means," Corker said.



The banner for the Citizen Engagement Summit features the event title in large, bold letters. To the right is a yellow button that says "REGISTER NOW!". Below the title, it says "W Washington, DC • February 22, 2017" and "FCW". On the right side, there is a logo for "THE FEDERAL 100". Below this, it says "March 30, 2017" and "Grand Hyatt Washington". At the bottom, a yellow bar says "TICKETS ON SALE NOW!".

New from FCW

MGT Act poised for a comeback

House Dems seek to probe Trump in cyber hearing

Ethics office website chokes under crush of visitors

In praise of public servants

Tallinn 2.0 refines the law of cyberattacks

Most Popular Articles

Watchdog: IT glitch at NASA led to fire

Either Congress reforms the civil service, or Trump does it his way, senator warns

Announcing the 2017 Fed 100

Contractor indicted for stealing spy secrets

Tallinn 2.0 refines the law of cyberattacks

FCW Update

Sign up for our newsletter.

Email Address

I agree to this site's Privacy Policy.

"But we need to help the world define it, because very soon it's likely that in parts of the world adjacent to Russia it will be more weaponized, and we're going to have to make a decision as to whether we're coming to the aid of one of our allies."

About the Author

Sean Carberry is an FCW staff writer covering defense, cybersecurity and intelligence. Prior to joining FCW, he was Kabul Correspondent for NPR, and also served as an international producer for NPR covering the war in Libya and the Arab Spring. He has reported from more than two-dozen countries including Iraq, Yemen, DRC, and South Sudan. In addition to numerous public radio programs, he has reported for Reuters, PBS NewsHour, The Diplomat, and The Atlantic.

Carberry earned a Master of Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School, and has a B.A. in Urban Studies from Lehigh University.



[E-MAIL THIS PAGE](#)

[PRINTABLE FORMAT](#)

Recommended: [Cloud for Government: How to make the right decision for your agency](#)

FEATURED



MGT Act poised for a comeback



FAA challenged by growing commercial space industry



Announcing the 2017 Fed 100

Deploy code faster with GitHub Enterprise

How agencies build software



[Learn More](#)

FEATURED

The Fed 100

Save the date for 28th annual Federal 100 Awards Gala.

March 30, 2017



The digital government Americans deserve



DOD can still hire cyber civilians



OPM explains the hiring freeze

Reader Comments

Please post your comments here. Comments are moderated, so they may not appear immediately after submitting. We will not post comments that we consider abusive or off-topic.

Name: (Optional)

Email: (Optional)

Location: (Optional)

Your Comment:



Please type the letters/numbers you see above

SUBMIT MESSAGE



Jack is Sad.

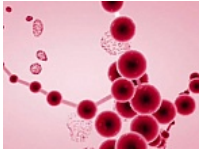


Zach is Smart.



Marketplace: Products

ADVERTISEMENT



UCLA Researchers
STUNNED by cancer



Thousands of retirees
are rushing to follow...



Options buyers lose
money 7 out of 10...



Identify Top Set-Aside
Opportunities for FY...



Free List of \$231B Top
Federal Contracts...

More from 1105 Public Sector Media Group



View the February 13, 2017 issue as a PDF

EPA employees don't approve of director pick

More Americans satisfied with federal services, survey says



Self-destructing messages won't fly in government

The debate over muni broadband expansion

KC shares its smart city data, best practices



Eight win spots on \$3B Army missile defense contract

Protest decision clears Vencore to start work on \$113M NOAA contract

Why one NSA vet picked the private sector as his new gig



Navy tests new stealth F-35C upgraded Helmet Mounted Display

Artificial Intelligence giving weapons greater autonomy

Air Force to defend B-52 with laser weapons

©2017 1105 Media, Inc.

Policy
Management
Who & Where
The Hill
Agencies
Opinion
Resources

Mobile site
FCW App
Digital Edition
List Rental

About Us
Contact Us
Advertise
Reprints
Subscribe
Terms of Use
Privacy Policy



8609 Westwood Center Drive, Suite 500
Vienna, VA 22182-2215
703-876-5100