

#CYBER RISK

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## Bipartisan Harvard panel recommends hacking safeguards for elections

Joseph Menn



SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) - A bipartisan Harvard University project aimed at protecting elections from hacking and propaganda will release its first set of recommendations today on how U.S. elections can be defended from hacking attacks.

EXCLUSIVE: Some State Department officials accused Rex Tillerson of violating a law designed to stop foreign militaries from enlisting child soldiers

The 27-page guidebook shown to Reuters ahead of publication calls for campaign leaders to emphasize security from the start and insist on practices such as two-factor authentication for access to email and documents and fully encrypted messaging via services including Signal and Wickr.

The guidelines are intended to reduce risks in low-budget local races as well as the high-stakes Congressional midterm contests next year. Though most of the suggestions cost little or nothing to implement and will strike security professionals as common sense, notorious attacks including the leak of the emails of Hillary Clinton's campaign chair, John Podesta, have succeeded because basic security practices were not followed.

The ongoing effort is being led by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, based at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and is drawing on top security executives from companies including Google, Facebook and the cyber security firm CrowdStrike. The guidebook will be available online ([here](#)).

"We heard from campaigns that there is nothing like this that exists," said Debora Plunkett, a 31-year veteran of the National Security Agency who joined the Belfer Center this year. "We had security experts who understood security and election experts who understood campaigns, and both sides were eager to learn how the other part worked."

Plunkett said the goal was a digestible outline that was both realistic and helpful, and that leadership buy-in was critical.

The handbook is the first effort from the Belfer Center's four-month-old Defending Digital Democracy program, whose leadership includes top campaign officials from both the Republican and Democratic parties. Belfer co-director Eric Rosenbach said another guidebook, scheduled for spring, will aim at state election officials, who oversee the actual vote-counting and might also have to deal with propaganda intended to mislead or dissuade voters or sow suspicions about election integrity.

The Belfer Center is also sending students out to the states to understand various voting technologies and procedures. The idea is to recommend best practices for each type of set-up, which could include mandated software updates, paper back-ups and audits.

Thus far, the project has offered no advice for the internet companies that are under fire for allowing Russian advertising and false claims to polarize Americans. That could come later, as could a broader program for quick sharing of threat information.

Reporting by Jonathan Weber; editing by Diane Craft

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#TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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## Uber fights proposed rule in Mexico's Cancun barring cash fares

Noe Torres, Julia Love



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MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Uber Technologies Inc, which has been facing a wave of regulations in Latin America, is fighting proposed rules in Cancun that the ride-hailing service says could drive it out of the top Mexican beach resort.

The logo of Uber is seen on an iPad, during a news conference to announce Uber resumes ride-hailing service, in Taipei, Taiwan April 13, 2017. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu

Legislators in Quintana Roo, the southeastern state that includes Cancun, are considering a proposal that would bar drivers from accepting cash and set minimum value and age criteria for the cars used for trips.

Accepting cash from users is often seen as making drivers robbery targets.

Federico Ranero, general manager for Uber in Mexico, said the law would have grave implications for the company's operations in the tourist destination, where 40 percent of trips are paid for in cash.

"This regulation, if it is passed as it is, would so limit the service and so drastically affect the experience of our users and driver-partners that Uber would feel obligated to suspend its operations in the state of Quintana Roo," Ranero said in an interview.

Fernando Zelaya, president of the state legislature's transportation commission and one of the lawmakers who presented the initiative, could not be reached for comment. But his staff said legislators could discuss it as soon as this week.

Last month, lawmakers in the central Mexican state of Puebla approved new rules aimed at

Senators in Brazil scrapped parts of a bill last month that would have treated ride-hailing companies like traditional taxi services after a lobbying effort by Uber that included a trip there by new Chief Executive Officer Dara Khosrowshahi.

By specifying the value and age of drivers' cars, the regulation in Quintana Roo is among the more onerous in Mexico, said Carlos Martinez, who heads the Center for Citizens and Consumers, a group that has studied the proposals.

"You have here a clear barrier to entry in the market," he said.

Ranero warned that tourism in Cancun, a relatively small but growing market for Uber, could take a hit if the company leaves.

"The tourists trust Uber," he said.

Cash payments have proved to be a thorny issue for Uber as it pursues growth in emerging markets where many consumers do not have credit cards. After a wave of attacks on drivers in Brazil, Uber began using social security numbers to verify the identity of riders who pay with cash.

After testing various methods in Mexico, Uber has been authenticating such riders through their Facebook profiles, Ranero said.

Reporting by Julia Love; Editing by David Alire Garcia and Lisa Von Ahn

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All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See [here](#) for a complete list of exchanges and delays.

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