

[Security](#)

April 21, 2009 6:05 PM PDT

Gates: Cyberattacks a constant threat

by CBS Interactive staff

[Font size](#)[Print](#)[E-mail](#)[Share](#)[Yahoo! Buzz](#)

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Tuesday that the United States is "under cyberattack virtually all the time, every day" and that the Defense Department plans to more than quadruple the number of cyber experts it employs to ward off such attacks.

In an interview for an upcoming edition of 60 Minutes, CBS News anchor Katie Couric asked Gates about the nation's cybersecurity after hackers stole specifications from a \$300 billion fighter jet development program as well as other sensitive information.



In a series of spy attacks, hackers stole information about the Pentagon's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter project and the Air Force's air traffic control system, according to a [Wall Street Journal report](#) Tuesday.

The computer spies copied several terabytes of data from the Joint Strike Fighter project, the most expensive in Defense Department history, pertaining to the electronics and design systems of the aircraft, several current and former officials told the Journal.

Officials said the separate incursion into the air traffic control system could allow intruders to interfere with military aircraft.

Gates would not discuss the specifics of the attacks, but said, "I believe we still have security of the sensitive systems."

Generally, "We think we have pretty good control of our sensitive information both with respect to intelligence and equipment systems, but we, like everybody else, is

under attack. Banks are under attack. Every country is under attack," Gates told Couric.

But, he said, "It's sometimes very difficult to figure out a home address on these attacks so one of the things that I am doing in the budget is significantly increasing the resources for cyber experts. We're going to more than quadruple the number of experts that we have in this area. We're devoting a lot more money to it."

The source of the espionage appears to be China, according to a former official, though the origin of any attacks could be masked. Chinese officials deny any involvement and say U.S. suspicion is the result of a "Cold War mentality."

Similar attacks have become more frequent in recent months, underscoring the increasingly heated battles taking place in cyberspace. Earlier this month, the Wall Street Journal reported that Russian and Chinese spies gained access to the U.S. electrical grid, inserting software that could disrupt the system.

In the Joint Strike Fighter attack, officials said that while spies made off with some data, the most sensitive information is stored on separate, non-networked computers. But the vulnerability lies in the Pentagon's reliance on private defense contractors, some foreign, who have less-than-secure networks. The breaches apparently took place in Turkey and another U.S. ally nation, according to the report.

While there is no U.S. agency currently dedicated solely to cybersecurity, the Obama administration is expected to propose a senior White House post to coordinate military efforts to guard against further breaches. The White House may also look to extend a \$17 billion security initiative originally planned by the Bush administration.

"This is going to be an enduring problem and it is going to be a challenge not just for the Department of Defense but for the entirety of the United States," Gates said.

Topics: [Privacy & data protection](#), [Vulnerabilities & attacks](#)

Tags: [cybersecurity](#), [jet](#), [Gates](#)

Share: [Digg](#) [Del.icio.us](#) [Reddit](#) [Yahoo! Buzz](#)

Related

From CNET

[The Cold War moves to cyberspace](#)

[F-Secure says stop using Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)

[Pentagon spends over \\$100 million on cyberattack cleanup](#)

From around the web

[Affordable Paris: Museums for free - Thi...](#) Budget Travel

[Copernic Mobile: View PC files from your...](#) CNET News

[More related posts](#) powered by

 Sphere