Print This Article

<< Return to Updated cybersecurity bill draws continued criticism

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In light of the former Egyptian regime's move to cut off internet access as means to silence protesters, critics of a U.S. Senate proposal worry it would give the president the same type of authority in the United States, even in the legislation's revised form.

The *Cybersecurity and Internet Freedom Act*, introduced last week by Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn.; Susan Collins, R-Maine; and Tom Carper, D-Del, aims to secure the nation's most sensitive critical cyber infrastructures.

The legislation is a revised version of a highly contested bill first introduced last year as *The Protecting Cyberspace as a National Asset Act of 2010*. The original bill drew harsh criticism for a provision that critics said would give the president kill-switch-like power to shut down the internet.

The newly updated legislation contains no such provision, the senators said in a statement released late last week. Moreover, it contains "explicit" language prohibiting the president or any other U.S. government employee from shutting down the internet, they said.

"There is no so-called 'kill switch' in our legislation because the very notion is antithetical to our goal of providing precise and targeted authorities to the president," Lieberman said. "Furthermore, it is impossible to turn off the internet in this country. This legislation applies to the most critical infrastructures that Americans rely on in their daily lives – energy transmission, water supply, financial services, for example – to ensure that those assets are protected in case of a potentially crippling cyberattack."

Privacy and civil liberties advocates argue, however, that the revised bill still gives the government too much power.

Michelle Richardson, legislative counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union, told SCMagazineUS.com on Wednesday that the amended bill could infringe upon citizen's First Amendment rights.

"We have some significant reservations about the bill," Richardson said. "We are still concerned that it would allow the executive breach to interfere with internet communications when they deem it necessary to respond to a cyber emergency."

Despite their concerns, members of the ACLU take no issue with an "overwhelming majority" of the 221-page bill, including provisions to support research and development, bolster the nation's cybersecurity workforce and create a cybersecurity center within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Meanwhile, Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at The Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank, called the proposal a "government-power grab" and questioned whether it would improve the state of cybersecurity.

"No amount of tailoring can make a bad idea a good one," he wrote in a blog post late last week.

Controversy over the bill has only been fueled by protests in Egypt last month, which prompted the oppressive Mubarak regime to briefly halt internet access.