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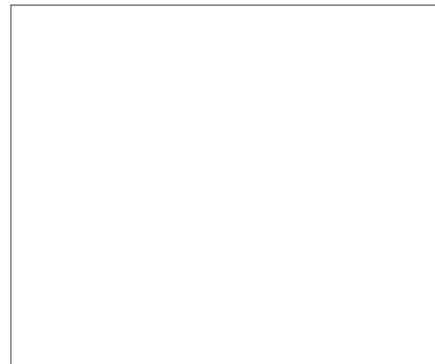


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MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2009

## How Can Cyberspace Be Defended?

Last month, President Obama unveiled his long-awaited "Cyberspace Policy Review." The 60-plus-page document is the first step toward a strategic, national plan to protect and defend the Internet, which is now the backbone of global commerce, communications and our basic way of life. Obama made clear he knows how vulnerable our networked world has become. He said that his own campaign computers had been hacked, that the rate of online crime is increasing, and that cyber intruders had penetrated the computer systems that control electrical power plants in the United States. Obama said it was time to start treating cyberspace for what it is, "a strategic national asset."

The question is, how does the government protect a borderless, largely anonymous space that is almost entirely owned and operated by private citizens and corporations? Many had hoped that the president's new policy review would offer some answers, but it was thin on new ideas. Obama plans to appoint a new "cyber czar" to coordinate from the White House. But that official will have to contend with two enormous bureaucracies that play dominant roles in protecting cyberspace -- the departments of Homeland Security and Defense. How can one White House official, who will not report directly to the president, herd those giant cats? Has Obama got it right when he says that cyberspace is a "strategic national asset"? If so, why not commit more forcefully to its protection? Or is cyberspace too big, and perhaps too abstract, to "defend" the way the government does our land, sea and air borders?

-- Shane Harris, NationalJournal.com

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