

China's cyber warfare against the civilised world

“America must also face the rapidly growing threat from cyber-attacks. We know hackers steal people's identities and infiltrate private e-mail. We know foreign countries and companies swipe our corporate secrets. Now our enemies are also seeking the ability to sabotage our power grid, our financial institutions, and our air traffic control systems. We cannot look back years from now and wonder why we did nothing in the face of real threats to our security and our economy”

President Obama, 2013 State of the Union Address, February 12, 2013

The Chinese attack on US websites is of sufficient scale that President Obama mentioned it in his State of the Union address in 2013. China has been hacking US websites for a decade now and the effort is growing. In 2006, Chinese hackers got into several Department of Defense computer networks and stole files. In early 2013 they got into the networks of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. It has been estimated that China has trained over one million amateur hackers to date. This enables the Chinese Government to use them to attack foreign or domestic targets. The best of the hackers are put to work to penetrate important foreign networks.

This militia activity on the internet was pioneered in the late 1990s when the Chinese Defence Ministry established “NET Force” initially as a research organisation to determine China's vulnerability to internet attack. This soon led to seeing how vulnerable other countries were. In 1999, Net Force was joined by an irregular civilian militia known as the Red Hackers Union (RHU). The RHU members were initially motivated by the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

Beyond the theft of information, there is the fear that Chinese hackers have laced US utilities with logic bombs to be set off coincident with a physical attack on US military bases in the Western Pacific. The most detailed report on one of China's cyber espionage units is the Mandiant report released in early 2013. It is available [here](#).