

Cyberspace should be platform for peace, not battleground

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Global Research, June 18, 2011

[Xinhua News Agency](#) 18 June 2011

BEIJING: The United States recently took a series of aggressive actions related to the Internet, targeting other governments rather than terrorists or criminals.

These moves have undermined global trust, which is critical to build international consensus and carry out a coordinated policy response on cyberspace safety issues.

The United States is playing a “cat-and-mouse game” on the web, said Michael Posner, U.S. assistant secretary of state in charge of human rights, on May 10, adding the government would spend 19 million U.S. dollars to develop new tools to break online firewalls erected by other states.

“If you (a country) shut down our power grid (through the Internet), maybe we will put a missile down one of your smokestacks,” an unnamed U.S. military official told the Wall Street Journal in late May, regardless of the fact that the hackers’ attack may have its origins in another country rather than the place where the smokestacks are located in.

Furthermore, British media reported that the United States was developing non-English software that will allow it to secretly manipulate social media to influence Internet conversations and spread pro-American propaganda.

These moves, disrespectful of the sovereignty of other nations, have aroused the legitimate concern of other governments. The Internet has been an important platform for the global economy after its fast growth during the last 30 years. It is not surprising that few countries want to solely depend on a single state to maintain Internet safety and that most stakeholders expect a balance of power in cyberspace.

The U.S. unilateral actions to expand its online arsenal and flex muscles may push other players to resort to both offensive and defensive technology in cyberspace. And a cyber arms race could end up in a lose-lose situation, in which countries attack each other’s essential systems and the Internet would be fragmented, instead of forming one big cyber community.

In fact, governments, companies, organizations and individuals are all facing safety challenges on the Internet now. By effectively addressing the disputes, the priority of cyberspace governance should be to find common ground, build international consensus and encourage concerted efforts among stakeholders. Also, international cooperation on the Internet is possible since we all call for cracking down on cybercrime.

As in other areas, international cooperation in cyberspace has to be based on global trust, which helps stakeholders overcome the differences in cultures, ideologies and goals.

However, the United States, the only superpower in cyberspace like in the traditional domains, still seems to be stuck in a Cold War mentality. Instead of helping to make cyberspace an area where different countries can safely and peacefully interact, the United States has helped transform it into yet another battleground.

Stop NATO e-mail list home page with archives and search engine:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/messages>

Stop NATO website and articles:

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com>

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