Written by **James Murphy** on July 16, 2018

National Intelligence Director Issues Dire Warning on America's Cybersecurity

According to National Intelligence Director Dan Coats (shown), each day, the United States is attacked. Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and others launch attack after attack against our infrastructure. Of course, we do not see bridges exploding and mushroom clouds above our largest cities but, nonetheless, the attacks are happening. These are cyberattacks, carried out via the Internet, and they are almost as frightening, and potentially just as dangerous, as those other forms of attack. Coats spoke on the subject at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. on Friday.

Coats spoke only a few hours after 12 Russian nationals were indicted by the Mueller investigation for allegedly hacking Democratic National Committee e-mails and servers in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election. His remarks came just three days before President Trump was scheduled to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin. While many countries are waging these systematic attacks, Russia, above all, is supposedly the worst offender. "Russia has been the most aggressive foreign actor, no question. They continue their efforts to undermine our democracy," Coats said, seemingly ignorant of the fact that the United States is not a democracy, but a republic.

As of yet, the United States has not detected any further attacks such as the type launched in 2016 against state election boards and voter databases, but such attacks in the future are all but certain to occur again, Coats said: "However, we fully realize that we are just one click away of the keyboard from a similar situation repeating itself."

In addition to the 2016 attacks against state election boards and databases, state actors, using such resources as the alleged "troll factory" in St. Petersburg, Russia, have also been accused of using social media in order to create "fake news" in order to sway public opinion.

Coats referenced the 9/11 attacks to underscore just how serious he considers these computer-based attacks on America: "In the months prior to September of 2001 … according to then CIA Director George Tenant the system was blinking red. Here we are nearly two decades later, and I'm here to say, the warning lights are blinking red again."

Coats believes that these cyber-intrusions are part of a comprehensive plan that takes aim at all crucial American institutions, both governmental and private.

"The targets range from U.S. businesses to the federal government, including our military, to state and local governments, to academic and financial institutions and elements of our critical infrastructure, just to name a few," Coats explained. "These attacks come in different forms. Some are tailored to achieve very tactical goals, while others are implemented for strategic purpose."

Although the alleged election tampering being done would be bad enough, Coats warns against focusing on election tampering alone. Other sensitive attacks against the computer infrastructure are, potentially, just as frightening: "DHS and FBI, in coordination with international partners, detected Russian government actors targeting government and businesses in the energy, nuclear, water, aviation and critical manufacturing sectors…. The system is blinking and it is why I believe we are at a critical point."

In the wake of the alleged Russian hacking of the 2016 election, the U.S. intelligence community has become more flexible and more adept at sharing information between agencies. Information that the NSA or CIA possesses gets into the hands of the FBI in a more streamlined fashion. But, as Coats points out, "Everyone, if we are to succeed in dealing with this threat, must take ownership of the challenge.

The Trump administration has taken several steps in order to address these issues, among them attribution, the aforementioned criminal indictments, and economic sanctions, all of which have been used recently. America is now slightly better equipped to deal with cybersecurity threats, but we are far from safe from them.

According to Coats, "All of these disparate efforts share a common purpose; to exploit America's openness in order to undermine our long-term competitive advantage." While this certainly may be true of the aformentioned countries — though U.S. intelligence agencies can hardly be said to be honest and reliable — perhaps Coats should attempt to expose what the forces known as the Deep State are doing to undermine our freedoms right here at home.

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