



## Hack Attack Forces Pentagon To Take Computers Offline

The Secretary of Defense said the e-mail system in the Office of the Secretary of Defense was penetrated and computers were taken offline to stop the breach.

By Sharon Gaudin, [InformationWeek](#)

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The U.S. Department of Defense was hit by a security breach Wednesday that forced the military agency to take an estimated 1,500 computers offline.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said at a [press conference on Thursday](#) that the e-mail system in the Office of the Secretary of Defense was penetrated by hackers, and "elements" of the unclassified [e-mail](#) system were shut down in response.

Gates said the computers weren't expected to be offline for long.

"The reality is that the Defense Department is constantly under attack," he said in the press conference. "We obviously have redundant systems in place, and there is no anticipated adverse impact on ongoing operations. There will be some administrative disruptions and personal inconveniences. It will come as no surprise that we aggressively [monitor](#) intrusions and have appropriate procedures to address events of this kind. But, as I say, we get perhaps hundreds of attacks a day. "

He added that the DoD is investigating the security breach.

Gates, though, wasn't inconvenienced by the [computer](#) downtime. He told reporters that he doesn't use e-mail.

"I don't do e-mail," he said. "I'm a very low-tech person."

The security breach hit on the same day that Scott Charbo, the CIO of the Department of Homeland Security, was in the [hot seat in front of a Congressional hearing](#). Charbo and his entire department were taken to task for a plethora of [computer network](#)

weaknesses that some congressmen said were putting national security at risk.

Jim Langevin, D-R.I., chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology, said at the hearing Wednesday afternoon that the Department of Homeland Security suffered a reported 844 security incidents during fiscal 2005 and 2006. He also said the infiltration of federal government networks and the possible theft or exploitation of information on them is one of the most critical issues confronting the country, noting that the Chinese have been "coordinating attacks against the Department of Defense for years."

According to Langevin's testimony, the security incidents included workstations infected with Trojans and viruses, a compromised department Web site, classified e-mails being sent over unclassified networks, unauthorized users attaching their personal computers to DHS networks and gaining access to government equipment and data. He also said the incidents included "numerous classified data spillages."

Another Congressional hearing earlier this year focused on two computer break-ins at the Department of State and the Department of Commerce last summer. Langevin said the break-ins are very likely more numerous and more serious than even the government has reported.

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