

Kremlin concerned about report on U.S. cyber attack on Russia's power grid



Moscow, June 18 (RHC)-- The Kremlin says it is concerned about a New York Times report alleging that the United States has escalated its cyber attacks against Russia through incorporating malicious software into Russian power systems.

Citing unnamed current and former U.S. government officials, the Times claimed in an in-depth report that the U.S. intelligence officials have been investigating the Russian power grid since at least 2012 and that they have recently started targeting power grid control systems in offensive operations.

According to the daily, the incursions are being made in an attempt to warn Russian President Vladimir Putin and show off how aggressively the current U.S. administration is deploying cyber tools. The move was also described as a classified part of action against Russia over alleged disinformation and hacking attempts around the 2018 midterm elections.

"Undoubtedly this information shows the hypothetical possibility... all signs of cyber war and military cyber action against the Russian Federation," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday. He also noted that some strategic parts of the Russian economy had suffered and were continuing to suffer due to

cyber attacks from abroad, adding that the authorities were constantly working to try to keep the economy and what he called sensitive parts of it safe.

Peskov also said that the authorities tried to prevent these attacks from inflicting substantial harm to the Russian economy, adding that Moscow has made multiple attempts to initiate international cooperation in the area of countering cyber attacks, but Washington has consistently turned a deaf ear to these calls.

Donald Trump has refuted the allegations and accused The New York Times of committing a “virtual act of treason” for spreading “not true” information in its recent report. However, the influential media outlet responded to the American leader’s accusations, saying that it had shown the report to the U.S. government, and national security officials had expressed no concerns.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Peskov said that if US agencies were conducting cyber attacks “without notifying the head of state” about them, then there could be “signs of cyber war and cyber warfare aimed at Russia.”

Separately on Monday, Konstantin Kosachev, the chair of the Russian upper house's foreign affairs committee, called on the international community to strongly condemn the U.S. plans to insert malicious software into Russian energy systems.

“When a guilty mind betrays itself, a punishment usually follows, even if the crime has not been committed yet. Relevant U.S. plans, if they are definitely confirmed, are a crime against the international law, and the global community should condemn this firmly and comprehensively,” he said.

Commenting on the response given by the New York Times to Trump, Kosachev said that the “dispute” escalated to “something much more significant.” It has escalated to “a confirmation that the United States, at the state level, is preparing destructive cyber attacks against other states. And this is the same U.S. that accuses Russia, China, Iran, Cuba and North Korea of breaking into computer systems,” Kosachev added.

Back in March, Russian Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov claimed that Moscow had detected some three million attacks against Russian networks coming from U.S. territory over just a few days. On Tuesday, U.S. national security adviser, John Bolton, said that the U.S. was trying “to say to Russia, or anybody else that’s engaged in cyber operations against us: ‘You will pay a price.’”

Russia has been accused of meddling in US elections, a claim dismissed by Moscow. After Trump was elected into office in 2016, special counsel Robert Mueller began investigating his ties with the Kremlin.

In his last statement, the special counsel neither cleared the president nor charged him, throwing the ball into the Congress’ court. Mueller argued that the decision not to charge Trump was made based on the Justice Department’s longstanding policy of not bringing charges against a sitting president.

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