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The Defense Department has started to broaden its cyber strategy and include international cooperation with allies in cyberspace, the American Forces Press Service reports.

Experts from Washington, Russia and the Netherlands spoke at Georgetown University's International Engagement on Cyber Monday, discussing obstacles that lie in way of international cooperation for cyber efforts.

Steven Schleien, the Pentagon's principal director on cyber policy, said officials are working to establish cyber ties with allied nations, an effort that strikes an accord with President Obama's cyber strategy released last May.

The cyber strategy indicates that hostile cyber attacks could lead to defensive actions based on mutual defense strategies.

Schleien said Pentagon officials worked with allies and NATO staff at the 2010 Lisbon Summit to bring all NATO networks up to speed under the NATO Cyber Incident Response Center.

The Pentagon has also begun to work with Japan, New Zealand and South Korea on cyber strategy and to develop cyber interoperability with British and Australian ministries, Schleien said.

The Pentagon views the law of armed conflict as applicable to cyberspace.

Schleien notes that norms of international behavior in cyberspace need to be established since the U.S. and Russian colleagues are unsure how to monitor or verify cyber weapons or tools.

Navy Rear Adm. Samuel Cox, the U.S. Cyber Command's intelligence director, said Cybercom sees information sharing with other nations as necessary but hard to establish.

Army Gen. Keith Alexander, head of Cybercom and the National Security Agency, said the U.S. is looking at a global cyber arms race that is accelerating.

Cox said that is a reason Cybercom wants to move forward with building international ties.

Certain nations are easier such as Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and Australia since they are longstanding partners.

Information classification makes it difficult to establish ties in cyberspace, Cox said.

Estonia's President Toomas Hendrik Ilves told attendees at a separate event that collaboration among nations would be vital to securing intellectual properties as well.

Christopher Painter, the State Department's coordinator for cyber issues, said cyber threat has become more acute and evolved into a national security and foreign policy priority.

Painter said the U.S. can only do so much on its own and should act in concert with additional nations.

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