

U.S. Beefs Up Cyber Defenses to Thwart Hacks of Nuclear Arsenal

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March 24, 2016 — 1:01 PM GMT

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- Cyber attacks are a 'legitimate concern,' U.S. military says
- U.S. Navy hosts world's largest arsenal of nuclear warheads

The U.S. military is beefing up cyber defenses to counter threats by hackers trying to gain access to nuclear missiles and other weapons.

Amid growing concerns about cyber attacks from Russia, China and groups such as Islamic State, the U.S. is seeking \$34.7 billion through 2021 to boost cyber-security capabilities. Meanwhile, the U.K. has set aside 1.9 billion pounds (\$2.7 billion) from its military budget for spending on cyber security over the next five years, on top of 860 million pounds spent since 2011, according to the U.K.'s Ministry of Defence.

As part of the effort, the U.S. military plans to award BAE Systems Plc a contract that would boost software-security provisions for U.S. and U.K. Trident missile systems, John Daniels, a spokesman for the Navy's Strategic Systems Program, said in an e-mailed response to questions. The goal is to upgrade the defenses on a weapons program that started four decades ago, before the Internet and mobile phones became widespread.

'Legitimate Concern'

"Now that cyber has become even more important in our national security, there will be even more requirements" for anti-hacker defense systems, Daniels said. "In our modern era, cyber-security threats are a legitimate concern."

The U.S. Navy would be a prime target, hosting the world's largest nuclear arsenal of about 4,700 warheads, according to the Arms Control Association. The U.K.'s weapons horde includes about 225 warheads, including 120 arming 40 Trident missiles. Since those missile systems are

deployed aboard submarines, online threats are limited by their isolation, a spokeswoman for the U.K. ministry said.

Under its deal with the U.S. Navy, which also helps maintain the U.K.'s weapons, London-based BAE will "conduct reviews and manage processes and policies for safety and cyber security" for the Lockheed Martin Corp.-built missiles, according to the contract document.

BAE provides current maintenance work for the weapons. The expanded one-year contract is set to start Oct. 1 and can be extended for four years, according to the solicitation document posted by the U.S. military. A spokesman for BAE declined to comment on contract terms.