

U.S. network security experts say Chinese hackers recently launched a network attack targeting people attending a U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference.

Officials say the attempted attack took place this month at the conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, attended by defense officials, defense industry representatives, defense security experts and think-tank scholars.

Steven Adair, founder of Washington-area network security company Volexity, said the hacking attempt was based on a Chinese phishing email, asking recipients to open the message. The email contained malicious software that would have allowed the hackers to enter all systems connected to that computer network.

Lotta Danielson, vice president of the U.S.-Taiwan Business Association, which sponsored the conference, told VOA the association has been a target of hacking for years, and has been vigilant about hacking attacks. She said she immediately notified all participants of the conference when she saw the suspicious email.

Danielson said the email "was directed at Taiwan's defense industry. Some recipients were attending the conference, some not. I immediately found it suspicious." She said she forwarded the email to security experts.

### **Hacker identity**

Adair told a seminar organized by Washington-based think tank Global Taiwan Institute that while it is not possible to prove China was behind the hacking attempt, there are ways to infer the identity of the hackers.

"We've seen the same kinds of attacks and malware that have specific Chinese features, and some malware that only Chinese hacker groups use," Adair said.

Mark Stokes, executive director of the Project 2049 Institute, said Taiwan's democratic government is a real threat to the legitimacy of Chinese's communist government. He said that Taiwan faces huge challenges, and that cyberattacks from China are one of them.

However, Stokes said Taiwan has excellent network talents, and that the United States and Taiwan should strengthen their cooperation on cybersecurity issues because they face the same threats.

### **Taiwan to up its security**

Taiwan's Ministry of Defense plans to set up a special cybersecurity unit within the army, because of the increasing cyberattacks against Taiwan in recent years. Taiwan's government said the new plan is highly necessary because Chinese hackers have attacked Taiwan more often than they have attacked the United States, Hong Kong and mainland China itself.

Taiwan believes Chinese hackers have infiltrated Taiwan's defense, foreign affairs, air traffic control and communication systems, saying the scale has reached "quasi-war level."