

Bolton's Magnificent Idea: Nix the White House Cyber Czar

By Paul Rosenzweig, Megan Reiss Thursday, May 10, 2018, 4:08 PM

DayZero: Cybersecurity Law and Policy

News reports suggest that new national security adviser John Bolton is thinking about eliminating the cybersecurity coordinator position, known as the "cyber czar," that Rob Joyce will soon vacate.

We think this is a magnificent idea.

Bolton is completely correct that there is no need for any coordination between the various federal agencies on this issue. Cybersecurity is not a cross-cutting problem that affects all sorts of equities. We have no concerns that eliminating this position will result in conflicting mission imperatives. We have every confidence that the National Security Agency, for example, can work out vulnerability disclosure equities without the need for input from the Departments of Commerce, Justice or Homeland Security (much less Treasury or State).

We also are confident that the decision accurately reflects the diminished importance of cybersecurity as a national issue. Cybersecurity is no longer deserving of the prominence that so many national security experts seem to give it. We fully expect the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to eliminate the cybersecurity menace from its annual threat assessment. We are confident that the trend lines for cyber threats and intrusions are down.

We are also certain that last year's Equifax breach set the high-water mark for cybercrime. Hence, there is simply no need for the White House, or America in general, to continue to worry about the vulnerability of critical infrastructure networks. We are pleased to think that the hardware intrusion problem no longer justifies national coordination, and we have unwavering confidence that the Department of Education is well-positioned to take the lead on cybersecurity education initiatives.

Likewise, our adversaries certainly will not interpret this as a signifier that the United States will be less capable of developing a strategy to respond to cyber threats.

Most importantly, we would never question whether folding the cyber czar's job into the role of another National Security Council member would lead to decreased attention to the functions of the cybersecurity coordinator at the highest level of the administration. Never.

Topics: Cybersecurity

Paul Rosenzweig is the founder of Red Branch Consulting PLLC, a homeland security consulting company and a Senior Fellow at the R Street Institute. He is also a Senior Advisor to The Chertoff Group. Mr. Rosenzweig formerly served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy in the Department of Homeland Security. He is a Professorial Lecturer in Law at George Washington University and an Adjunct Lecturer at Northwestern University.

@RosenzweigP

Megan Reiss is senior national security fellow with the R Street Institute, where she writes about cybersecurity and other pressing national security issues. Megan joined R Street in September 2017 from Office of U.S. Senator Ben Sasse, for whom she was also a senior national security fellow. Megan has a bachelor's degree in human biology from Stanford University, an LL.M. in international criminal justice and armed conflict from the University of Nottingham School of Law, and a Ph.D. in public policy from the University of Texas at Austin's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.