

International

(/international/)

French defense chief touts offensive tack in new cyber strategy

By: **Christina Mackenzie** (/author/christina-mackenzie) 📅 2 days ago

PARIS — The French military plans to develop and deploy offensive cyber weapons and improve the protection of its networks from “security events,” Defense Minister Florence Parly announced here this morning.

“Today, France is choosing to procure cyber weapons for its military operations. We consider the cyber weapon as a full-fledged operational weapon,” she said.

“We will use it proportionately,” Parly added, noting at the same time, “We will not be scared of using it.”

“On average we have more than two security events daily,” Parly said, “some of which were aimed directly at us [whilst] others were aimed at our industries and partners.” She revealed a serious breach of security, which lasted from late 2017 to April 2018, that could have imperiled the navy’s entire fuel chain. “In case of a cyberattack against our forces, we reserve the right to retaliate, in a legal framework, with the means and at the moment of our choosing,” Parly said. “We also reserve the right, whoever the attacker is, to neutralize the effects and the digital means employed.”



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France has launched the first of three identical military imaging satellites, which, when they reach full operational capability at the end of 2021, will replace the aging Helios system.

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She added: "We will also be ready to employ the cyber weapon on foreign operations for offensive purposes, on its own or to support our conventional means, or to multiply their effects."

Part of the €1.6 billion (\$1.8 billion) earmarked in the 2019-2025 military program law for cyber defense would be used to hire "1,000 cyber fighters" between now and 2025, according to the defense minister. Some of those would be under the orders of Brig. Gen. Olivier Bonnet de Paillerets, commander of the French cyber-defense force founded in 2017. Others would be employed by the DGA procurement agency or by the DGSE, France's foreign intelligence service. Parly noted that "cyber fighters on foreign operations will benefit from the same protection as our military."

Following Parly's speech, Gen. François Lecointre, the chief of staff of the French armed forces, announced that Bonnet de Paillerets would craft a new offensive cyberwarfare doctrine meant to "ensure the defense of our interests and the preservation of our sovereignty."

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