



Air National Guard tells HACKERS BEWARE

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LINCOLN, Neb. — When it comes to saving government dollars and protecting against potential enemies, the Air National Guard is taking security to a completely different level — cyber level, that is.

Through an Air Guard-wide initiative, the organization is providing critical protection to its communications systems at a reduced cost. The system, known as a Regional Operations Security Center system, protects Air National Guard computers against computer-borne viruses and cyber hackers.

The system is actually the result of an Air Force directive ordering Air National Guard units to comply with beefed-up computer security system regulations, according to Maj. Carl Tesch, commander of the 155th Communications Flight in Lincoln, Neb., which hosts one of the six national ROSCs,

Major Tesch said the Air Force went to a security system in the 1990s, built around the powerful Combat Information Transport System, which was put at the network control centers at each active duty Air Force base. At the same time, the 92 Air National Guard flying wings that comprise the Air National Guard essentially built individual systems designed to suit their needs.

The Air Guard solution, however, was not up to Air Force standards in the field of computer and messaging security. So, the Air Force directed the Air National Guard to comply

with the increased security needs. Considering that each CITS equipment suite cost approximately \$250,000, the expense was too much for the Guard to handle.

The Guard's solution was to set up a series of regional centers that each of the Air Guard organizations could tie into.

Initially envisioned at 10 separate ROSCs, the system has since been downsized to six centers throughout the states.

Major Tesch said the ROSC works somewhat like an Internet provider.

"All their traffic for the (Local Area Network), e-mail and Web — anything they do that traverses through the network comes through this regional center for security purposes," he said. "We're like their Internet Service Provider on a medium to large scale."

Master Sgt. Hubert Brunk, Region 4 ROSC manager, added, "Prior to the regional concept, we had more than 90 bases that had to be notified whenever there was a problem or a possible attack on the system. Now we've only got six locations that you have to call. You can quickly prevent a virus from going bonkers on the system."

Also, by concentrating the main costs at six regional bases, the Guard has been able to not only pay for expensive hardware and software upgrades to the ROSCs, it has also enabled it to pay for smaller upgrades at each of the Guard's individual bases.

The result is a system that operates quickly and efficiently.

Bases also have newly installed T-1 circuits that have the capacity to move 5 megabytes of information every second.