

S.S.R.C. Intelligence Report
~The U.S. 2016 Election Race -
The Candidates and Cybersecurity~

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Shield Security Research Center

Hitachi Systems, Ltd.
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3. The U.S. 2016 Election Race – The Candidates and Cybersecurity

As the U.S. enters 2016, the approaching election this November continues to dominate news headlines. Both Democrat and Republican candidates are competing fiercely to earn their Parties' nomination to lead the U.S. as Commander in Chief. In numerous debates, news programs and other media we have heard their positions on issues such as terrorism, the economy, immigration, and internal domestic issues like guns and race relations. However, one topic that has not risen to the same level is the candidates' stance on U.S. cybersecurity.

Still, regardless of whether or not it emerges as a hot campaign topic, one can expect that the next president will certainly confront the issue. How might our next president set cybersecurity policy, or respond to a major cyber event? Among the major candidates, Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republicans Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio do address it as part of their platforms (lower polling Jeb Bush even include a full cybersecurity plan as part of his platform). Still, one can determine how certain candidates might deal with cyber based on their positions on broader issues such as defense and commerce.

The good news is regardless of which candidate is elected, Democrat or Republican, there will likely be strong support from the executive branch in supporting security cyberspace initiatives, even if candidates motives for doing so differ. Though there are differences in the philosophies on how to provide prosperity for America both provide incentive for the next President to improve upon, or at least continue current efforts in cyberspace.

On the Democrat side, Hillary Clinton discusses the threat of cyber attacks within her national security proposal, stating she will “leverage the work of the public and private sectors...to strengthen security... “ within cyberspace. Additionally, she includes in her infrastructure plan a goal to connect all households to the internet by 2020, as well as, invest in public Wi-Fi. These plans, if realized, would indirectly create a need for greater cyberspace security and safeguards. Thus, Hillary Clinton would likely be a strong supporter of cyber security initiatives and policies and further invest in the cyber security enterprise.

Bernie Sanders, Clinton's chief competitor for the Democratic nomination, does not address cyber within his chief proposals. However there is certainly a likelihood of strengthening the government's cyber capabilities within his national security priorities. Chiefly because Sanders, as would-be Commander in Chief, calls for a strong defense, but states that military force should be a last resort. It is possible that he would look to cyber capabilities as a safer and non-kinetic option, keeping military forces out of harm's way. Thus, even a reduced Defense Department might see increases in operating budgets for cyberspace. Additionally, like Clinton, Sanders also calls for building better access to broadband in America, particularly in rural areas. Again, any increase in internet access to the American population would likely create a second-order effect of strengthening and investing in the cyber security enterprise.

As for Republican candidates, the party's long-held push for a strong national defense should be expected to produce similar support for cyber as a tool for national security. Candidate Marco Rubio's platform calls for public-private information sharing and a harsh response to “international cyber attacks on American citizens, businesses, and governments.” Rubio, clearly is a supporter of cyber security and is expected to implement measures to boost the cyberspace security and defense capabilities if he were elected. As for other candidates such as Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, it is safe to assume that a similar policy on cyber-attacks would be adopted by either candidate's prospective administration as they are both hardline supporters of defense policies.

Where Democrats may add an additional boost for cyber in their calls for infrastructure build up, Republicans' other non-defense platform that includes a role for cybersecurity is their championing of economic freedom. Cruz and Rubio highlight internet freedom in their economic plans; and as a

key platform for economic activity, security would play a major role in ensuring a safe and reliable internet. Although in this initiative, rather than direct government investment, look for a Republican president to support cyberspace's role in the economy through less regulation as well as incentives for private industry to do the legwork.

A long process remains before each party chooses their presidential nominee. Cyber may emerge as a hotter topic as the campaign field narrows, particularly should 2016 see another major cyber event such as the Sony hacks or Office of Personnel Management data theft. Nevertheless, though the manner in which it takes place may differ, expect the importance of cybersecurity to grow regardless of who succeeds President Obama next January.

()Sources: Candidates' Official Websites*

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