

Digital security a growing concern

By Nicole Perlroth, New York Times

Paul Kocher, one of the country's leading cryptographers, says he thinks the explanation for the world's dismal state of digital security may lie in two charts.

One shows the number of airplane deaths per miles flown, which decreased to one-thousandth of what it was in 1945 with the advent of the Federal Aviation Administration in 1958 and stricter security and maintenance protocols. The other, which details the number of new computer security threats, shows the opposite. There has been more than a 10,000-fold increase in the number of new digital threats over the last 12 years.

The problem, Kocher and security experts reason, is a lack of liability and urgency. The Internet is still largely held together with Band-Aid fixes. Computer security is not well regulated, even as enormous amounts of private, medical and financial data and the nation's computerized critical infrastructure – oil pipelines, railroad tracks, water treatment facilities and the power grid – move online.

In a speech two years ago, Leon Panetta, the former defense secretary, predicted it would take a “cyber-Pearl Harbor” – a crippling attack that would cause physical destruction and loss of life – to wake up the nation to the vulnerabilities in its computer systems.

[Read the whole story](#)