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## A Struggle Over U.S. Cybersecurity

By Brian Krebs

The resignation of the federal government's cybersecurity coordinator highlights a power struggle underway over how best to defend the government's civilian computer networks against digital attacks.

Rod A. Beckstrom resigned the post Friday after less than a year on the job, citing a lack of funding and the National Security Agency's tightening grip on government cybersecurity matters.

Beckstrom is director of the National Cyber Security Center -- an organization created last March to help coordinate such security efforts across the intelligence community. But recently, Beckstrom said, efforts have been underway to fold his group into a facility at the NSA.

Beckstrom said in an interview over the weekend that his group was formed to coordinate the various agencies' efforts but not to be controlled by the NSA.

"This is a coordination body and it resides alongside or above the other centers, but certainly not below them," Beckstrom said. "In my view, it is very important that there be independence for the [center], and that it be able to carry out its role."

The Obama administration is in the midst of a 60-day review of the government's cybersecurity initiative, with recommendations on next steps expected sometime next month.

**Philip Lieberman, president of Lieberman Software**, a Los Angeles-based security software maker, said the new administration faces a tough job balancing privacy and civil liberties issues with the real need to help secure the Internet, a major engine of the world's economic activity.

"Obama has a real firecracker on his hands that he's going to need to put out real fast," Lieberman said. "Right now, no one is really running the insane asylum when it comes to cyber."

Beckstrom said he decided to leave roughly 10 days ago, after learning that orders were canceled for computers, network equipment, furniture and office space in Arlington slated for his group. While he officially reports to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Beckstrom said he has not yet had a meeting with her.

"Once you lose your space, have no money and no chance to meet with your boss, and decisions are being made about your future with no consultation, it's time to go," Beckstrom said.

A former Silicon Valley entrepreneur and author with no government experience, Beckstrom was seen as an unorthodox pick by many Washington insiders. "He brought a completely different perspective, which in one way could have been his undoing," said a senior member of the intelligence community, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The Bush administration created Beckstrom's office shortly after it launched the "comprehensive national cyber security initiative," an effort to help shield government networks from online attack. That program is expected to cost at least \$6 billion in 2009 and more than \$30 billion over the next few years.

Beckstrom's resignation comes as the NSA is being groomed to take a front-seat position in driving the government's cybersecurity programs. Last month, Adm. Dennis C. Blair, the director of national intelligence, told the House Intelligence Committee that the NSA was the proper agency to be given purview over protecting military and government networks. Traditionally, the role of protecting civilian networks has fallen to the DHS.