The Chinese - major espionage threats to the U.S.?

The Chinese government's infiltrations of U.S. national security agencies is on the rise and becoming a serious threat.

As cybersecurity threats continue, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission panel today asked Congress to take steps to combat espionage threats and monitor those working in information technology.

"Chinese cyber espionage has been a major problem and has inflicted quite a bit of damage on the U.S. economy and our country's competitiveness," said Dennis Shea, chairman of the U.S.- China economic and security review commission.

The commission, created by Congress in 2000, monitors and submits an annual report on the national security implications of the trade and economic relationship between the U.S. and China.

Reports of Chinese intelligence collection operations against the U.S. has greatly increased over the past 15 years targeting a wide range of U.S. national security organizations, including military forces, industrial and infrastructure entities.

"I'm very concerned they have reconnoitre our major defense. This is something that has to be taken into account," said James Talent, former senator and current commissioner.

The review commission proposed the following two steps that might reduce if not stop the espionage threats to the U.S.:

- Congress should direct the Department of State to create awareness among American students pursuing their education abroad about potential recruitment efforts by Chinese intelligence agents.

- Congress to direct the FBI to provide a classified report on the risks identified as associated with information systems

acquired by the U.S. government by paying close attention to those working in information technology.

"Once you have awareness and those in IT are being closely looked at, there's a way to know how much leakage is going on," said Khatherine Tobin, commissioner at U.S.-China economic and security review commission.

The two most prominent Chinese intelligence organizations are the Ministry of State Security and intelligence units within the People's Liberation Army, who conduct both cyber and human intelligence collection operations.

Through the use of financial incentives and coercion, these units build networks of agents with U.S. academics studying in China.

Carolyn Bartholomew, vice chairman of the U.S.-China economic and security review commission, stressed the importance of educating the youths going to China about the risks that may be posed.

"We grow up in this country and we don't necessarily understand that people are going to use other people for access of information," she said. "It is important we make sure our young people go into their interactions with their eyes wide open."

Bartholomew stressed the importance to think about the loss of opportunities for American companies. "We can't compete freely when the Chinese have fenced off certain aspects to advantage their own opportunities," she said.