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Biden Looks To Up Cybersecurity Spending With Budget Plan

By [Allison Grande](#)

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Law360 (April 9, 2021, 10:35 PM EDT) -- The Biden administration on Friday urged Congress to set aside more than \$1.3 billion in funds to bolster the federal government's cybersecurity posture in the wake of a pair of massive cyberattacks suspected to have been orchestrated by foreign nation-states, including a requested \$110 million boost for the [U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#) agency tasked with leading these efforts.

President Joe Biden's fiscal year 2022 discretionary funding request, which lays out for Congress the administration's topline funding recommendations across a wide range of policy areas, proposed several enhancements to the funding and resources currently invested in protecting the nation's infrastructure and information systems at several government agencies, including DHS and the [General Services Administration](#).

The proposal called for Congress to allocate \$2.1 billion, a \$110 million increase from the 2021 enacted level, for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, a standalone agency under DHS oversight that was established in 2018 to assist both other government agencies and private sector organizations in addressing emerging cybersecurity threats and issues.

"This funding would allow CISA to enhance its cybersecurity tools, hire highly qualified experts, and obtain support services to protect and defend federal information technology systems," according to the discretionary funding request, which was prepared by the [Office of Management and Budget](#).

The funding would build on the \$650 million provided for CISA in the American Rescue Plan Act, which was signed into law in early March, the Biden administration added.

The discretionary request also calls for Congress to greenlight \$20 million for a new Cyber Response and Recovery Fund at DHS, \$500 million for the Technology Modernization Fund at the General Services Administration in order to "strengthen federal cybersecurity and retire antiquated legacy technology systems," and \$750 million for reserve funds to strengthen federal agency information security. The funding for the GSA fund would be on top of the \$1 billion provided for it in the American Rescue Plan Act, according to the Biden administration.

The Biden administration's push for increased cybersecurity funding comes in the wake of a pair of recent sprawling cyberattacks that the funding proposal stressed "highlight the urgent need to modernize federal technology, with particular emphasis on mission essential systems and citizen-facing digital services."

The cyberattacks targeted third-party IT provider [SolarWinds Corp.](#) and [Microsoft Exchange's email](#) servers. The SolarWinds hack, which

U.S. intelligence agencies [have attributed to](#) "a group, likely Russian in origin," breached the networks of at least nine federal government agencies and hundreds of private companies, while hacking crews linked by Microsoft to the Chinese government separately breached the software giant's Exchange email servers, [potentially looting](#) email files from Microsoft customers.

The White House's request for more cybersecurity funds is also consistent with budget proposals pressed by the Trump administration in recent years.

Last year, the Trump administration [urged Congress](#) to set aside nearly \$11 billion to boost cybersecurity initiatives at several federal agencies, including efforts by DHS to conduct risk assessments of voting systems and the U.S. Department of Treasury's work to identify and remediate new vulnerabilities in the financial services sector. And in 2019, the White House [similarly called for](#) increased spending on cybersecurity efforts across the federal government, including the allocation of \$8 billion to boost initiatives at the [U.S. Department of Defense](#) and \$1 billion to help improve cyberthreat information-sharing between the public and private sectors.

Aside from the requested funding to support agencies as they "modernize, strengthen, and secure antiquated information systems and bolster federal cybersecurity," the Biden administration's funding request also stressed investment in cybersecurity research efforts across the federal government.

The proposal called on Congress to approve \$916 million, an increase of \$128 million over the 2021 enacted level, to expand scientific and technological research at the U.S. [Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology](#), which is tasked with research in a number of vital areas, including cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

The Biden administration also requested funding for research projects involving cybersecurity data analytics at DHS as well as to establish a new directorate for technology, innovation and partnerships within the [National Science Foundation](#) to "help translate research into practical applications."

"The directorate would work with programs across the agency and with other existing federal and non-federal entities to expedite technology development in emerging areas that are crucial for U.S. technological leadership, including artificial intelligence, high performance computing, disaster response and resilience, quantum information systems, robotics, advanced communications technologies, biotechnology, and cybersecurity," according to the budget proposal.

--Editing by Jay Jackson Jr.

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