

176th Cyber Protection Team activates in Bloomington

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SPRINGFIELD - The 176th Cyber Protection Team was honored in a ceremony recognizing the group's official activation at the Illinois National Guard's Armory in Bloomington, Illinois on Nov. 5.



Maj. Gen. Richard J. Hayes, the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard, presided over the ceremony that included nearly 20 military members, as well as Congressman Darin Lahood and State Representative Dan Brady.

During the ceremony, Hayes said this unit was challenged during preparation for activating this unit and would be even more in the future.

"This unit comes at a time when they are needed the most," said Hayes. "Cyber Protection becomes more vital all the time and the Illinois National Guard looks to lead the way in battling cyber-attacks."

Lahood said cyber security of our national institutions, our businesses and corporations and our personal data continues to be one of the biggest challenges that the federal government faces.

"What we are doing here today by activating this unit is we are taking the next step by putting young men and women that are committed to fighting on the cyber security front into action," said Lahood. "I commend Major General Hayes and the Illinois National Guard for stepping up to put this unit in place and we have to continue to be vigilant."

Brady said this unit exemplifies what the state of Illinois is trying to do.

"We are trying to be pro-active instead of reactive against cyber-attacks," said Brady.

The Illinois National Guard works hand-in-hand with multiple state and federal agencies as well as nongovernmental entities in domestic emergency operations and has participated in cyber protection exercises at the state, regional and national level.

Partners within Illinois slated to support cyber operations include DuPaul University, Illinois State University, the University of Illinois at Champaign, the University of Illinois at Springfield, Lincoln Land Community College, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, the Illinois State Police, and the DuPage County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

As part of ongoing growth of cyber forces throughout the Department of Defense, the National Guard announced plans to activate 13 additional cyber units spread throughout 23 states by the end of fiscal year 2019.

The current roll out of Guard cyber units is part of laying out a larger foundation for future cyber forces scheduled for activation.