

THE JOB NO ONE WANTS: CYBERCZAR

To be honest, I've lost count, but I believe we have had close to eight cyberczars in the last eight years.

Make it nine.

The White House's acting cybersecurity czar announced her resignation Monday, saying in an interview that she is leaving for personal reasons.

Melissa Hathaway, who completed the Obama administration's cybersecurity review in April, had initially been considered a leading contender to fill the post permanently.

[snip]

Ms. Hathaway said she took her name out of the running for the post two weeks ago.

At this point, you'd think someone smart would take a step back and re-evaluate and—more importantly—have a public conversation about what our country needs to do for cybersecurity.

As I understand it, two factors have been chasing cyberczars back to the private sector as fast as we can hire a new one. First, no one wants to demand that private sector companies meet certain standards for their cybersecurity. As a result, their vulnerability becomes our vulnerability. But in the US of A, you simply can't ask money-making institutions to sacrifice for the public good, so one after another cyberczar realizes their job is completely unworkable, and leaves.

Then there's the giant pissing match over turf within the government. The NSA has the best capabilities for taking on this job. But to give them the job would mean the same people spying

on our emails would also be (hell, probably already are) spying on our internet use. Plus there's the whole problem of what is basically a defense function within our day-to-day Toobz.

Now, I know the government doesn't like to talk openly about how easily the Chinese and Israelis and Russians can waltz into our computers and fuck around. And I know how mandating that businesses do certain things cuts into the donor pool. But perhaps the problem is in the entire way we're conceiving of the Toobz police. Perhaps it's time to reconstitute the NSA such that the military isn't—as they now are—given carte blanche to sneak in my metaphorical panty drawer. Maybe if we rethink this whole thing we can actually keep someone on this job for more than 18 months?