North Korea armed for cyber war
Correspondents in Seoul
The Australian
OCTOBER 06, 2004

NORTH Korea has trained more than 500 hackers capable of launching cyber warfare, South Korea’s defence ministry has said. In a report to the National Assembly's National Defence Committee, the ministry said that hackers from the impoverished Stalinist state were among the best in the world.

"North Korea's intelligence warfare capability is estimated to have reached the level of advanced countries," Yonhap news agency reported.

The military hackers had been put through a five-year university course training them to penetrate the computer systems of South Korea, the United States and Japan, the report added. Their goal, it said, was to gather intelligence or to launch a cyber attack.

Earlier this year sensitive South Korea computer systems came under attack from abroad, according to intelligence reports.

The attacks were considered a serious threat to national security, South Korea's National Intelligence Service said in July.

The spy agency said the spate of cyber-attacks in June and July were launched from China but it was unable to say whether they were launched by Chinese nationals or nationals from a third country using China-based computers.

The hackers broke into 211 computers at 10 government agencies in South Korea including defence and security-related agencies. National Assembly computers were also targeted as were computers at private companies, universities and media firms.

"We believe the hackers are either Chinese or used China as a base for their attacks," an official at the National Cyber Security Centre, attached to the national spy agency, said in July.

Agence France-Presse

This report appears on australianIT.com.au.