



Addressing the global Internet

June 18, 2010

Rod Beckstrom
CEO and President

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Dear Lynn:

Many thanks for your letter of 14 April, 2010, addressed to members of the ICANN Board and sent via our Chairman, Peter Dengate-Thrush, expressing concern about recent developments brought forth by ICANN pertaining to the security and stability of the Internet. Given that the concerns you express are primarily operational in nature, Peter has asked me to reply.

Let me first address your concerns about my comments at ICANN's Nairobi Meeting about the extent to which the Internet is under attack. I am conscious, as you rightly remind us, that participants within both ISOC and ICANN constituencies are continuously working to address attacks on "Internet Infrastructure," and that the community is continuously stepping up activities (operational and development) to address them. I think the main difference between us is that I am not convinced that we are yet doing enough, or moving quickly enough. As a newcomer to ICANN, but with some relevant experience in this field, I thought it right to draw attention to an area where I have very real concerns. Concerns which are, I know, widely shared among our communities. To provide the views of some internationally recognized security experts on this topic, we have arranged a public panel discussion on Monday, June 21, at the Brussels ICANN meeting. This group will include the original architect of the DNS, one of the fathers of public key cryptography, and the expert who exposed a major flaw in the DNS protocol that stimulated a major security response by the community. We will be holding similar panels at BlackHat Security Conference and Defcon this year to pull in other experts to get their opinions on this important topic. Clearly, when it comes to risk management of DNS related systems, we cannot be doing enough, and we must never underestimate the risks, as the potential costs of damage could be so great.

In relation to your concerns about the lack of facts to quantify the risks to the Internet, and of information on existing and planned activities to address those risks: I believe we would agree that all would benefit from more detailed information of those existing and planned activities, and, in particular, from more accurate and objective data on what is actually taking place across the DNS and related systems. Many operators have shared with me their very serious concerns about cybersecurity attacks and events. We have also been informed that many registries have

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experienced increases in botnet attacks; but none have, so far, been willing to come forth and share their data. For example, I have heard that there have been increases in attacks in volume and complexity on the .ORG Registry operations. Ideally, .ORG could be an industry leader in disclosing statistical data on the types and nature of cyber attacks that it experiences. It would be very helpful if we could work together to gather additional data on attacks on registries, and on how that information is being shared and measured on a global basis. It would greatly contribute to our joint efforts to evaluate the seriousness of the threat and coordinate our forces more effectively to meet it.

Following my remarks in Nairobi, I made informal requests for information on an overall risk assessment and simulation models for DNS related systems. None has yet been presented, although narrow individual topics, such as individual registry scaling and the root server scaling issues had been considered. In addition, there is a serious lack of data upon which to establish an appropriate response. I appreciated the conversation with you earlier this week in which you expressed ISOC's willingness to help establish processes and mechanisms to gather such data.

I have, meanwhile, also requested both the RSSAC and SSAC for their data concerning the international DNS anomalies that occurred on March 24, when users in multiple countries were prevented from accessing various websites. We are awaiting data on that incident.

Turning to your comments on the merits of a global DNS CERT. As you will be aware, we have never proposed that ICANN should be the operator of such a CERT, but rather have asked the community for their views on the proposal that such a global DNS CERT should be established. These we have been pleased to receive, including those in your letter. I encourage you to continue providing input on this important issue where, again, I hope we are in broad agreement that there is more that could be done to deal with growing threats to the Internet. I think that ICANN should probably have a role in the operation of such a CERT, if required by the community, but in any case, we look forward to the continuing discussions.

I also wanted to thank you and Raul for the email received this week in which you expressed ISOC's support for ICANN's continued operation of the IANA contract with the U.S. Department of Commerce, and for sharing your view that all three functions (domain names, Internet addresses and parameters and protocols) should be continued to be coordinated together.

Finally, as we have discussed separately, we look forward to continuing our dialogue with you and the affiliated ISOC entities on these and other important current issues. I look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming ICANN Public Meeting in Brussels, when our respective boards will meet and have an opportunity to exchange views on these and other matters.

Yours sincerely,



Rod Beckstrom