U.S. short of options to punish NKorea for serious cyberattack

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration vowed Tuesday that North Korea would be held accountable for a May cyberattack that affected 150 countries, but it didn't say how, highlighting the difficulty of punishing a pariah nation already sanctioned to the hilt for its nuclear weapons program.

The WannaCry ransomware attack infected hundreds of thousands of computers worldwide and crippled parts of Britain's National Health Service. It was the highest-profile cyberattack North Korea has been blamed for since the 2014 hack of Sony Pictures after it produced "The Interview," a satirical movie imagining a CIA plot to kill leader Kim Jong Un.

While that attack led to leaks of confidential data from the movie studio and emails that embarrassed Sony talent, the implications of the WannaCry intrusion were altogether more serious. Homeland security adviser Tom Bossert said it was "a reckless attack and it was meant to cause havoc and destruction." He said it put lives at risk in British hospitals.

Other experts say the attack was more likely an attempt by Kim's cash-strapped government to extract money. Last year, the same hacking group was suspected in a malware attack that penetrated the Bangladesh Central Bank's computer system, stealing $81 million.

Whatever the motivation, the public declaration of blame by Washington reflects growing concern over North Korea's cyber capabilities that appear all the more threatening because of Pyongyang's scant regard for international norms. In defiance of world opinion, North Korea is the only country to test nuclear weapons this century and is closing in on a missile that could strike anywhere on U.S. mainland.

FBI involved with airport blackout probe; no sign of terror

ATLANTA (AP) — The FBI is part of the probe into what caused a fire that knocked out power to the world's busiest airport in Atlanta, but an agency spokesman said Tuesday there was no sign of anything connected to terrorism.

"There's no indication at this point of anything nefarious," FBI spokesman Kevin Rowson said.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has also been involved in the investigation, Georgia Power spokesman Craig Bell said.

"We're bringing everything we have to bear to the situation to make sure this doesn't happen again," Bell said Tuesday.

No conclusions have been drawn as to the cause of the fire, which took out the airport's power supply and also its backup electricity for about 11 hours Sunday. The blackout stranded thousands of passengers on grounded jets and in darkened concourses and led to the cancellation of more than 1,500 flights just ahead of the frenzied holiday travel period.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the main hub for Delta Air Lines, is a crucial cog in the nation's air travel system. Delays there typically ripple across the nation because so many U.S. and international flights are routed through the Atlanta hub.

Because of the magnitude of Sunday's outage, "we want to be able to rule out any possible scenario that wasn't equipment malfunction," Bell said.

"We really don't expect any answers like that to come forth for a few days," he said.

The power company is working with the airport to explore how to prevent the situation from happening again.