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Europe's largest cybersecurity conference coming to San Antonio in 2025

The InCyber Security Forum is expected to bring up to 5,000 international attendees.

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Brandon Lingle – March 29, 2024

Europe's largest cybersecurity conference is coming to Cyber City, USA next year, and it's expected to bring up to 5,000 attendees from around the world.

The InCyber Forum — an international group of cyber professionals, leaders and policymakers — will hold its annual conference June 17-18, 2025, in San Antonio, the organization announced.

While details and venue locations are being determined, local officials, tourist groups and tech leaders are enthusiastic about having the event here.

"San Antonio is the U.S. hub for cybersecurity innovation. As the seventh-largest American city, San Antonio is perfectly suited to host the first U.S. edition of the InCyber Forum," Mayor Ron Nirenberg said in a statement. "San Antonio will offer thousands of forum attendees from around the globe a close look at the city's cybersecurity bona fides and why we're quickly becoming known as Cyber City, USA."

The European version of the conference occurs in Lille, France, and attracts 20,000 people from 82 countries to discuss "cybersecurity, data protection, combating cyber crime, investing in emerging technologies and advancing workforce development," according to a statement.

"It's a wonderful chance to showcase the capabilities that we have in San Antonio on not just the military presence and the commercial presence, but some of the great things that we are doing in terms of the education side," said Jim Perschbach, President and CEO of Port San Antonio. "To bring people here and to see that we have — I think we're up to nine NSA (National Security Agency) and Department of Homeland Security certificated collegiate programs — the efforts that are being made at Port San Antonio, downtown and throughout the city...I think is fantastic."

While Perschbach said the Port "would love to host the entire show," he realizes that's not practical. Nevertheless, he's "confident that you're going to see breakout sessions at the Port and through some of the other areas" around town.

Perschbach, who has long sought to bring people to San Antonio to showcase the city's unique capabilities and create business opportunities, talked about how city tourism and economic development groups are attracting conferences that mesh well with local industry.

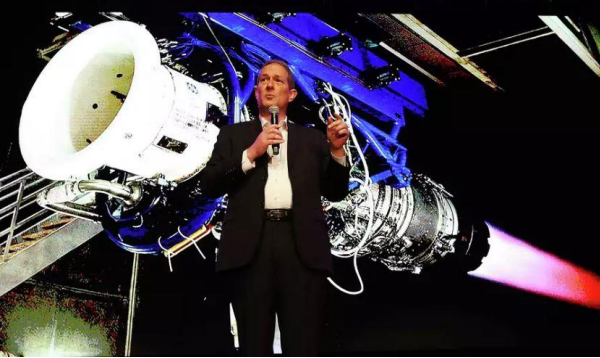


The Project Tech Building at Port San Antonio was quickly filled by cybersecurity companies, including defense contractors. Image credit: Port San Antonio.

"I am really impressed with the way that Visit San Antonio and Greater:SATX are leveraging not just bringing conferences that are great from the hospitality perspective, but that tie into what we do so well in San Antonio, because there is no substitute to actually see it," he said.

Officials at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center said the venue can handle the crowd, noting that the downtown facility hosts up to 90 conferences each year.

"Many of them have an international component, such as the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium each December," Richard Oliver, spokesman for the city's convention and sports facilities, said via email. That conference brought people from 91 countries.



Jim Perschbach, CEO of Port San Antonio, talks about aerospace company StandardAero as he gives a State of the Port address at Boeing Center at Tech Port on June 14, 2023. The Port is the largest tech employer in San Antonio. Image credit: Kin Man Hui/Staff Photographer.

The U.S. Travel Association's IPW travel-trade conference in May attracted 5,000 attendees from more than 60 countries.

With roughly 5,000 expected attendees, the upcoming cyber conference is big but well within the Convention Center's capacity, as Oliver said it would be able to handle the size of the InCyber Forum's European event as well.

"We can certainly accommodate that," he said. "It's amazing since I've gotten here to watch small cities come in and leave in the course of three or four days. But, yeah, 20,000, that's a large conference."

The largest conferences, he said, were the Seventh Day Adventist Church 60th Quinquennial General Session in August 2015, which drew nearly 70,000 people over more than a week to the Convention Center and Alamodome.

Also, the 75th International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in June 2010 drew more than 50,000.

Conferences with more than 20,000 people occur almost every year, Oliver said. Last year's San Japan anime and gaming convention drew 24,027. The 2022 Texas High School Coaches Association Convention brought about 20,000. And the annual Texas Music Educators Association conference, held here each February, attracted 26,000 last year.

"We're coming off of a wonderful year," he said. "We're back to the numbers that we had before COVID."

Organizers of the event are excited to bring it to the United States.

"At long last, the forum is headed to America," said Vincent Riou, general manager of InCyber Forum Americas. "It is my great hope that InCyber Forum becomes one of Europe's greatest exports to the U.S. and, more specifically, to the great state of Texas."

The InCyber Forum won't be the first major cybersecurity conference in San Antonio. The Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association holds a major annual event in San Antonio that brings about 4,000 people.