

Large cyber hack 'hits Russia govt'

BBC ONLINE
A "professional" cyber attack has hit Russian government bodies, the country's intelligence service said yesterday.
A "cyber-spying virus" was found in the networks of about 20 organisations, the Federal Security Service (FSB) said. The report comes as Russia stands accused over data breaches involving the Democratic Party in the US.
The Russian government has denied involvement and has denounced the "poisonous anti-Russian" rhetoric coming out of Washington.
The FSB did not say who it believed was responsible for hacking Russian networks, but said the latest hack resembled "much-spoken-about" cyber-spying without elaborating.
It said the hack had been "planned and made professionally", and targeted state organisations, scientific and defence companies, as well as "country's critically important infrastructures".
The malware allowed those responsible to switch on cameras and microphones within the computer, take screenshots and track what was being typed by monitoring keyboard strokes, the FSB said.
In the US, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee have both suffered hacks in recent weeks.
Emails from the DNC were later distributed by the Wikileaks organisation, and showed party officials had been biased against Bernie Sanders in his primary race against Hillary Clinton.
US officials believe the cyber attacks were committed by Russian agents. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied being responsible.
The Clinton campaign said on Friday that an analytics data program, which it shared with other entities, had been accessed by hackers. But, her press secretary Nick Merrill said, there was "no evidence that our internal systems have been compromised".



THE SILENT MARCH

A woman holds a placard reading "We are all brothers and sisters" as she takes part in a silent march yesterday in Lyon participated by Muslims, Christians in a bid to forge togetherness between the communities following the attack at the church Saint-Etienne in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray on July 26. Muslim and Christian groups yesterday held vigils for a French priest murdered by jihadists who pledged allegiance to the so called Islamic State group.

PHOTO: AFP

EU-Turkey migrant deal risks failing

AFP, Vienna
European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said that the EU's deal with Turkey on halting the flow of migrants towards the bloc is at risk of breaking down, in comments published Friday.
"The risk is big. The success so far of the pact is fragile. President (Recep Tayyip) Erdogan has already hinted several times that he wants to scrap it," Juncker told Austrian daily Kurier.
"(If that happens) then we can expect migrants to start coming to Europe again," he told the paper in an interview to be published on Saturday.
The March accord between the European Union and Turkey succeeded in stemming the flow of migrants but there are concerns that it could fall apart after a failed coup against Erdogan on July 15.
A subsequent purge in Turkey has seen thousands of arrests among the army, the police and judiciary, and hundreds have lost their jobs in every major Turkish ministry.
Three days after the attempt on the government, a group of Turkish officials assigned to monitor the migration deal on the Greek side returned home, and have yet to be replaced.
Turkey has detained more than 18,000 people over the attempted putsch which has been blamed on the US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen -- a charge he denies -- with the relentless crackdown sparking warnings from Brussels that Ankara's EU membership bid may be in danger.

War-hit Syria may splinter

Hints CIA chief; 'dozens of families' leave besieged Aleppo

AGENCIES

The head of the US Central Intelligence Agency has said he is not optimistic about the future of Syria remaining one country.
John Brennan's comments are a rare public acknowledgement by a senior US official that Syria may not survive a five-year civil war in its current state.
"I don't know whether or not Syria can be put back together again," he said on Friday at the annual Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.
"There's been so much blood spilled, I don't know if we're going to be able to get back to [a unified Syria] in my life time."
John Kerry, US secretary of state, expressed similar fears in February, saying he would move towards a "Plan B" that could involve a partition of Syria if a ceasefire did not materialise in advance of peace talks in March.
"It may be too late to keep it as a whole Syria if we wait much longer," Kerry told the US Senate foreign relations committee.
However, he did not directly advocate for partition as a solution.
Several weeks later, Staffan de Mistura, UN envoy to Syria, said the possibility of a federal division of the country had not been taken off the table.
At the time, major powers close to the UN-brokered talks discussed a potential federal break-up of the country, which

would grant broad autonomy to regional authorities, while maintaining the country's unity as a single state.
President Bashar al-Assad pledged in June to "liberate every inch" of the country lost to rebel forces.
After five years of war that have left more than 280,000 people dead, according to UN estimates, and driven about 11 million people from their homes, Syrian territory has been carved up and divided between the government and its allies, Kurdish fighters, various opposition groups and the so called Islamic State.
The Syrian opposition has categorically rejected the idea of federalism.
In contrast, the Syrian Kurdish PYD party, which has wide influence over the country's Kurdish areas, and several allied groups announced in March plans to create an autonomous federation in the northeast.
The autonomous region, known as Rojava, includes Jazira, Kobani and Afrin - three distinct enclaves, or cantons, under Kurdish control.
On the ground, dozens of civilians left the besieged and battered opposition-held east of Syria's Aleppo city yesterday through a "humanitarian corridor" to the government-held west, state media reported.
The crossings were the first major movement of people from the besieged districts of the city after regime ally Russia announced Thursday that passages would be opened for civilians and surrendering fighters.



John Brennan

Floods kill 50 in India

Nepal death toll hits 90; 26 die in Pakistan

AGENCIES

Floods triggered by days of torrential monsoon rains have claimed more than 50 lives in eastern India this week, the country's home minister and reports said yesterday, with millions of people affected by surging waters.
A day after major Indian cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR hogged the headlines for the waterlogging they faced, attention yesterday also turned to other parts of the country that have been facing flood-like situations. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam all continue to suffer from floods, while heavy rain in Karnataka pushed parts of downstream Tamil Nadu closer to inundation.
Rivers have burst their banks, flooding villages in the northeastern tea-growing state of Assam where 26 people have died, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said, after carrying out an aerial survey of the worst-affected districts.
"The flood situation is really grim. Twenty-six people have died over seven days and some 3.6 million people are affected," Singh told reporters in the city of Guwahati.
"No efforts are being spared to help the people. The NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) and army are doing their best. Some 60 boats have been pressed into service to rescue people."
Thousands of people were sheltering in

makeshift camps set up along highways and on higher ground in the flood-ravaged state.
Severe floods have also hit the state of Bihar where 26 people have also died and several thousands have been displaced, the Press Trust of India news agency reported Friday.
Scores of people die every year from flooding and landslides during the monsoon rains in the subcontinent.
In Nepal, floods and landslides have killed more than 90 people at a time when millions of Nepalis are still living in makeshift huts after a devastating earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people in 2015.
In Pakistan, at least 26 people were killed yesterday when a vehicle carrying wedding guests was washed off a mountainous road by floodwater and flung into a gorge, an official said.



Inmates sleep on the steps of a ladder inside the Quezon City jail in Manila. There are 3,800 inmates at the jail, which was built six decades ago to house 800. It is a reflection of a criminal justice system in chaos, set to worsen as the state engages in an aggressive war on drugs instigated by the country's hardline president, Rodrigo Duterte. Prisoners - caught up in trials which take years - can be seen crammed body-to-body on concrete floors and stairwells. Others are forced to sleep sitting or standing.

PHOTO: AFP

Up to 16 feared dead in Texas balloon crash

AFP, Washington
Up to 16 people are feared dead after a large hot air balloon caught fire and crashed in central Texas on yesterday, officials said.
The accident took place shortly after 7:40 am (12:40 GMT), when the balloon crashed into a field near Lockhart, around 30 miles south of Austin, Lynn Lunsford of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a statement.
"It does not appear at this time that there were any survivors of the crash," police said.
A photo posted on social media apparently depicting the accident showed a balloon in the air with huge flames spurting underneath.
If all 16 fatalities are confirmed, the crash would be the deadliest US hot air balloon accident on record.

'Next generation' of IS terrorists

Report says children of foreigners are being trained as state-building exercise
INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The children of foreign fighters living in IS territory in Syria and Iraq are being trained to become the "next generation" of terrorists, Europe's law enforcement agency has warned.
The group advertises its use of children as fighters and suicide bombers, as well as featuring children including a four-year-old British boy as executioners in its gory propaganda videos.
There are concerns the number of young boys forced into IS' ranks will increase as young children taken to live in its territories or born to "jihadi brides" grow up.
In its annual report on terrorism in the European Union, Europol said children raised under the group's rule are of "particular concern".
"In their propaganda, IS has often shown that they train these minors to become the next generation of foreign terrorist fighters, which may pose a future security threat to member states," the Europol report said.
"Some returnees will perpetuate the terrorist threat to the EU via facilitation, fundraising, recruitment and radicalisation activities. They may also serve as role models for future would-be violent jihadists."
More than 50 children from the UK are living in the "caliphate", where there are also an estimated 31,000 pregnant women, an investigation by the Quilliam Foundation found earlier this year.
Among them is Isaaq Dare, the son of a London woman known as Khadijah Dare, who was shown appearing to blow up a car containing three prisoners in a propaganda video in February.
Parents who have fled IS territory have described their children being "brainwashed" in IS schools, with some being taught how to make bombs or being sent home with Caucasian dolls dressed in orange jumpsuits to behead as "homework".
Analysts say IS leaders see the children as crucial to secure the group's long-term success and consider them better and more lethal fighters because of their indoctrination and desensitisation since birth.
Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, an activist group that documents Isis atrocities, raised concern that even if IS is defeated, its young recruits could continue bloody attempts to establish a brutal caliphate, calling them a "lost generation".
Nikita Malik, a senior researcher from the Quilliam Foundation, told The Independent children are being used as part of the terrorist group's "state-building exercise" in Iraq and Syria.

NEWS IN brief

Four killed in clashes near Kashmir border

AFP, Srinagar
Two soldiers and two suspected rebels were killed overnight in a gunbattle in Indian-administered Kashmir, the Indian army said yesterday. It said the firefight occurred in Naugam sector after soldiers intercepted the militants attempting to infiltrate the territory from Pakistan. Nearly 100 protesters and police were injured in clashes Friday as authorities sought to block a rally called by separatist groups opposed to Indian rule.

Belgium cops arrest 2 for plotting attack

AFP, Brussels
Belgian police arrested two men suspected of plotting a terror attack in Belgium as Europe remained on edge yesterday following a rising wave of jihadist bloodshed on the continent. Police arrested two men, identified as Nouredine H and his brother Hamza H, after house searches late Friday in Belgium's French-speaking areas of Mons and Liege, federal prosecutors said.

Brazil's ex-leader Lula charged in graft probe

AGENCIES
Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, Brazil's hugely popular former president, has been ordered to stand on trial on charges that he attempted to obstruct a giant corruption probe at Petrobras oil company, according to officials. The decision published on Friday names Lula and five others as co-conspirators in an alleged attempt to buy the silence of a former Petrobras director implicated in the scandal.

Afghan forces lose 5pc territory to Taliban

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The Afghan government lost five per cent of its territory to the Taliban in the first five months of this year, according to a US government watchdog, leaving it with a claim to less than two thirds of the country's districts.
Taliban fighters are estimated to hold more ground than at any time since 2001, when American forces forced them from power and emptied al-Qaeda training bases.
The report, published by the Special Inspector General for Reconstruction (Sigar), paints a bleak picture since the US ended combat operations in 2014 and passed responsibility for security to a faltering government in Kabul.
At the same time, it points out that American spending in support of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces is now more than \$68 billion (£51bn).
Yet the result is that the country seems as far from peace as ever. This week the United Nations reported that 1,601 people had been killed in violence - a third of them children - and 3,565 were injured in the first six months of the year, making a four per cent increase over the same period in 2015. The report said the area under Afghan government "control or influence" had decreased to 65.6 per cent by the end of May from 70.5 per cent near the end of January, based on data provided by US forces in Afghanistan.

Clinton's support drops 16% among youth in a year: poll

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Hillary Clinton's campaign has been losing favorability among America's youth, with the Democratic candidate's popularity dropping 16 per cent from a year ago, according to the latest Gallup poll.
Gallup tracked the presidential candidate's appeal over the month of July and found that only 31 per cent of 18-to-29-year-old Americans had a favorable view of Hillary Clinton.
That is a drop of 16 percentage points from a year ago, when the same age group gave her a 47 per cent favorability rating, which was higher than that given by other age groups.
"Clinton's popularity problem with young Americans stands out because young people skew Democratic in their political identification and are often disproportionately positive about national Democratic figures," stated Gallup.
Gallup attributed Obama's victory in 2008 and 2012, in part, to his "constituency of 'Obama coalition' voters," predominantly young Americans aged 18-29.
Clinton's favorability among young people fell dramatically in February and March of this year, and did not recover through July. The drop in appeal might have been connected with the rise in the popularity of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, whose presidential campaign drew massive support from America's young demographic, while drawing voters away from Clinton.
The Gallup poll found that, in July, Clinton's image appealed to 40 per cent of 30-to-49-year-olds, 41 per cent of 50-to-64-year-olds, and 39 per cent of those 65 and older. Gallup said that she had suffered a drop in favorability in all of those groups compared to a year ago.
For those 65 and older and 50-to-64-year-olds, her favorability dropped 2 per cent. For 30-to-49-year-olds, her appeal remained the same.



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