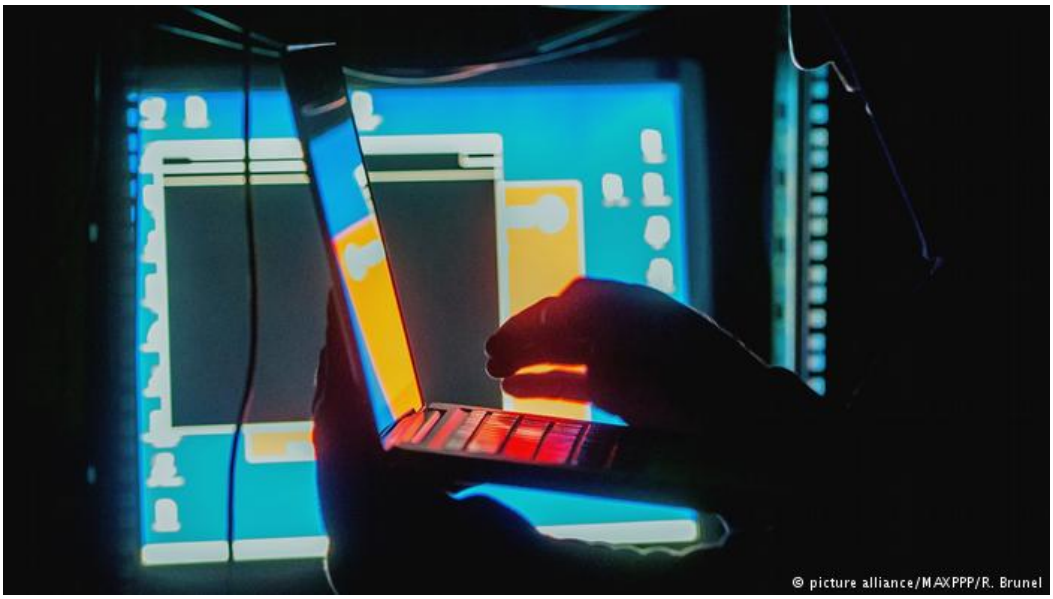
NEWS

North Korea denies US WannaCry cyberattack accusation

The WannaCry ransomware attack infected about 300,000 computers in 150 countries in May. North Korea has labeled the US accusation a "grave political provocation."



North Korea on Thursday denied US accusations it was behind the WannaCry global ransomware cyberattack earlier this year and vowed to retaliate.

North Korea described the accusation as a "grave political provocation" and said Washington had "ulterior motives."

A spokesperson from North Korea's Foreign Ministry said the allegations were "absurd," according to North Korean state news agency KCNA.

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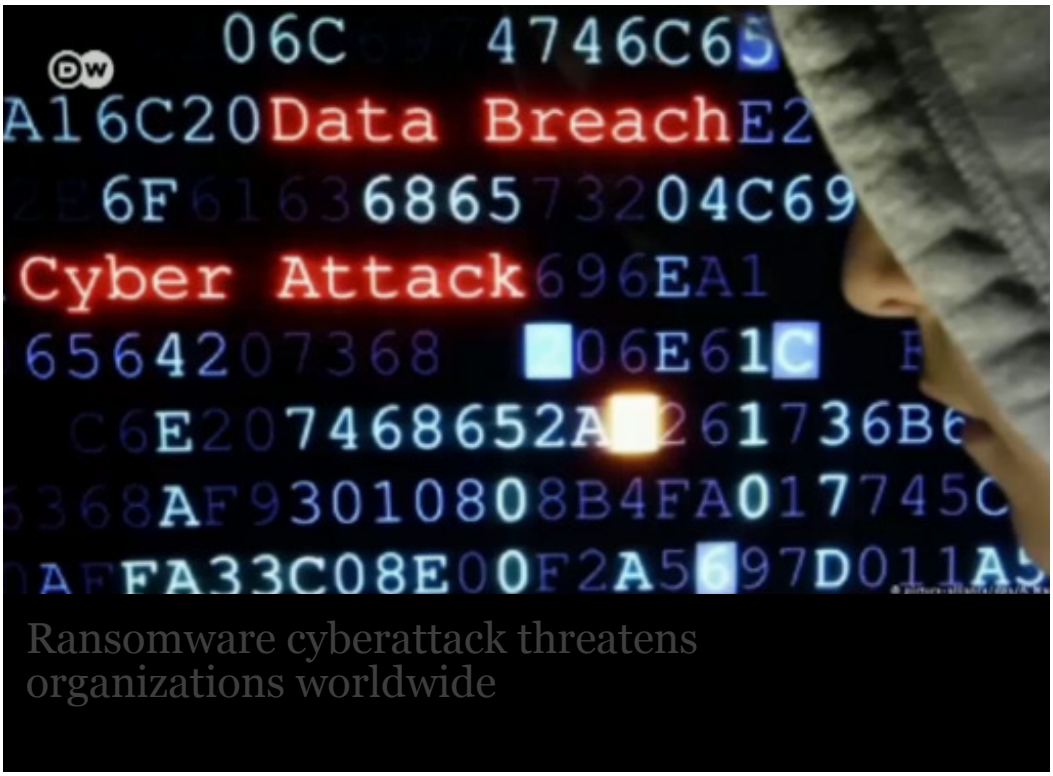
"This move is a grave political provocation by the US aimed at inducing the international society into a confrontation against the DPRK by tarnishing the image of the dignified country and demonizing it," the spokesperson said.

WannaCry infected some 300,000 computers in 150 countries in May, encrypting user files and demanding hundreds of dollars from their owners in exchange for the keys to get their files back.



US homeland security adviser Tom Bossert wrote a Wall Street Journal op-ed published on 18 December that claimed North Korea was directly responsible for the cyberattack.

At a press conference on Tuesday Bossert said, "After careful investigation, the United States is publicly attributing the massive WannaCry cyberattack to North Korea. We do not make this allegation lightly. We do so with evidence, and we do so with partners."

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"The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan have seen our analysis, and they join us in denouncing North Korea for WannaCry," Bossert said.

Bossert also said Microsoft had traced the attack to cyber affiliates of the North Korean government, and others in the security community have contributed their analysis.

On Tuesday the UK came out in support of the US accusations. Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad said in a statement that, "The UK's National Cyber Security Centre assesses it is highly likely that North Korean actors known as the Lazarus Group were behind the WannaCry ransomware campaign – one of the most significant to hit the UK in terms of scale and disruption."

"We condemn these actions and commit ourselves to working with all responsible states to combat destructive criminal use of cyberspace. The indiscriminate use of the WannaCry ransomware demonstrates North Korean actors using their cyber programme to circumvent sanctions," Ahmad said.

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The cyberattack crippled hospitals, banks and other companies worldwide, including parts of the UK's National Health Service. Some companies reported massive losses, including FedEx which said they had incurred losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The attack exploited a Windows vulnerability that was originally developed by the US National Security Agency, but was released in a stolen cache of NSA cyberweapons by a hacking group known as the Shadow Brokers.

law/jil (AFP, AP)

DW RECOMMENDS

» US and UK blame North Korea for WannaCry cyberattack
The UK has joined the US in publicly blaming North Korea for the devastating WannaCry hacking attack earlier this year. The cyberattack took down computer systems in 150 countries and caused widespread chaos. (19.12.2017)

» North Korea link to WannaCry ransomware 'highly likely'
It is 'highly likely' that Lazarus hackers were responsible for this month's WannaCry cyberattack, the US anti-virus firm Symantec reports. The cell is widely believed to be connected to North Korea. (23.05.2017)

» Opinion: When spies lose their secrets
Several hundred thousand computer systems were hit by the "WannaCry" virus. Those who created it aren't to blame, but rather the intelligence community, which was trying to exploit a security gap, says Konstantin Klein. (15.05.2017)

» New EU cyber strategy aims to cut crime and raise resilience
The European Commission has said it will upgrade its existing cyber agency as part of an effort to add EU-wide standards to boost resilience against increasing online aggression. But will the plan work? (19.09.2017)

» Spread of global cyberattack curbed - for now
The spread of a global cyberattack appears to have slowed after a researcher accidentally found a "kill switch." The breakthrough won't help fix systems worldwide that are already crippled by ransom-demanding malware. (13.05.2017)

» Arrest of 'WannaCry' buster Marcus Hutchins raises concern
Marcus Hutchins is credited for single-handedly stopping the WannaCry cyber attack in May, which affected computers in over 150 countries. He was detained by law enforcers before returning to London. (04.08.2017)

» Australia sets up cyberwarfare unit to target foreign enemies
Australia has announced it is launching a new military cyberwarfare unit for offensive and defensive operations. A minister cited "the changing character of contemporary conflict." (30.06.2017)

WWW LINKS

It's Official: North Korea Is Behind WannaCry

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