

GLOBAL SURGE IN RANSOMWARE ATTACKS AND ORGANISED CRIME

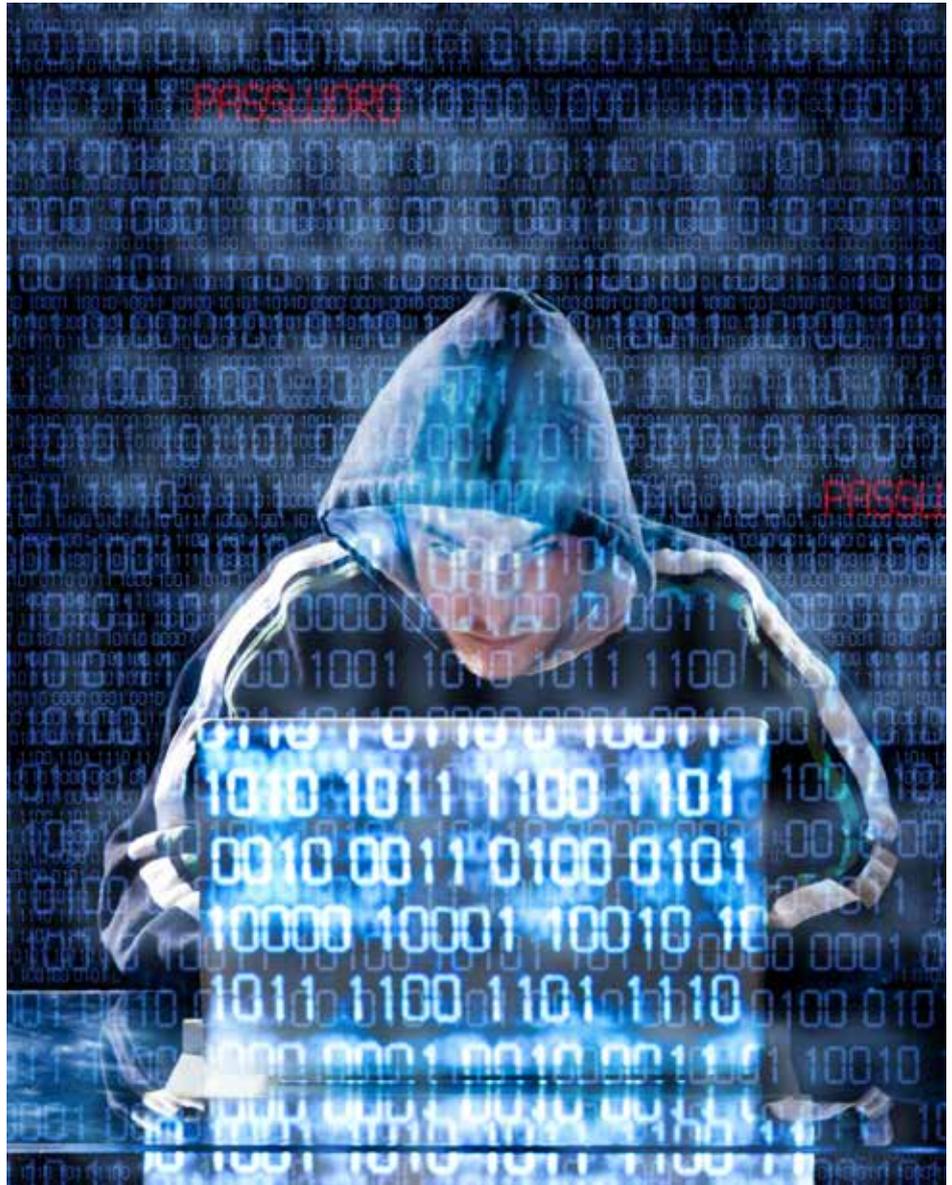
With evolving critical ransomware threats, technology and the Covid-19 pandemic shifting the foundations of police work, senior police officials worldwide have endorsed measures to boost the role of National Central Bureaus as part of a co-ordinated response between INTERPOL and frontline police.

Major initiatives ranging from operational and investigative support to expanding INTERPOL's secure communications network to national police and border control agencies were virtually reviewed by some 300 senior police officials from 167 countries during INTERPOL's 16th annual conference for National Central Bureaus (NCBs) on 6-8 July.

The measures aim to optimise the performance and operational capacity of NCBs, and to enhance international police co-operation through INTERPOL channels against transnational crime and corruption.

"Despite the pandemic, the number of records entrusted to INTERPOL by NCBs over the past year has increased by 10 per cent to reach a record 115 million, demonstrating their role at the heart of our global early warning system," according to INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock.

With serious threats changing in lockstep with the pandemic, the meeting heard that ransomware activities generated US\$350 million in 2020 – a 311 per cent increase over the previous year – according to Chainalysis.



Law enforcement agencies have been advised to continually develop global strategies to address and deal with new ways and means of committing crime using cyberspace.

GLOBAL THREAT AT A CROSSROADS

"A global strategy in response to the threat of ransomware is critical – one where we successfully build trust, see effective exchange of data, and maximise rapid operational assistance to law enforcement agencies," the Secretary General added.

The Head of the Jamaican NCB and Police Superintendent Paulette Green said: "Law enforcement agencies must understand that globally there will always be new ways and means of committing crime using cyberspace and that they should continually develop strategies to properly deal with these issues.

" Cyber-related evidence is time-sensitive and when investigating any



"A global strategy in response to the threat of ransomware is critical to securely exchange data and maximise rapid operational assistance to law enforcement agencies," according to Interpol's Secretary General.

CYBER CRIME ON THE RISE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

A member of Europol Data Protection Experts Network has said that the ongoing pandemic will progressively exacerbate global poverty and push young talent to commit internet crime, which has been predicted by cybersecurity experts and criminologists.

According to Iliia Kolochenko, founder and CEO of ImmuniWeb Inc, "Deprived of fair employment opportunities or offered very modest salaries in isolated developing countries, more and more school graduates and junior security experts try their luck on the dark side, as it pays very well."

He pointed out that this is because the monthly income of a ransomware gang member largely



surpasses an average salary of a security engineer. "Worse still, organisations are significantly disrupted by the pandemic, working from home and the myriad of inter-related problems – eventually becoming a low-hanging fruit even for technically inexperienced cybercriminals."

Kolochenko, who has 15 years' experience in security auditing and digital forensics, claims that most cyber units of law enforcement agencies – even in developed western countries – are now struggling with avalanches of new complaints.

"Often times they have no capacity to investigate 'small' crimes which represent a huge loss for an individual or a family. Governments should urgently increase financing of law enforcement units in the digital space, otherwise, in a few years they will likely lose control over the Internet."

Currently, Kolochenko is a PhD student in Cybersecurity Leadership at Capitol Technology University in Maryland, USA. In addition to membership of the Europol Data Protection Experts Network, he is a member of GIAC Advisory Board and a Committee Member at Boston University Metropolitan CIC (Cybercrime Investigation & Cybersecurity) Center. For further information visit www.immuniweb.com

crime law enforcement must be able to capitalise on such opportunities as soon as possible,” he told the organisation’s membership meeting with key public and private partners at the INTERPOL Forum on Ransomware on 12 July.

On terrorism, Secretary General Stock said the global threat was at a crossroads, with the territorial defeat of Da’esh opening up a new insurgency phase in the Middle East, whilst in other critical theatres such as Africa, new groups have joined the terrorist movement, battling Al-Qaeda for supremacy.

‘PROJECT I-CAN’ TO COMBAT MAFIA GROUP

Senior police officials were also updated on Project I-CAN (a three-year INTERPOL initiative funded by the Italian Department of Public Security to combat the ‘Ndrangheta mafia group). International co-operation via I-CAN facilitated the arrest of Rocco Morabito, a convicted mafia boss on the run from Italian justice, by Brazilian authorities in May.

The Head of the Brazilian NCB and Federal Police Commissioner Bruno Eduardo Samezima said that I-CAN is one of the most relevant

and operational-driven projects INTERPOL has launched in recent years. “It has the potential to be a real game changer in the global fight against transnational organised crime, with a cyclical approach that can serve as a reference to other future INTERPOL initiatives.”

The meeting closed with a call for member countries to engage in regional partnerships based on reciprocal efforts to strengthen international police co-operation.

