

Local

Kuwait confirms arrest of person part of international ransomware network

Twenty-one-year-old college student caught in 'operation GoldDust'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's interior ministry confirmed yesterday arresting a person as part of an international operation against suspects who reportedly carried out cyber-attacks in several countries including Kuwait.

International investigators said on Monday they had arrested seven people in global raids targeting cyber criminals behind ransomware attacks worth more than half a million euros. Two people were arrested last Thursday in Romania and another in Kuwait, while three were held in South Korea and one in Poland during the months-long operation dubbed "GoldDust". The arrests were linked to the Russian-based hacker group REvil, also known as Sodinokibi, and the ransomware group GandCrab, the EU police agency Europol said in a statement.

"Kuwait police arrested a university student aged 21 years as part of an international operation called GoldDust," the interior ministry said in a press release yesterday, adding that an international collaboration led to the arrest of "a seven-member gang who carried out cyber-attacks in several countries around the world including Kuwait."

"The Interpol sent information of a person who used an account on social media to operate as a member of the gang which had activity" in Kuwait and 16 other countries, it added. Detectives were able to identify the account's holder: a 21-year-old Asian resident and were able to locate him. "Several

computers containing malware and a large number of fake emails were found" in the suspect's apartment, the ministry said, adding that the suspect confessed to committing numerous hackings "for several years". All seven detainees were apprehended at the same time following coordination between authorities in the countries of arrest, the ministry further noted.

The global police body Interpol and EU judicial agency Eurojust were also involved in the operation.



Computers containing malware found

"Suspected of about 7,000 infections, the arrested affiliates asked for more than 200 million euros in ransom," the Europol statement said. The two Romanians alone were responsible for around 5,000 infections which pocketed around half a million euros, it added. "All these arrests follow the joint international law enforcement efforts of identi-



fication, wiretapping and seizure of some of the infrastructure used by Sodinokibi/REvil ransomware family," it said.

Ransomware is an increasingly lucrative form of digital hostage-taking in which hackers encrypt

victims' data and then demand money for restored access. REvil, a group of Russian-speaking hackers, are prolific perpetrators blamed for a series of high-profile cyberattacks. It is said to be a successor organization of GandCrab.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah meets US Central Force Air Commander Lieutenant-General Gregory Guillot. —Kuwait Army photos

Kuwait Army Chief meets US air commander

KUWAIT: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah

met yesterday with US Central Force Air Commander Lieutenant-General Gregory Guillot, who is currently on an official visit to the country. Kuwait Armed Forces stated in a press release that the two sides discussed bilateral ties, cooperation, and issues of common interest, especially in the military field and ways of strengthening the coordination between the two countries at the military level. Several senior officials attended the meeting.



Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah meets Pakistani Chief of Naval Staff Mohammad Amjad Khan Niazi.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant-General Khaled Al-Sabah met with Pakistani Chief of Naval Staff Mohammad Amjad Khan Niazi, who also is currently on an official visit to the country. The two ranking military officials discuss bilateral relations, as well as cooperation and issues of common concern, in addition to ways of improving military coordination, Kuwait's army said in a statement. Several senior officials attended the two meetings. —KUNA

New laws and legislations to promote transparency and anti-corruption laws

By Dhari Buyabes

Combating corruption takes many forms. One of the most direct and effective means is enforcing anti-corruption laws. This can significantly promote transparency, accountability and the rule of law. While Kuwaiti legislators issued a law on anticorruption - namely law no. 2 of 2016 on the establishment of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) and the Special Provisions of Financial Disclosure - it is important to highlight the significance of other laws that further support anti-corruption efforts in the country.

Since its establishment, Nazaha has worked vehemently to enhance integrity and transparency through promoting anti-corruption laws and legislations. This task is reflected in article 5 of its establishment law, which mentions that one of its functions is "Studying the legislations and legal instruments related to anti-corruption periodically and proposing the necessary amendments thereto in order to keep pace with the international conventions and treaties ratified or acceded to by Kuwait."

Nazaha, in fact, has many contributions in this field. It has been promoting law no. 12 of 2020 on the right to access to information. This law allows persons to seek information from ministries, public institutions and state-owned companies. It also requires these entities to disclose information about their regulations, functions, programs, projects, job vacancies and more. On its part, Nazaha conducted many workshops to train officials in implementing this law.

Furthermore, Nazaha prepared a draft law to amend penal code no. 16 of 1960 and its amending law no. 31 of 1970 to include bribery in the private sector and the bribery of foreign public officials in line with articles 16 and 21 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

Another draft law that was prepared by Nazaha is related to extending the liability of legal persons in corruption offences. The draft law amends certain provisions of the penal code and its amending law. It identifies the appropriate penalties for legal persons for their participation in corruption offences, without prejudice to the liability of natural persons. This is similarly reflected in article 26 of UNCAC, which stipulates the following: "Each state party shall adopt such measures as may be necessary, consistent with its legal principles, to establish the liability of legal persons for participation in the offences established in accordance with this convention."

Another significant law is the conflict of interests' law which deals with situations that affect the integrity of the person's duties, in that it could cause personal gain or interest for him. Although a law on conflict of interests was adopted in 2018, it was ruled unconstitutional. Therefore, Nazaha prepared a draft law to address its gaps.

The abovementioned draft laws have been referred to the National Assembly for adoption. These laws are necessary for establishing integrity, transparency and accountability in both the public and private sectors. They contribute to eliminating corruption and improving Kuwait's ranking in international anti-corruption indices such as the Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

In support of Nazaha, the Council of Ministers has reiterated that issuing these laws will have a positive impact on Kuwait's ranking in international indices related to integrity, transparency and anti-corruption. Therefore, it has instructed the relevant authorities to expedite the issuance of the said draft laws.

Laws and legislations must continuously develop in order to combat corruption. Therefore, new laws are drafted to address corruption offences in line with relevant international treaties and conventions as well as best international practices. Laws regarding the right to access information, bribery in the private sector, liability of legal persons, and conflict of interests are essential for combating corruption and promoting integrity. Nazaha stresses the importance of these laws and looks forward to cooperating with the relevant bodies in the issuance and implementation of these laws.

- Dhari Buyabes is a specialist in the International Cooperation Department at the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha)



Dhari Buyabes

Crimes

Young man dies of drug overdose

KUWAIT: A drug overdose killed a young man despite his father's attempt to revive him, a local daily reported yesterday. The father had noticed his son was in abnormal condition and seemed to be in a lot of pain, so he called for an ambulance. The father could not wait for the ambulance to arrive and carried his son to hospital as his condition was getting worse, where he later died, Al-Rai Arabic newspaper reported. The medical report indicated that the cause of death was a drug overdose.

'Fake doctors' arrested

Kuwait police arrested two persons who allegedly performed plastic surgery operations without having proper medical licenses, according to a local report. The arrest came following investigations after a woman reported to police that her domestic helper had absconded. Police had tracked the helper to a clinic in Hawally where she had allegedly escaped. During the operation, police discovered the two alleged fake doctors and placed them under arrest, along with four other runaway domestic helpers. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday quoting a source with knowledge of the case. The detainees were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Banned tobacco

Shuwaikh customs officers confiscated 30 tons of banned chewing tobacco upon its arrival in two containers from Jebel Ali Port. The shipment was reportedly abandoned at Shuwaikh Port for 90 days. Officers searched the unclaimed containers and then transferred them to the relevant authorities for further inspection for any banned substances. The two containers were registered to be carrying sanitary materials, but when checked, 580,000 bags of chewing tobacco were found.

False alarm

A woman in Qurain called police and told them that her husband was keeping explosives in their house. Police responded quickly and discovered that the entire issue was fabricated. They found out that it was in fact a domestic dispute case, and that the woman made the false claim so police could respond as quickly as possible, Al-Rai reported. She was taken to the police station for further action.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah visits the new Farwaniya Hospital. — KUNA photos



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah is seen during the tour.

Health Minister visits new Farwaniya Hospital project

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah visited yesterday the new Farwaniya Hospital as part of an approach to follow-up on the ministry's development

projects. This visit comes as part of the ministry's keenness on achieving the goals of Kuwait vision 2035 in providing modern clinical services, said the ministry in a statement. This hospital project is considered an integrated medical edifice that provides all medical services, both diagnostic and therapeutic, and is provided with the latest medical equipment to enhance the medical sector in Kuwait. The total space of construction is 423,000 square meters, including 955 beds, 233 intensive care units, 318 clinics, 156 dental clinics, 31 operation rooms and 1,400 parking spaces. —KUNA