

UK Armed Forces Data Exposed In Suspected Chinese Cyberattack: Report

In a concerning development, the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) has been targeted by a large-scale data breach, according to Sky News reports. Sensitive information belonging to service personnel and veterans is believed to be compromised, potentially including names and bank details.

Sky News, citing investigative sources, reports that China is suspected to be behind the cyberattack. The targeted system, separate from the MoD's main computer network, has been shut down for investigation and review.

The MoD has yet to confirm the source of the attack or the extent of the breach. However, this incident raises serious concerns about the security of personnel data and the potential consequences for those affected.

The Chinese state is to be accused of two or three attempts at hacking MoD employees, including personnel. The cyberattack was on a payroll system with current service personnel and some veterans. It is largely names and bank details that have been exposed. All salaries will be paid this month.

Tobias Ellwood, a Conservative MP and former soldier, told Sky News that China "was probably looking at the financially vulnerable with a view that they may be coerced in exchange for cash."

According to the BBC, Defence Secretary Grant Shapps is due to update MPs about the hack in the Commons on Tuesday. He is expected to set out a "multi-point plan" in response, which will include action to protect affected servicemen and women.

The government's recent defence strategy update warned of a significant increase in cyberattacks by both state and non-state actors, including the use of spyware, ransomware, and offensive hacking tools.

China in Crosshairs Again: Just a few months ago, in March 2024, the UK government publicly accused China of a cyberattack in August 2021 that compromised voter data held by the Electoral Commission.

White House Slams Trump Veep Contender's Call For Biden's Dog To Be Shot

WASHINGTON: The White House bared its teeth Monday at a "disturbing" political opponent who called for President Joe Biden's dog to be put down, days after she revealed she had shot her own family's pet.

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, a potential Donald Trump 2024 running-mate, said Biden's dog Commander should meet a similar fate as her own pup for biting several Secret Service agents.

Biden's Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said it was Noem, 52, a darling of the Republican right, who should be in the dog house.

"We find her comments from yesterday disturbing, we find them absurd," Jean-Pierre told a briefing. "This is a country that loves dogs and you have a leader talking about putting dogs down."

Noem "should probably stop digging herself in a hole," added Jean-Pierre.

Noem shocked Americans by saying in a forthcoming memoir that, after a hunting excursion gone awry, she shot and killed her own "untrainable" 14-month-old dog Cricket. She added that if she got to the White House alongside Trump in November's election she would make "Commander say hello to Cricket." "Joe Biden's dog has attacked 24 Secret Service people. So how many people are enough people to be attacked and dangerously hurt before you make a decision on a dog?" Noem told CBS's Face the Nation program on Sunday.

Putin To Be Sworn In As Russian President For Record 5th Term



MOSCOW, RUSSIA: Russian President Vladimir Putin will be sworn into office at a lavish ceremony in the Kremlin on Tuesday, embarking on a record-breaking fifth term with more power than ever before.

The 71-year-old Kremlin chief has ruled Russia since the turn of the century, securing a fresh six-year mandate in March after winning presidential elections devoid of all opposition.

The inauguration will be broadcast live on most major Russian television channels from around midday (0900 GMT) when a luxury motorcade will drive Putin to Moscow's Grand Kremlin Palace. After arriving, he will walk through the palace corridors to the ornate Saint Andrew Hall, where he will take the presidential oath and make a brief address to Russians.

Government officials and foreign diplomats in Moscow have been invited

to the ceremony, including French Ambassador Pierre Levy, who is expected to attend.

Other European countries including Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic have signalled that they will not send representatives amid soured tensions over the conflict in Ukraine.

Putin's 87 percent landslide victory in the presidential election was criticized by most international observers and dismissed as rigged by opposition and rights groups.

The inauguration comes two days before Russia marks Victory Day on May 9, an event that has taken on renewed symbolism as Putin compares his offensive in Ukraine to Russia's fight against Nazi Germany in World War II.

Authorities have erected barriers throughout Moscow's city centre ahead of both events.

Shake-up
Putin kicks off his six-year term emboldened by

advances on the battlefield in Ukraine and sustained economic growth, despite a barrage of Western sanctions.

On the domestic front, he saw off a rebellion last June from paramilitary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin -- who later died in a plane crash -- and in February his main political rival Alexei Navalny died in prison.

His victory in March means that he is likely to become the longest-serving ruler of Russia in a century, beating out Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

Russia's army held off a much-hyped Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, and it has since made gains on the front lines as Kyiv struggles with ammunition and manpower shortages.

But as the conflict stretches into a third year without an obvious resolution and the economy teeters towards overheating, Putin faces significant challenges in his fifth term.

Inflation -- a historic source of angst amongst the Russian population -- remains persistent as Moscow adopts what analysts have called a "military Keynesianism", pouring billions of resources into the war effort.

The Kremlin has also failed to quell fears it will announce a new round of unpopular mobilisation in Putin's new term, and discontent among the wives of men who have been drafted continues to simmer.

US Soldier Arrested In Russia On Theft Charges: Report

A US soldier who was detained in Russia on charges of criminal misconduct was arrested by a Vladivostok court on theft charges, Russia's RIA state news agency reported on Tuesday.

Citing the court's press office, RIA said that the soldier, whom the court identified as Gordon Black, is to be detained until July 2.

The Pervomaisky District Court in Vladivostok arrested the American soldier Gordon Black...under the 'Theft' article (of Russia's criminal code)," RIA cited the court's spokeswoman as saying.

The US Army, which said on Monday it had been informed about the detention, has not officially named the soldier.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the soldier had been based in South Korea. Another US official said the soldier was accused of stealing from a woman. The Russian daily Izvestia, quoting an unnamed source, said the South Korea-based Army sergeant met a woman from Russia's far eastern port of Vladivostok on the Internet.

Izvestia said the couple lived together for a time and that he stole 200,000 roubles (\$2,196) from her.

Reuters could not independently verify the Izvestia report.

Biden Again Warns Netanyahu As Israel Starts Gaza's Rafah Operation

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden, seeking to push a Gaza ceasefire, on Monday warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against invading Rafah as Israel defiantly issued evacuation orders and carried out intense air strikes on the crowded Gaza city.

The United States said it was reviewing a response from Hamas, which said it has accepted a deal to halt seven months of war and free hostages, with CIA Director Bill Burns in the region to negotiate through Arab allies.

Biden told Netanyahu in April that invading Rafah would be a "mistake," and Secretary of State Antony Blinken told him last week in Jerusalem that there should be no offensive due to the safety of more than one million civilians sheltering there.

"The president reiterated his clear position on Rafah," the White House said in a brief readout of the call.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said afterward that the United States has not yet "seen a humanitarian plan that is credible and that is implementable."

"We believe a military operation in Rafah right now would dramatically increase the suffering of the Palestinian people (and) would lead to an increase in loss of civilian life," Miller told reporters.

But hours after the call between Biden and Netanyahu, Israel issued its second warning in a day for



Palestinians to evacuate Rafah and said it was preparing for a ground invasion.

Israel carried out intense air strikes on Rafah late Monday which were virtually continuous for 30 minutes, an AFP correspondent said.

Israel has vowed to eliminate Hamas following its October 7 attack, the deadliest ever experienced by Israel. Military spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a broadcast address that Israeli aircraft hit "more than 50 terror targets" around Rafah on Monday. In one area of progress, the United States said Netanyahu agreed to keep aid flowing through Kerem Shalom, the key crossing between Gaza and Israel.

Four Israeli soldiers were killed in an attack at the crossing on Sunday claimed by the armed wing of Hamas. The Biden administration said that Burns was discussing the Hamas response in the region and did not immediately characterize it, but voiced hope for an agreement. "We continue to believe that a hostage deal is in the best interests of the Israeli people; it's in the best inter-

ests of the Palestinian people" Miller said.

Biden is under growing domestic pressure about the war in Gaza in an election year, with pro-Palestinian protests roiling US university campuses.

New York's prestigious Columbia University, which has been at the heart of the protests, said Monday it had canceled its main graduation ceremony next week.

- Jordan king sounds warning -
Biden also discussed developments at a closed-door lunch with King Abdullah II of Jordan, which has relations with Israel but also a large Palestinian community and is especially sensitive to turbulence to its west. The king asked Biden to intervene with Israel, saying that an Israeli attack on Rafah "threatens to lead to a new massacre," according to a Jordanian statement.

Egypt, which borders Rafah and has a peace treaty with Israel, and Qatar, a US ally that is also home to Hamas leaders, have taken the lead in the ceasefire negotiations.

Israel Bombards Gaza's Rafah Ahead Of Talks To Seal Peace Deal

Rafah, Palestinian Territories: Israel carried out strikes on the Gaza city of Rafah overnight as it sought to put "pressure" on Hamas ahead of talks in Egypt on Tuesday aimed at sealing a truce proposal endorsed by the Palestinian group.

After having vowed for weeks to push into the southern border town, Israel called on Monday for Palestinians in eastern Rafah to leave for an "expanded humanitarian area" ahead of a ground incursion.

An AFP correspondent in the city reported heavy bombardment throughout the night, while the Kuwaiti hospital there said Tuesday in an updated toll that 11 people had been killed and dozens of others injured in Israeli strikes.

After talks earlier in the day failed to produce an agreement, Hamas said Monday evening that it had informed mediators Egypt and Qatar of its "approval of their proposal regarding a ceasefire" in the seven-month-old war, prompting cheering crowds to take to the streets of Rafah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the proposal "is far from Israel's essential demands", but the government would send negotiators for talks "to



exhaust the potential for arriving at an agreement."

In the meantime, it added, "Israel is continuing the operation in Rafah to exert military pressure on Hamas in order to advance the release of our hostages and the other objectives of the war."

Close Israeli ally the United States said it was "reviewing" the Hamas response.

Hamas member Khalil al-Hayya told the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news channel that the proposal agreed to by Hamas involved a three-phase truce.

He said it includes a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the return of Palestinians displaced by the war, and a hostage-prisoner exchange, with the goal of a "permanent ceasefire."

Qatar said that it was sending a delegation to Cairo on

Tuesday morning to resume negotiations in the "hope that the talks will culminate in reaching an agreement for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza strip".

A senior Hamas official, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said Israel must now decide whether it accepts or "obstructs" a truce.

"Intolerable" invasion
Renewing the call for people to leave Rafah late Monday, Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said "aircraft targeted more than 50 terror targets in the Rafah area" throughout the day.

Hamas ally Islamic Jihad said Monday night that it had fired rockets from Gaza towards southern Israel in response.

International alarm has been steadily building about the con-

sequences of an Israeli ground invasion of Rafah, situated on the border with Egypt.

Egypt, the main conduit for aid trucks into Gaza, has been a key mediator in truce efforts and has resolutely opposed any mass displacement of refugees from the strip into its territory.

An Israeli incursion into the city would be "intolerable", UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Monday, calling on Israel and Hamas "to go an extra mile" to reach a ceasefire deal.

"This is an opportunity that cannot be missed, and a ground invasion in Rafah would be intolerable because of its devastating humanitarian consequences, and because of its destabilising impact in the region," Guterres said.

Egypt's foreign ministry warned of "grave humanitarian risks" for the more than one million Gazans sheltering there and urged Israel to "exercise the utmost restraint".

Jordanian King Abdullah II asked US President Joe Biden in talks Monday to intervene to stop a "new massacre" in Rafah.

In a conversation with Netanyahu on Monday, Biden restated "his clear position" opposing an invasion of the city, the White House said.

"Will Wait To...": US On India's Probe Into Khalistani Terrorist's Murder Plot

WASHINGTON: The United States is waiting to see the results of the Indian investigations on allegations related to a plot to assassinate Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in the US, a State Department official has said.

"They (Indian government) opened a committee of inquiry to look into the matter, and that work is ongoing; we'll wait to see the results. But we made it very clear that it's something that we are taking seriously and we think they, too, should take this seriously," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news conference.

Miller was responding to a question on the allegations that Indian government officials were involved in a plot to assassinate Pannun, a US citizen and a separatist Sikh leader.

"I would refer you to the Canadian authorities to speak to the details of the investigation there. With respect to the indictment that was returned in the United States, I will let the Department of Justice speak on behalf of that in detail," he told reporters.

"And then the only thing further I would say: when it comes to the State



Department, we had made it clear right when these allegations were first made public that it's something we think India should take very seriously and investigate," Miller added.

The Washington Post, citing unnamed sources, recently named a Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) officer in connection with the alleged plot to kill Pannun on American soil last year.

Slamming the report by the US daily, India has strongly rejected the claims, saying that the report made "unwar-

ranted and unsubstantiated" imputations on a serious matter and that an investigation into the case was underway.

"The report in question makes unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations on a serious matter," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in New Delhi last Tuesday.

Mr Jaiswal said a high-level inquiry committee set up by New Delhi to look into inputs provided by the US on the alleged plot was still probing the case.

The New York Times, Reuters Win Pulitzer Prizes For Coverage Of Gaza War

NEW YORK: The war in Gaza featured prominently in Monday's Pulitzer Prizes, which included a special citation for journalists covering the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The New York Times won a Pulitzer in international reporting for its "wide-ranging and revelatory coverage of Hamas's lethal attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7," as well as reporting on "the Israeli military's sweeping, deadly response."

Reuters meanwhile won the award for breaking news photography for its "raw and urgent" coverage of the October 7 attack and Israeli response, while a special citation recognized "journalists and media workers covering the war in Gaza."

"This war has also claimed the lives of poets and writers," the committee said. "As the Pulitzer Prizes honor categories of journalism, arts and letters, we mark the loss of invaluable records of the human experience." The awards, given out at Columbia University, come as the New York college has faced backlash after it called in police to clear out pro-Palestinian protesters. The police largely

blocked media from the scene and threatened student journalists covering the events with arrest.

Two of Columbia's student newspaper editors outlined in an article over the weekend the university's "suppression" of its reporting, including arrest threats from police and demands from the university to hand over videos and photos.

Other awards honored US journalists' reporting on migrant child labor, racial disparities in the legal system and gun violence.

Author Jayne Anne Phillips won the fiction prize for her novel "Night Watch," about a mother and daughter during and after the US Civil War, while the nonfiction prize went to Nathan Thrall's "A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: Anatomy of a Jerusalem Tragedy."

The committee praised the "finely reported and intimate account of life under Israeli occupation of the West bank, told through the portrait of a Palestinian father whose five-year-old son dies in a fiery school bus crash when Israeli and Palestinian rescue teams are delayed by security regulations."

Boeing Probed In US Over Possible Falsified Records On 787



NEW YORK, UNITED STATES: US air safety authorities are investigating whether embattled aviation giant Boeing completed required inspections on its 787 aircraft and whether employees falsified records, officials said Monday.

The issue centers on whether Boeing undertook required inspections to "confirm adequate bonding and grounding where the wings join the fuselage on certain 787 Dreamliner airplanes," the Federal Aviation Administration said in an email. The FAA said it opened the investigation after Boeing notified it that the company may not have completed required inspections, which are needed to ensure a safe and functional electrical flow between aircraft components.

"The FAA is investigating whether Boeing completed the inspections and whether company employees may have falsified aircraft records," the

agency said. "At the same time, Boeing is re-inspecting all 787 airplanes still within the production system and must also create a plan to address the in-service fleet."

The issue surfaced after a Boeing employee observed an "irregularity" and raised the issue with a supervisor who elevated it further.

"We quickly reviewed the matter and learned that several people had been violating company policies by not performing a required test, but recording the work as having been completed," Scott Stocker, head of the Boeing 787 program, said in an email to staff.

"We promptly informed our regulator about what we learned and are taking swift and serious corrective action with multiple teammates," said Stocker, adding that engineering staff determined that the issues does not pose an immediate safety of flight risk.

The probe adds to the litany

of issues facing Boeing in the aftermath of a near-catastrophic Alaska Airlines flight in January in which a panel on the fuselage blew out.

The FAA has given the company three months to present a plan to address "systemic quality-control issues."

Boeing's management of the 787 came under question at an April 17 Senate hearing at which a company whistleblower testified that he was retaliated against after raising questions about manufacturing processes on the 787 that he believed threaten aircraft safety.

An audit by an FAA advisory panel released in February pointed to significant shortcomings in Boeing's safety culture, describing a "disconnect" between senior company management and other Boeing employees and skepticism that safety complaints by workers would not result in retaliation.

In his message to employees, Stocker praised the employee for coming up, saying the company "will use this moment to celebrate him, and to remind us all about the kind of behavior we will and will not accept as a team."

Board under scrutiny
Safety experts have said the problems at Boeing suggest significant safety culture defects that will not be turned around quickly.

Sunita Williams Was Strapped In Seat When Space Mission Was Aborted

CAPE CANAVERAL: The first crewed flight of Boeing's Starliner spaceship was dramatically called off around two hours before launch after a new safety issue was identified, officials said Monday, pushing back a high-stakes test mission to the International Space Station.

Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams were strapped in their seats preparing for liftoff when the call for a "scrub" came, in order to give engineers time to investigate unusual readings from an oxygen relief valve on the second stage of the rocket. "Standing down on tonight's attempt to launch," tweeted NASA chief Bill Nelson. "As I've said before, @NASA's first priority is safety. We go when we're ready." The next possible launch date comes on Tuesday night, but it wasn't immediately clear how big the problem was and if it could be resolved with the rocket still on the launchpad.

NASA said it would hold a late night press briefing to provide updates. The mission has already faced years of delays and comes at a challenging time for Boeing, as a safety crisis engulfs the century-old manufacturer's commercial aviation division.

NASA is banking on a successful test for Starliner so it can certify a second commercial vehicle to carry crews to the ISS.

Elon Musk's SpaceX achieved the feat with its Dragon capsule in 2020, ending a nearly decade-long dependence on Russian rockets following the end of the Space Shuttle program.

Clad in Boeing's bright blue spacesuits, the astronauts were helped out of the spaceship then boarded a van to leave the launch tower at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, returning to their quarters. Wilmore and Williams, both Navy-trained pilots and space program veterans, have each been to the ISS twice, travelling once on a shuttle and then aboard a Russian Soyuz vessel.

Hiccups expected
When it launches, Starliner will be propelled into orbit by an Atlas V rocket made by United Launch Alliance, a Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture. The crew will then take the helm, piloting the craft manually to test its capabilities.

The gumdrop-shaped capsule with a cabin about as roomy as an SUV is then set to rendezvous with the ISS for a weeklong stay.

Williams and Wilmore will conduct a series of tests to verify Starliner's functionality before returning to Earth for a parachute-assisted landing in the western United States.