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PROTECTING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SECRETS

National Counterintelligence and Security Center | March 4, 2021

The threat to unclassified information .... Proprietary data, emerging technologies, R&D, personal information and other data are all key targets of foreign intelligence entities today. Protecting the sensitive and proprietary information of your business, academic institution, research organization or other entity has never been more important. Your organization may be a target. And in this fight you matter. You have access to facilities and computer networks, as well as sensitive information, resources, technologies, research and other data that our foreign adversaries and competitors desperately want. Our adversaries and competitors are interested in you because you have connections and access. You also have social media accounts. A work and/or personal smartphone. Social and professional networks include others in sensitive positions. You may travel, both domestically and abroad. These are all potential vulnerabilities.

Read the full publication here.

AMERICANS ARE AT RISK OF BEING DRAGGED INTO GLOBAL CYBER WARFARE, FIREEYE'S CEO WARNS: 'IT'S AS SIMPLE AS IF YOU CAN BE HACKED, YOU ARE HACKED'

Avery Hartmans | Business Insider | March 1, 2021

Americans are at risk of being dragged into cyber attacks that would put their connected devices at risk, according to the cybersecurity executive whose company discovered the SolarWinds hack. Kevin Mandia, the CEO of cybersecurity company FireEye, told "Axios on HBO" on Sunday that future cyber warfare between the US and China or Russia could impact regular citizens, leading to widespread disruptions to daily life. "Apps won't work. Appliances may not work. People don't even know all the things they depend on," Mandia said. "All of a sudden, the supply chain starts getting disrupted because computers don't work." Mandia warned that the rules of engagement around cyberattacks are unclear, meaning that there may be nothing that's off-limits. In a world where more devices are connected to the internet than every before, consumers could opened up to massive risk. "It's as simple as if you can be hacked, you are hacked," he said. Mandia's company, FireEye, was the first to notice the massive SolarWinds security breach last year, which FireEye discovered when its own systems were hacked.

Read the full article here.

EXPERTS: CMMC PRINCIPLES BUY DOWN SUPPLY CHAIN RISK, BUT NO GUARANTEE AGAINST SOPHISTICATED SOLARWINDS-LIKE ATTACKS

Sara Friedman | Inside Defense | March 8, 2021

Meeting the standards laid out in the Pentagon's Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification program is a necessary start to buying down supply chain risk through establishing good cyber hygiene, but cyber experts say CMMC would not necessarily have helped contractors detect or prevent exposure to the SolarWinds attack. The CMMC program's current focus is on level three, which establishes a cyber regime around controlled unclassified information. Inside Cybersecurity spoke with attorneys about the benefits of CMMC for the defense industrial base and how it could be improved to address supply chain attacks. "The point of CMMC is not to protect against nation-state advanced persistent threat actors," attorney Robert Metzger said. "There are ways in which CMMC as it evolves can assist companies to reduce their vulnerability to such attacks and CMMC could promote the protection of information through the use of encryption so the damage from such an attack is reduced."

Read the full article here.

NSA AND CISA RELEASE CYBERSECURITY INFORMATION ON PROTECTIVE DNS

National Security Agency Central Security Service | March 4, 2021

The National Security Agency and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released a cybersecurity information sheet, "Selecting a Protective DNS Service" on Thursday. This publication details the benefits of using a Protective Domain Name System (PDNS), which criteria to consider when selecting a PDNS provider, and how to effectively implement PDNS. The Domain Name System (DNS) is a key component of the internet's resilience. It makes navigating a website, sending an email, or making a secure shell connection easier by translating domain names into Internet Protocol addresses. PDNS is a security service that uses existing DNS protocols and architecture to analyze DNS queries and mitigate threats. Its core capability is leveraging various open source, commercial, and governmental threat feeds to categorize domain information and block queries to identified malicious domains.

Read the full article here.

RUSSIA AND CHINA RISING IN UNIVERSITY RANKING BY SUBJECT

Brendan O'Malley | University World News | March 6, 2021

Chinese higher education continues to show improvements in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject, with a record number of programmes now achieving a top-50 rank. Russian higher education continues to strengthen, with a record number of departments achieving top-20 places. But it has been a disappointing performance for Australia, with its lowest number of programmes ranking among the top 10 in the world in the past three years. Its total of 13 top-10 departments is fewer than in 2020 (17) and 2019 (18), and two-thirds of Australian National University's programmes have fallen year-on-year. Some 126 Chinese programmes are ranked among the world's top 50 in their subject, a record high, up from 100 in 2020, and 97 in 2019. There are now 47 Russian university departments ranked among the global top 100 compared to 22 in 2018, and 14 in the top 50 compared to eight in 2018, and Project 5-100 universities are continuing to make good progress with 124 programmes ranked.

Read the full article here.

UNIVERSITIES BRACE FOR CHINESE STUDENT HIT AFTER COVID

The Sydney Morning Herald | University World News | March 6, 2021

Australia's universities face the prospect of a prolonged Chinese student drought as reports sweep through the multi-billion-dollar industry that Chinese agencies are being encouraged by local authorities not to send students to Australia, write Lisa Visentin and Eryk Bagshaw for The Sydney Morning Herald. The universities first began receiving these reports towards the end of February, at which point the advice not to recommend or advertise Australian universities appeared to be circulating only to agents in smaller regional cities. By 25 February, university sources confirmed some reports had expanded to include Beijing and Shanghai, China's two largest cities. Group of Eight Chief Executive Vicki Thomson said her member universities – which include the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne – had heard the reports but their veracity remained unclear as there had been no official notification from Chinese authorities. "There is definitely something afoot. Either agents are being told not to direct students here or they are being told not to mention Australia as an option for study. But we've had no official notification from anybody," Thomson said.

Read the full article here.

DOZENS OF LEADING SCIENTISTS SPEAK UP FOR HARVARD CHEMIST CHARLES LIEBER

Rebecca Trager | Chemistry World | March 5, 2021

More than a year after the chair of Harvard University's chemistry department was arrested for allegedly hiding his receipt of millions of dollars in research funding from China from his university and the US government, dozens of prominent researchers – including many Nobel Prize winners – are coming to Charles Lieber's defence. They are calling the US Department of Justice (DOJ) case against him 'unjust' and urging the agency to drop it. Following his January 2020 arrest, Lieber was placed on 'indefinite' paid administrative leave. The nanoscience pioneer was indicted in June on charges of making false statements to federal authorities regarding his participation in China's Thousand Talents plan – the country's programme to attract, recruit and cultivate high-level scientific talent from abroad. Lieber faces up to five years in prison and a fine of $250,000 (£179,000) if convicted. A 1 March open letter, drafted and coordinated by Harvard chemist Stuart Schreiber, co-founder of the Broad Institute, and professor emeritus Elias Corey, winner of the 1990 chemistry Nobel prize, says Lieber became the target of a 'tragically misguided government campaign'.

Read the full article here.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WARMING TO US AFTER BIDEN VICTORY

Brendan O'Malley | University World News | March 3, 2021

International students' perceptions of the United States as a study destination have significantly improved following the presidential election win by Joe Biden, according to new research by IDP Connect. The improved perceptions of the US among students surveyed in early 2021 could impact on the pulling power of rival destination countries Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, the research suggests. A survey of more than 800 prospective international students in more than 40 countries who are interested in studying in the US – albeit with more than half of respondents based in India – has found that more than three quarters (76%) have improved perceptions of the US since the 2020 presidential election, with 67% stating they are now more likely to study there. "I really hope that the result of the election helps students like me to move to America and pursue our dreams," said one respondent.

Read the full article here.

UNIVERSITIES URGED TO PROTECT TECHNOLOGY FROM CHINESE THEFT

Reuters | University World News | March 6, 2021

A United States national security commission is recommending that American universities take steps to prevent sensitive technology from being stolen by the Chinese military, a sign of growing concerns over the security of academic research, write Jane Lanhee Lee and Daphne Psaledakis for Reuters. The National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, led by former Google chairman Eric Schmidt, voted unanimously to approve its final report to Congress. A new section on university research was added to the final report, which also features numerous recommendations in areas including competition in artificial intelligence and the semiconductor supply chain. "We did a great deal of research in looking at where China was, and they have a massive investment in this area with many, many, many smart people working on it," said Schmidt. "The activities that we describe in the report are necessary to stay ahead."

Read the full article here.

SENATE APPROVES BILL TO TIGHTEN CONTROLS ON CHINA-FUNDED CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES ON U.S. UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Christian Nunley | CNBC | March 5, 2021

The Senate on Thursday approved by unanimous consent — without a roll-call vote — a bill that would increase oversight on Confucius Institutes, China-funded cultural centers that operate on university campuses. According to Human Rights Watch, Confucius Institutes "are Chinese government-funded outposts that offer Chinese language and culture classes." However, some politicians, particularly Republicans, have accused them of spreading propaganda. "Confucius Institutes are under the control of the Chinese Communist Party in all but name," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., who introduced the bill. "This bill would give colleges and universities full control over their resident Confucius Institutes and restore freedom of thought on their campuses." In 2020, Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., introduced a similar bill. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., one of that bill's co-sponsors, said, "For far too long, the Communist Chinese government has attempted to infiltrate American universities through the disguise of the government-run Confucius Institute."

Read the full article here.

UNIVERSITIES WORRIED ABOUT FALL IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Michael Gardner | University World News | March 3, 2021

German universities have voiced concern about their international students, both in terms of the financial and psychological problems they are facing during the COVID-19 crisis and declining first-year student numbers. Around 100 universities spoke out on concerns and challenges regarding internationalisation and the COVID-19 crisis at a recent virtual meeting organised by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). "Several of our member universities are worried about recruiting and retaining international students," said DAAD President Joybrato Mukherjee. "The declining numbers of first-year students are just as worrying for university managements as the frequently poor psychological and financial situation of young people who have already been studying in our country for some time," Mukherjee stated. "They refer to students suffering from the absence of social contact, increasing numbers of students consulting university counselling services and many seeing little light at the end of the tunnel, given what will probably be a digital summer semester."

Read the full article here.

WHY SUPPLY CHAINS ARE TODAY'S FASTEST GROWING CYBERSECURITY THREAT

Steph Charbonneau | Beta News | March 2, 2021

Business ecosystems have expanded over the years owing to the many benefits of diverse, interconnected supply chains, prompting organizations to pursue close, collaborative relationships with their suppliers. However, this has led to increased cyber threats when organizations expose their networks to their supply chain and it only takes one supplier to have cybersecurity vulnerabilities to bring a business to its knees. To this point governments around the world have highlighted supply chains as an area for urgent attention in tackling cyber risk in the coming years. Over the last few years, many organizations have worked hard to improve their cyber defenses and are increasingly "harder targets". However, for these well-defended organizations, now the greatest weaknesses in their defenses are their suppliers, who are typically less well defended but with whom they are highly interconnected.

Read the full article here.

SEMICONDUCTORS AND THE U.S.-CHINA INNOVATION RACE

Foreign Policy Insider | February 16, 2021

Semiconductors, otherwise known as "chips," are an --essential component at the heart of economic growth, security, and technological innovation. Smaller than the size of a postage stamp, thinner than a human hair, and made of nearly 40 billion components, the impact that semiconductors are having on world development exceeds that of the Industrial Revolution. From smartphones, PCs, pacemakers to the internet, electronic vehicles, aircrafts, and hypersonic weaponry, semiconductors are ubiquitous in electrical devices and the digitization of goods and services such as global e-commerce. And demand is skyrocketing, with the industry facing numerous challenges and opportunities as emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced wireless communications, notably 5G, all requiring cutting-edge semiconductor-enabled devices.

Read the full article here.

HOW CHINA'S DIGITAL SILK ROAD IS LEADING COUNTRIES AWAY FROM THE UNITED STATES

Patrick Tucker | Nextgov | February 24, 2021

Even if Washington succeeds in keeping allies and partners from importing Huawei telecom gear, that's just one of the many ways China is working to burrow into these countries' economies and infrastructure, creating dependencies that may ultimately weaken these partners' U.S. ties, a new report finds. And many of these countries may not even know all of the different ways Beijing is building influence, much less have a plan to confront it. The February report from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, or IISS, looked at China's "Digital Silk Road" strategy, which includes technology investments, bilateral agreements to conduct research together, funding for students to learn about Chinese tech, the provision of security tech to autocratic regimes, and more. They looked specifically at Indonesia, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Poland but the issue touches nearly every country. They found that at least 16 countries had signed memorandums of understanding with China on projects related to the Digital Silk Road, meaning that that the two countries had reached some sort of formal understanding about, say, allowing Chinese tech in the marketplace, China hosting an education program, or launching a research program together.

Read the full article here.

TECH EXEC TO CONGRESS: SUPPLY CHAIN HACK TOOK 1,000 ENGINEERS

Justin Katz | Defense Systems | February 24, 2021

Brad Smith, president of Microsoft, told a panel of senators on Tuesday that his company estimates the cybersecurity breach of nine federal agencies and 100 private companies likely took "at least a thousand" skilled and capable people to pull off. "At Microsoft as we worked with customers that had been impacted by this, we stepped back and just analyzed all of the engineering steps that we had seen and we asked ourselves how many engineers do we believed had worked on this collective effort and the answer we came to was at least a thousand," Smith told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. "I should say at least a thousand very skilled, capable engineers. So we haven't seen this kind of sophistication matched with this kind of scale," he added.

Read the full article here.

UNIVERSITIES FACE DOUBLE THREAT OF RANSOMWARE, DATA BREACHES

Robert Lemos | Dark Reading | February 24, 2021

Institutions of higher education continue to have problematic password policies, lack multifactor authentication (MFA), and have a plethora of open ports — despite suffering dozens of ransomware attacks and targeting by attackers focused on stealing student information and university research, according to a new study published Tuesday. An analysis by cybersecurity services firm BlueVoyant of publicly reported cybersecurity incidents involving higher education found that over the past two years, about 9% of the passwords on a common list used by attackers matched those used in combination with a university-assigned e-mail address. Meanwhile, about two-thirds of universities had no DNS-based e-mail security protocols in place, and 38% of all universities had at least one open database port.

Read the full article here.

THERE ARE SPYING EYES EVERYWHERE—AND NOW THEY SHARE A BRAIN

Arthur Holland Michel | Wired | February 4, 2021

One afternoon in the fall of 2019, in a grand old office building near the Arc de Triomphe, I was buzzed through an unmarked door into a showroom for the future of surveillance. The space on the other side was dark and sleek, with a look somewhere between an Apple Store and a doomsday bunker. Along one wall, a grid of electronic devices glinted in the moody downlighting—automated license plate readers, Wi-Fi-enabled locks, boxy data processing units. I was here to meet Giovanni Gaccione, who runs the public safety division of a security technology company called Genetec. Headquartered in Montreal, the firm operates four of these "Experience Centers" around the world, where it peddles intelligence products to government officials. Genetec's main sell here was software, and Gaccione had agreed to show me how it worked.

Read the full article here.