



Kim Jong-un's hackers targeted the team behind Poldark because it planned a drama series about North Korea



MIKE HOGAN

Kim's hackers hit Poldark firm

North Korea used bogus LinkedIn invitations and hijacked UK computers to launch a global campaign of cyber-warfare

Dipesh Gadher

The invitation from Henny Watson to connect on LinkedIn seemed innocuous enough at the time. Staff at Mammoth Screen, the television production company best known for Poldark, receiving the request through the professional networking site were not to know the sender might have an ulterior motive.

Now it can be revealed that "Watson" was one of many online aliases allegedly used by an elite unit of North Korean hackers wreaking havoc across the world on behalf of their leader, Kim Jong-un.

The team, led by Park Jin-hyok, a games developer and fluent English-speaker, is accused of hijacking computers in the UK to mask its tracks as it launched crippling attacks on the NHS, Sony Pictures and international banks.

Activities originating in North Korea were routed through IT networks in

Britain and other western countries to "conceal [the hackers'] true location".

Mammoth was targeted because it was planning to make a drama for Channel 4 that threatened to "blow the lid off" North Korea's secretive regime.

Details of the sophisticated operation have emerged in a 179-page criminal complaint filed by the FBI in US courts against Park in his absence. The FBI believes he is in hiding in Pyongyang.

Yesterday, however, Kim's regime claimed Park was a "non-existent entity".

The indictment suggests that Park, 34, and his team first came under suspicion following a hack in 2014 on Sony Pictures, which suffered a leak of embarrassing internal emails about Hollywood stars.

The IT systems breach was seen as direct retaliation for The Interview, a Sony-backed comedy about a plot to assassinate the North Korean leader.

On August 21 that year, Channel 4 announced it was commissioning a new 10-part drama from Mammoth called Opposite Number. Its plot involved a British nuclear scientist being captured on a covert mission to North Korea. According to the FBI indictment, Kim was not amused and an official in Pyongyang ominously warned the project would "only bring disgrace and self-destruction".



Park: fluent English-speaker accused of hijacking computers

Four days later, Park and his hackers allegedly went to work. Using fake profiles on Facebook under the names "Andoson David" and "John Mogabe", they "conducted online reconnaissance about Opposite Number, including about the producers and other personnel listed on Mammoth Screen's website".

In January 2015, a Gmail account linked to Park's team was discovered with the email addresses of 17 Mammoth staff stored in its contacts list. The US court papers disclose that a LinkedIn profile was created for the alias "Henny Watson". It was used to send "multiple invitations" to Mammoth personnel.

It is unclear how many people accepted the request, but the approach could explain how the production company's computers were breached.

"Although evidence collected shows that an intrusion occurred, it was detected and subsequently remediated," the court documents state. But they add that suspicious online activity continued until at least March 2016.

Mammoth declined to comment this weekend. ITV Studios, which owns the company, said Opposite Number was not subsequently made, simply because it failed to secure "third-party funding". The four-year investigation into Park has

been led by the FBI with the help of Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA). It follows last year's global WannaCry ransomware attack, which affected over a third of NHS trusts and led to the cancellation of almost 7,000 appointments.

The US indictment states that Park, a married university graduate, was employed by an IT firm called Chosun Expo. It is described as a front company for Lab 110, Kim's cyber-warfare unit.

As well as providing cover for North Korean agents, Chosun Expo – which has offices in China – carried out legitimate work for western clients. This raised income for Kim's cyber-attacks while also giving access to its clients' computer networks abroad. The US court papers show that email accounts and profiles linked to Park, Chosun and his unnamed co-conspirators were repeatedly accessed via computers in Britain from 2013 to 2016.

The strategy was intended to make actions carried out in North Korea appear as if they were emanating from overseas in an attempt to shake off investigators.

The NCA said: "Our investigation into the WannaCry attack on the UK is ongoing and it would not be appropriate to comment further on matters relating to judicial proceedings abroad." @dipeshgadher

Mother of modern medicine is key to patients' health

Julia Horton

Her cells have been used to develop countless medical advances, revolutionising treatment for patients around the world, after they were taken by doctors without her family's knowledge more than half a century ago.

Now the microscopic remains of Henrietta Lacks, a black American woman who died of cervical cancer in 1951, have inspired an unusual musical intervention for Scottish hospital patients aimed at boosting their wellbeing further.

Two pianos newly installed at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and Glasgow Royal Infirmary (GR) have been decorated with colourful shapes based on microscopic images of Lacks' so-called HeLa cells, which have been the basis of numerous developments to improve treatment for all kinds of diseases.

The artistic versions attempt to depict "molecules of kindness". One piano, in the atrium of the Queen Elizabeth, is named Molly, a play on the word molecule. The other has been named after Mabel Mackinlay, a leading member of the Dorcas society who began offering tea to outpatients in an act of kindness that lives

on today through the charity's Mabel's tearoom.

Both pianos were created by Glasgow Piano City, a social enterprise that decorates donated pianos before locating them in venues ranging from cafes to museums. The aim is to help reduce isolation and improve wellbeing by giving people of any ability a chance to play a piano or listen for free.

Project founder Tom Binns came across Lacks' story by chance while seeking inspiration for a health-related design. "I was struck by the lack of basic respect and kindness in her treatment, and that moment of insight made me wonder what a molecule of kindness might look like," he said.

"My sense was that kindness was distinctly lacking when Henrietta Lacks was being treated for cervical cancer in America and, most likely, in evidence when Mabel Mackinlay was creating a place for outpatients to get a cuppa at the GRI in 1942."

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which contributed £1,000 to fund repairs and decorate the pianos, said the health benefits of music were well-known. John Stuart, acting director for the GRI, said: "It's also a great opportunity to tell both these women's stories."



Hospital staff gather around 'Molly' outside the tearoom

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