UNIT 3 – Cyber Security

Reading 1

Skills:

- Details

- Complete summaries

Getting started: What kind of cybercrimes are you aware of?

MICROSOFT SAYS HACKERS FROM RUSSIA AND NORTH KOREA ATTACKED COVID-19 VACCINE MAKERS

Cyberattacks that originated in North Korea and Russia have been targeting companies conducting research for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, Microsoft said in a new blog post. The company says the attacks were aimed at seven leading pharmaceutical companies and researchers in the US, Canada, France, India, and South Korea.

"Among the targets, the majority are vaccine makers that have COVID-19 vaccines in various stages of clinical trials," according to the blog post by Tom Burt, Microsoft corporate vice president of customer security and trust. Microsoft didn't name the companies or provide details about what information may have been stolen or compromised, but they said it had notified the organizations and offered help where the attacks were successful. According to Microsoft, the majority of the attacks were blocked by its security protections.

The hackers used various methods to carry out the attacks, according to the blog post, including brute force login attempts to steal **login credentials**, as well as **spear-phishing attacks** where the hackers posed as recruiters seeking job candidates, and as representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO).

"It's disturbing that these challenges have now merged as cyberattacks and are being used to disrupt health care organizations fighting the pandemic," Burt wrote. "We think these attacks are immoral and should be condemned by all civilized society."

New coronavirus cases are on the rise across the US and other parts of the world, but there are some promising signs in the development of a vaccine. Pfizer and BioNTech announced their vaccine was 90 percent effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 in clinical trials. That preliminary data hasn't been examined by independent researchers yet, but experts called the news "extremely encouraging." And a vaccine candidate from Moderna, an American biotechnology company based in Massachusetts, is expected to release initial data soon.

**Adapted from https://www.theverge.com/2020/11/14/21565136/microsoft-hackers-russia-north-korea-attacked-covid-19-vaccine-coronavirus*

Glossary:

- **Login credentials**: Login credentials authenticate a user when logging into an online account over the Internet. At the very least, the credentials are username and password; however, a physical or human biometric element may also be required.
- **Spear phishing attacks**: This refers to an email or electronic communications scam targeted towards a specific individual, organization or business. Although often intended to steal data for malicious purposes, cybercriminals may also intend to install malware on a targeted user's computer.

Complete the summary of the text you just read:

_____(1) has reported that North Korean and Russian cyber criminals _____(2) been trying to hack _____(3) companies from different countries in the _____(4). These companies have been _____(5) to find a vaccine or treatments for COVID-19. It is not clear if there's information that has been compromised or _____(6) since most of the attacks were blocked.

The hackers used different strategies. The tried to steal login credentials and also used _____(7) attacks as the hackers pretended to be _____(8) for job positions. They _____(9) pretended to be part of the WHO.

These attacks have taken place just when two _____(10) have announced their vaccine is 90% effective at preventing COVID-19 symptoms.

What do you think?

Do you remember any famous cyberattack in recent years?