Monthly Review

Cybersecurity news from around the world

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NIS2 readiness: ENISA offers practical steps

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Newsletter introduction

As summer comes to a close, the cyber domain remains as dynamic and unpredictable as ever.

This issue examines how professional platforms like LinkedIn are exploited for espionage, how rising geopolitical tensions continue to fuel cyber incidents across Europe, and how a ransomware attack in Sweden disrupted services in more than 200 municipalities. We also explore the potential role of autonomous AI as a future cyber weapon, and review ENISA's latest guidance to help organizations prepare for NIS2.

Our aim is to provide clarity and perspective so you and your organization can stay resilient in an increasingly complex threat landscape.

General cybersecurity news

1 Cyber espionage targets LinkedIn users worldwide

In early August, Australia's intelligence agency ASIO warned that LinkedIn is increasingly exploited as a gateway for foreign espionage. Director-General Mike Burgess said espionage costs the country up to €4.8 billion each year.

Cyberwatch reports that more than 35,000 LinkedIn profiles in Australia list access to sensitive or classified information. Of these, around 7,000 belong to defense-sector employees who openly reference projects, teams, and critical technologies. Foreign actors use this information to map individuals and replicate classified work. In one case, a foreign organization nearly duplicated an Australian defense prototype after employees disclosed their involvement online. The trust inherent in professional networking platforms makes them particularly attractive to spies.

Similar incidents are reported elsewhere. In the UK, a Chinese agent contacted thousands of officials via LinkedIn in attempts to elicit government secrets. In the U.S., a former CIA officer sentenced to 20 years in prison had first been approached on the platform. vvTactics often begin with fake consulting or "side job" offers that seem harmless but gradually escalate to requests for sensitive data. Victims may only realize the risk when confronted with blackmail.

ASIO stresses the need for awareness and training. Employees should avoid posting sensitive work details and report suspicious outreach immediately. For organizations, such vigilance is not optional, it is a frontline defense.

2 Geopolitical tensions fueling cyberattacks in Europe

Geopolitical frictions are increasingly mirrored in cyberspace. In late July, Norwegian authorities reported a controlled dam water release suspected to involve Russian-linked actors.

At the same time, TechRadar reported that the malware campaign “MucorAgent” targeted government and energy networks in Georgia and Moldova, using automated tools to disrupt operations. Meanwhile, Poland faces an average of 300 Russian cyberattacks every day, driving closer cooperation between civil and military cyber defense teams.

These cases highlight a growing reality: state-linked groups are leveraging cyberattacks as instruments of geopolitical pressure. Critical infrastructure, government networks, and essential services across Europe are now caught at the intersection of global conflict and digital risk.

3 Cyberattack disrupts over 200 Swedish municipalities

In late August, a ransomware attack against a major IT systems provider in Sweden disrupted services in more than 200 municipalities. According to SVT, the Swedish public service broadcaster, it is considered one of the most severe cyber incidents in recent years. Authorities fear that sensitive personal data may have been stolen, with attackers demanding a ransom of 1.5 Bitcoins—worth approximately €145,000.

Impacted regions, including Halland and Gotland, warned citizens of potential data exposure, while CERT-SE, Sweden’s national Computer Emergency Response Team, and law enforcement continue investigations.

The incident underscores a critical lesson: when designing and deploying platforms that handle sensitive data, security must be built in from the very beginning. Resilience cannot be retrofitted, it is essential to protect both citizens and critical infrastructure.

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Autonomous threats to critical infrastructure

Autonomous AI-driven cyber systems, sometimes called Machine Autonomous Intrusion Cyber Agents (MAICAs), are emerging as a potential frontier in digital threats. Able to adapt and act without human oversight, they could one day coordinate complex attacks.

Artificial intelligence is changing how experts imagine the future of cyber operations. A concept drawing growing attention is the Machine Autonomous Intrusion Cyber Agent, or MAICA. In theory, such a system could scan networks, identify weaknesses, launch intrusions, and adapt tactics on their own. Unlike current AI-assisted tools, which support human operators, MAICAs would act without direct oversight. No attacks of this kind have been observed, but studies confirm their technical plausibility. For security leaders, the concern is not if such systems could emerge, but how soon.

The disruptive potential lies in scale, speed, and persistence. A human-directed attack may take hours or days to adjust. An autonomous agent could do so instantly, running non-stop and exploiting gaps faster than defenders can respond. MITRE's Secure AI program has simulated how such tools might refine attack strategies, while CISA has warned that AI could one day be used to disrupt essential services like power grids, water systems, or transportation networks. →

In practical terms, this would create a risk category where traditional defenses, designed for slower, human-led campaigns, may not hold.

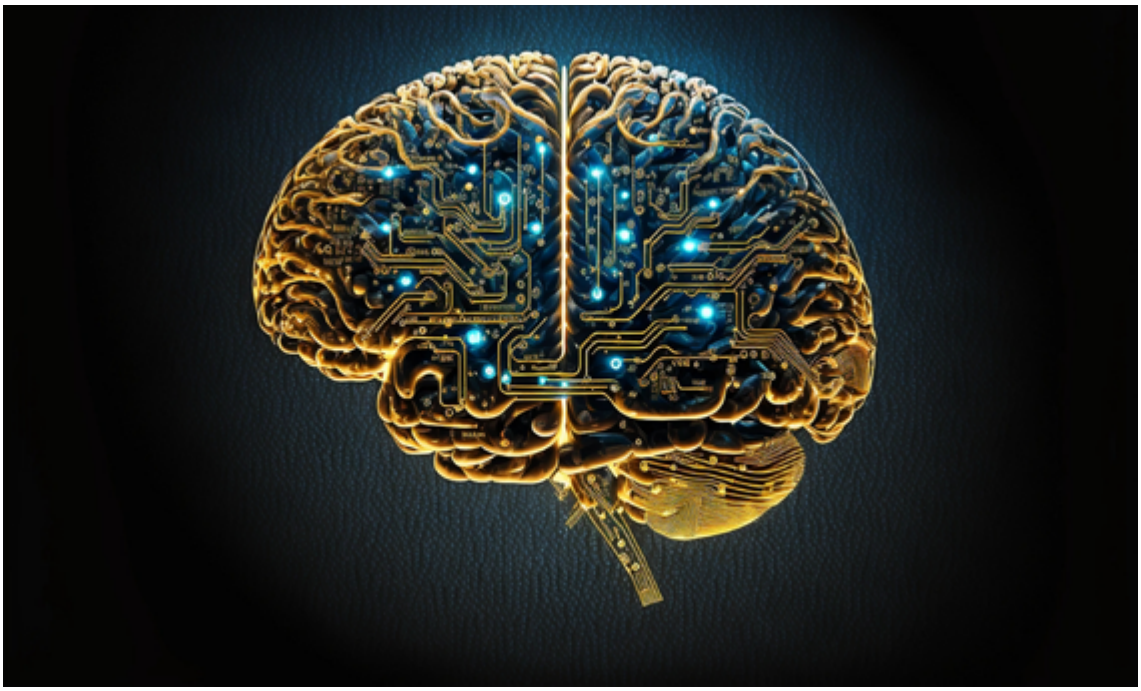
Geopolitics adds another layer of urgency. States could deploy MAICAs for sabotage, espionage, or hybrid warfare, applying pressure on rivals without risking personnel. ENISA has already reported that Europe's digital infrastructure faces increasing strain from sophisticated attacks. If autonomous agents entered the mix, incidents could become faster, larger, and more difficult to attribute.

"AI should not be viewed only as a threat but also as a defensive asset when paired with oversight"

Non-state actors also factor into the picture. With access to advanced AI platforms, criminal groups or small organizations could launch disproportionate disruptions, creating instability in regions less prepared to defend themselves.

Preparing for this future means adapting defenses now. Analysts recommend combining human expertise with AI-enabled tools such as anomaly detection, adaptive firewalls, and automated monitoring. These systems can "learn and adjust," offering more dynamic protection, but still need human judgment to validate results and decide on responses.

MITRE stresses the importance of continuous monitoring, intelligence sharing, and resilience planning, while CISA's AI Roadmap highlights that AI should not be viewed only as a threat but also as a defensive asset when paired with oversight. →



For CISOs, IT leaders, and infrastructure operators, the takeaway is that waiting until autonomous threats appear would be a costly mistake. Even if MAICAs remain hypothetical today, the speed of AI innovation makes preparation essential. Considering autonomous threats is not just academic speculation but a strategic necessity.

The rise of AI in cyber operations signals a possible shift from human-directed campaigns to intelligent, self-learning attacks. Awareness, collaboration, and investment in AI-informed defenses today will ensure strategies remain effective tomorrow.

Preparing now for autonomous agents, however speculative, offers the best chance of maintaining resilience in an era where the line between human and machine-led threats continues to blur. ■

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NIS2 readiness: ENISA offers practical steps

ENISA has released new technical guidance to support the implementation of the NIS2 Directive. The document outlines cybersecurity risk management measures and provides practical steps for organizations in critical sectors to align with European Commission requirements.

The implementation of the NIS2 Directive marks a new phase in Europe's cybersecurity framework. To support this, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) has published detailed guidance explaining how organizations can meet the requirements set out in the European Commission's Implementing Regulation 2024/2690.

The guidance covers 13 core areas of cybersecurity risk management, including network and system security policies, incident handling, business continuity, supply chain security, cryptography, access control, asset management, and physical security.

Its aim is to clarify expectations and provide examples of how entities can demonstrate compliance with NIS2 obligations. →

Targeted organizations include providers of cloud and data center services, online marketplaces, social networking platforms, managed service providers, and trust service providers.

ENISA developed the document in cooperation with the NIS Cooperation Group and the European Commission, incorporating input from both national authorities and private sector stakeholders.

Although the document is not legally binding, it functions as a reference framework. It sets out practical examples, such as using internal policies, system logs, or organizational charts as evidence that required cybersecurity measures are in place. In this way, organizations can compare their current practices against NIS2 standards, identify gaps, and prioritize improvements.

"The guidance seeks to facilitate NIS2 implementation without replacing the authority of national regulators"

The guidance emphasizes flexibility. It is designed to be updated in line with evolving standards and national interpretations of NIS2. Organizations are advised to follow instructions from their national authorities and adopt practices as requirements develop.

By applying the recommendations, entities can improve preparedness for cyber incidents and maintain operational continuity in line with European expectations.

From a regulatory perspective, the guidance supports a consistent approach across member states by providing a common reference point for implementation. It does not introduce new obligations but explains how existing requirements can be operationalized in practice. →

This approach is intended to reduce uncertainty and encourage harmonization in how NIS2 is applied.

Overall, ENISA's publication reflects the ongoing effort to align cybersecurity measures across the EU. By making technical requirements more accessible and offering concrete examples, the guidance seeks to facilitate NIS2 implementation without replacing the authority of national regulators.

For organizations in critical sectors, it provides a structured pathway to assess readiness, document compliance, and adapt to evolving regulatory expectations. ■

Key takeaways

1. Professional networks like LinkedIn remain active targets for foreign espionage, underscoring the need for employee vigilance.

2. Geopolitical tensions in Europe continue to translate into state-linked cyberattacks on critical infrastructure.

3. A ransomware attack in Sweden disrupted over 200 municipalities, underscoring the systemic risks when critical services rely on a single IT provider.

4. Autonomous AI systems (MAICAs) illustrate a potential future in which cyber operations adapt and act with minimal human oversight.

5. ENISA's new guidance provides organizations with practical steps to align with NIS2 requirements and strengthen resilience.

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