

Russia hacking site spying webcams worldwide: Britain

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Hackers have accessed household webcams, baby monitors and CCTV cameras with footage appearing online on a website in Russia, Britain's privacy watchdog warns

Britain's privacy watchdog on Thursday called on Russia to take down a site showing hacked live feeds from thousands of homes and businesses around the world and warned it was planning "regulatory action".

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said that hackers were

taking advantage of devices like CCTV cameras and remote-access baby monitors without security protection and with weak passwords.

"I want the Russians to take this down straight away," Christopher Graham, the information commissioner, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

"We've known about this for about 24 hours but we've been working out how best to deal with it because we want to take regulatory action," he said.

Graham said that the first reports about the website, which is registered in "an offshore territory administered by Australia", came from Macao and Hong Kong, then Australia and Canada.

Britain is now planning "very prompt action" with the Federal Trade Commission, the US consumer protection agency, "to get this thing closed down", he said.

In Britain, the ICO said around 500 feeds had been targeted, including a gym in Manchester, a house in Birmingham, and an office in Leicester.

"The website, which is based in Russia, accesses the information by using the default login credentials, which are freely available online, for thousands of cameras," said Simon Rice, ICO group manager for technology.

"The footage is being collected from security cameras used by businesses and members of the public, ranging from CCTV networks used to keep large premises secure, down to built-in cameras on baby monitors," he said.

Data watchdogs across the world have already drawn attention to the site,

which is hacking 4,591 cameras in the US, 2,059 in France and 1,576 in the Netherlands.

"We've got to grow up about this sort of thing. These devices are very handy if you want to check your child is ok and the shop's alright but everyone else can access that too unless you set a strong password," Graham said.

"If you value your privacy, put in the basic security arrangements."

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