

Connected, self-drive cars pose serious new security challenges

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US Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Carlin told an auto industry conference hackers could remotely control cars with consequences "much greater" than the Nice attack

In a world where motor vehicles can be weapons and cars increasingly depend on internal computers and internet connections, automakers are under increasing pressure to find ways to guard against cyber-attacks.

Auto industry chiefs, security experts and government officials warned

at an [auto industry](#) conference here Friday that hackers can threaten to do everything against cars that they do to other computers: remotely steal owner information, or hijack them and render them more dangerous than the truck that killed 84 people in Nice, France on July 14.

"When you look at autonomous autos, the consequences are so much greater" than the Nice attack by a possibly Islamic State-inspired man, said John Carlin, assistant US attorney general for national security,

"We know these terrorists. They don't have the capability yet. But if they're trying to get people to drive truck into crowds, than it doesn't take too much imagination to think they are going to take an [autonomous car](#) and drive it into a crowd of people," said Carlin.

General Motors' chair and chief executive Mary Barra said that the advanced information technology that comes in new cars, especially "connectivity" systems linking cars to the internet, creates huge new challenges.

"One of these challenges is the issue of cybersecurity, and make no mistake, cybersecurity is foundational," she said.

Barra pointed to the need to protect the [personal data](#) of customers who use their in-car system for banking or to pay for other services.

"The fact is personal data is stored in or transmitted through vehicle networks," she said.

On top of that is the complexity of the newest auto IT systems, which, she said, "opens up opportunities for those who would do harm through cyber-attacks."

"Cybersecurity is an issue of public safety," she said.

Carlin said cyber-attacks generally have cost the US economy billions of dollars, and that the problem is that hackers often outrace efforts to strengthen security.

That will be the case for the auto industry, especially as it pushes ahead with self-driving cars, he said.

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