

German intelligence warns of increased Chinese cyberspying

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The head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency warned Sunday that China is using social networks to try to cultivate sources of information among lawmakers and officials, while Chinese hackers are increasingly attacking European companies through trusted suppliers.

Hans-Georg Maassen said his agency, known by its German acronym BfV, believes more than 10,000 Germans have been targeted by Chinese intelligence agents posing as consultants, headhunters or researchers, primarily on the [social networking](#) site LinkedIn.

"This is a broad-based attempt to infiltrate in particular parliaments, ministries and government agencies," Maassen said.

The BfV established a task force early this year which examined the use of fake profiles on social networks over a nine-month period. The agency provided journalists with what it said were eight of the most prolific fake profiles on LinkedIn used by Chinese spies.

Using names such as Lily Wu, Laeticia Chen or Alex Li, the profiles sport an impressive resume, hundreds of contacts and attractive pictures of young professionals.

The agency also named six organizations it said are used by Chinese spies to cloak their approaches, including one called the Association France Euro-Chine and another named Global View Strategic Consulting.

Messages seeking comment from the organizations weren't immediately returned.

Maassen warned that Chinese cybergroups are also using so-called "supply-chain attacks" to get around companies' online defenses. Such attacks target IT workers and others who work for a trusted service providers in order to send malicious software into the networks of organizations the attackers are interested in.

"The infections are difficult to detect, since [network](#) connections between service providers and their customers aren't suspicious," the BfV said. "This gives the attacker an even better disguise than before."

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