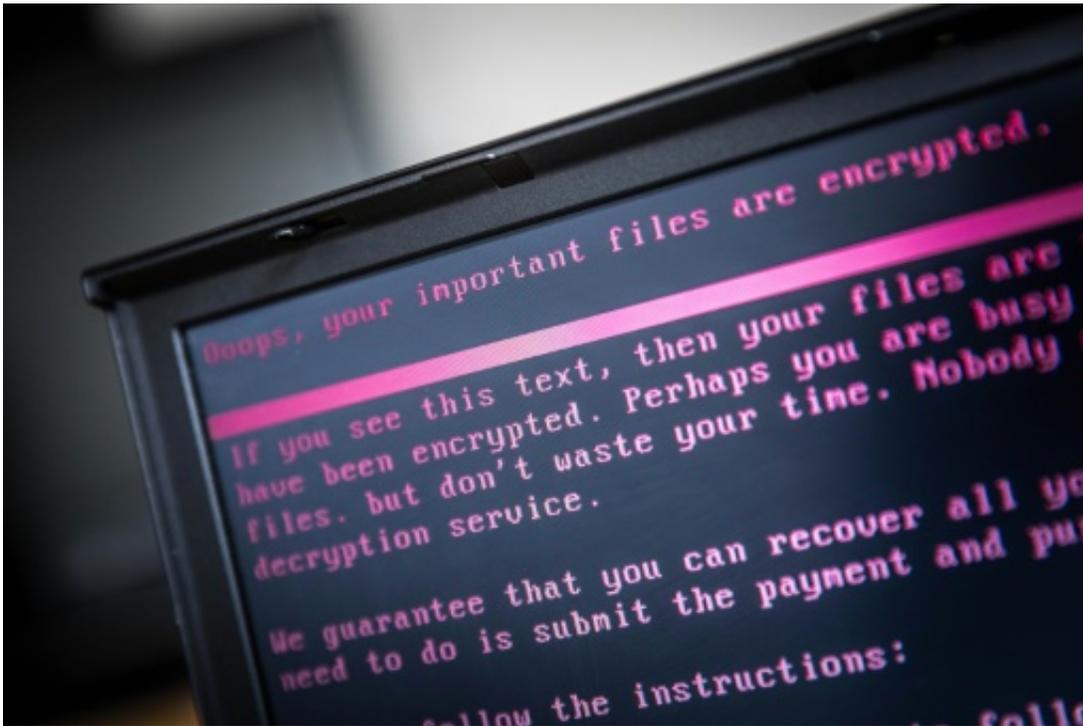


# Ransomware attacks 'global epidemic', says Europol

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An "epidemic" has erupted in global ransomware attacks, taking over computers as well as internet-linked devices like routers and CCTV cameras to turn them into tools for criminals, Europe's police agency said Wednesday.

"Ransomware attacks have eclipsed most other global cybercrime threats, with the first half of 2017 witnessing ransomware attacks on a scale previously unseen," Europol said, as it released its latest annual [report](#) on internet organised crime.

This included the WannaCry ransomware attack in May, believed to have rapidly infected as many as 300,000 targets in 150 countries including some high-profile ones such as Britain's National Health Service, Spanish telecoms company Telefonica, and logistics company Fed-Ex.

"The global impact of huge cyber security events such as the WannaCry [ransomware](#) epidemic has taken the threat from cybercrime to another level," Europol's chief Rob Wainwright said.

"Banks and other major businesses are now targeted on a scale not seen before," he said at the launch of the 80-page report.

At the same time, late 2016 saw the first "massive attacks" on insecure devices connected to the so-called internet of things.

In one case the notorious Mirai malware hacked into about 150,000 internet-linked devices like cellphones, routers, printers and security cameras to mount a "complex... sophisticated" attack.

The malware transformed them into botnets capable of launching a so-called distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack, Europol said.

They were responsible for a number of high profile attacks, including one which severely disrupted internet infrastructure on the West Coast of the United States.

Europol warned that the "collective response to cyber-criminals is still

not good enough."

"In particular people and companies everywhere must do more to better protect themselves," it said.

The report also said that last year saw an unprecedented increase in data breaches with vast amounts of data being stolen, including over two billion records related to EU citizens reportedly leaked over a 12-month period.

European safety commissioner Julian King said Europol's latest report "shows online crime is the new frontier of law enforcement."

"We've all seen the impact of events like WannaCry. Whether [attacks](#) are carried out for financial or political reasons, we need to improve our resilience," King said.

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