

Companies, governments assess damage from latest malware

PARIS (AP) — Companies and governments around the world on Wednesday counted the cost of a software epidemic that has disrupted ports, hospitals and banks.

Logistics firm FedEx says deliveries by its TNT Express subsidiary have been "slowed" by the cyberattack, which had "significantly affected" its systems.

Ports operated by the Danish shipping giant A.P. Moller-Maersk are still crippled. An Alabama port official, James K. Lyons, said crews at Maersk's APM terminal in Mobile, Alabama, have been loading and unloading containers in manual mode, without the normal computerized coordination. The company's operations were shuttered in Mumbai, India, Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, and Los Angeles, among others.

In a statement, Moller-Maersk acknowledged that



A screen of an idle virus affected cash machine in a state-run OshchadBank says "Sorry for inconvenience/Under repair" in Kiev, Ukraine, Wednesday.

its APM Terminals had been "impacted in a number of ports" and that an undisclosed number of systems were shut down "to contain the issue." The company declined to provide further

life remained affected, with cash machines out of order and airport displays operating manually.

As the impact of the cyberattack that erupted Tuesday was still being measured at offices, loading docks and boardrooms, the Ukrainian Cabinet said that "all strategic assets, including those involved in protecting state security, are working normally."

But that still left a large number of non-strategic assets — including dozens of banks and other institutions — fighting to get back online. Cash machines in Kiev seen by an Associated Press photographer were still out of order Wednesday, and Ukrainian news reports said that flight information at the city's Boryspil airport was being provided in manual mode.

A local cybersecurity expert discounted the

Ukrainian government's assurances.

"Obviously they don't control the situation," Victor Zhora of Infosafe in Kiev told the AP.

At the very least, cybersecurity firms say thousands of computers worldwide have been struck by the malware, which goes by a variety of names, including ExPetr.

In Pennsylvania, lab and diagnostic services were closed at the satellite offices of the Heritage Valley Health System.

In Tasmania, an Australian official said a Cadbury chocolate factory had stopped production after computers there crashed. Other organizations affected include U.S. drugmaker Merck, food and drinks company Mondelez International, global law firm DLA Piper, and London-based advertising group.

But most of the damage remains hidden away in

corporate offices and industrial parks.

As IT security workers turned their eye toward cleaning up the mess, others wondered at the attackers' motives. The attack has the telltale signs of ransomware, which scrambles a computer's data until a payment is made, but some experts believe this attack was less aimed at gathering money than at sending a message to Ukraine and its allies.

That hunch was buttressed by the way the malware appears to have been seeded using a rogue update to a piece of Ukrainian accounting software — suggesting an attacker focused on Ukrainian targets.

And it comes on the anniversary of the assassination of a senior Ukrainian military intelligence officer and a day before a national holiday celebrating a new constitution.

WORLD BRIEFLY

U.S. demands more security on international flights to U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Homeland Security Department is demanding that airlines around the world step up security measures for international flights bound for the United States or face the possibility of a total electronics ban for planes.

Compliance with the new rules could lead to the lifting of a ban on laptops and other large electronics already in place for airlines flying to the United States from 10 airports in the Middle East and Africa. It could also stave off a much-discussed expansion of the ban to flights from Europe.

Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly announced the rollout of the new rules Wednesday. The changes will be phased in over time and include enhanced passenger vetting, explosives detection and efforts to root out insider threats to airlines.

"Security is my No. 1 concern," Kelly said during a speech at the Center for a New American Security. "Our enemies are adaptive and we have to adapt as well."

Kelly said the changes will be "seen and unseen" and will be phased in over the coming weeks and months.

He said airlines that don't comply or are slow to enforce the new standards could be forced to bar large electronics in both carry-on and checked luggage. They could also lose permission to fly into the U.S. He said he's confident that airlines will cooperate.

The current ban, with affects only foreign carriers flying to the U.S. from 10 cities, allows passengers to travel with larger electronics packed in checked baggage.

The new rules will apply to roughly 180 foreign and U.S.-based airlines, flying from 280 cities in 105 countries.

Venezuela hunts for copter pilot behind 'terrorist attack'

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Oscar Perez is a cop, pilot, action movie star and dog trainer. He's now also a fugitive, accused of strafing two key Venezuelan government buildings from a helicopter in a quixotic attempt to set off a revolt against President Nicolas Maduro.

Authorities on Wednesday conducted a nationwide manhunt for Perez a day after the government charged that he stole the police chopper and directed grenades and gunfire against the Supreme Court and Interior Ministry in what Maduro called a "terrorist attack."

No one was injured, and there was no sign of damage at the buildings. But the episode added another layer of intrigue to a 3-month-old political crisis that has left at least 75 people dead and hundreds more jailed or

injured in clashes between security forces and protesters seeking Maduro's removal.

Did Perez act alone? Are other military uprisings in the works? Or was it an elaborate ruse clumsily orchestrated by the government to distract public attention or justify a tougher crackdown on the opposition?

Julio Borges, president of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, expressed doubts about Maduro's version of events but cautioned that he and the rest of the opposition were still analyzing what happened.

"There are people who say it was a government-staged hoax, others who say it was real," Borges said in a radio interview. "Whatever it was, it all points in the same direction: That the situation in Venezuela is unsustainable."

Lawsuits over new Utah monument to test president's power

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Native American tribes and environmental groups preparing for a legal battle to stop President Donald Trump from dismantling Utah's new national monument face a tougher challenge than anticipated.

Republican officials in the state who oppose Bears Ears National Monument asked Trump to rescind the designation. But U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke recommended the monument be downsized instead, noting past presidents have tinkered with the boundaries of lands protected under federal law.

Legal experts disagree on whether the 1906 Antiquities Act allows a president to reduce a monument, and it's something that has never been challenged in court.

Environmentalists and Indian tribes were ready to pounce at the notion Zinke would recommend Bears Ears be abolished, armed with their belief that no president may undo the work of another by rescinding a monument, and the fact that no president has tried.

But past presidents have trimmed national monuments and redrawn their boundaries — 18 times, according to the National Park Service.

Bears Ears, established by President Barack Obama in December, is about the size of Delaware, covering roughly 2,000 square miles. It protects more than 100,000 archaeological sites on what's considered sacred tribal land in southeastern Utah.

A largely GOP group of Utah officials wants the monument repealed and see it as an overly broad, unnecessary layer of federal control that closes off the area to energy development and other access.

Republican state Rep. Mike Noel said shrinking a monument is politically and legally much easier to defend than attempting to undo one.

"There's been enough history of downsizing, even fairly large areas, significantly large areas," Noel said.

Thursday Morning

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NIGHT OWL

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