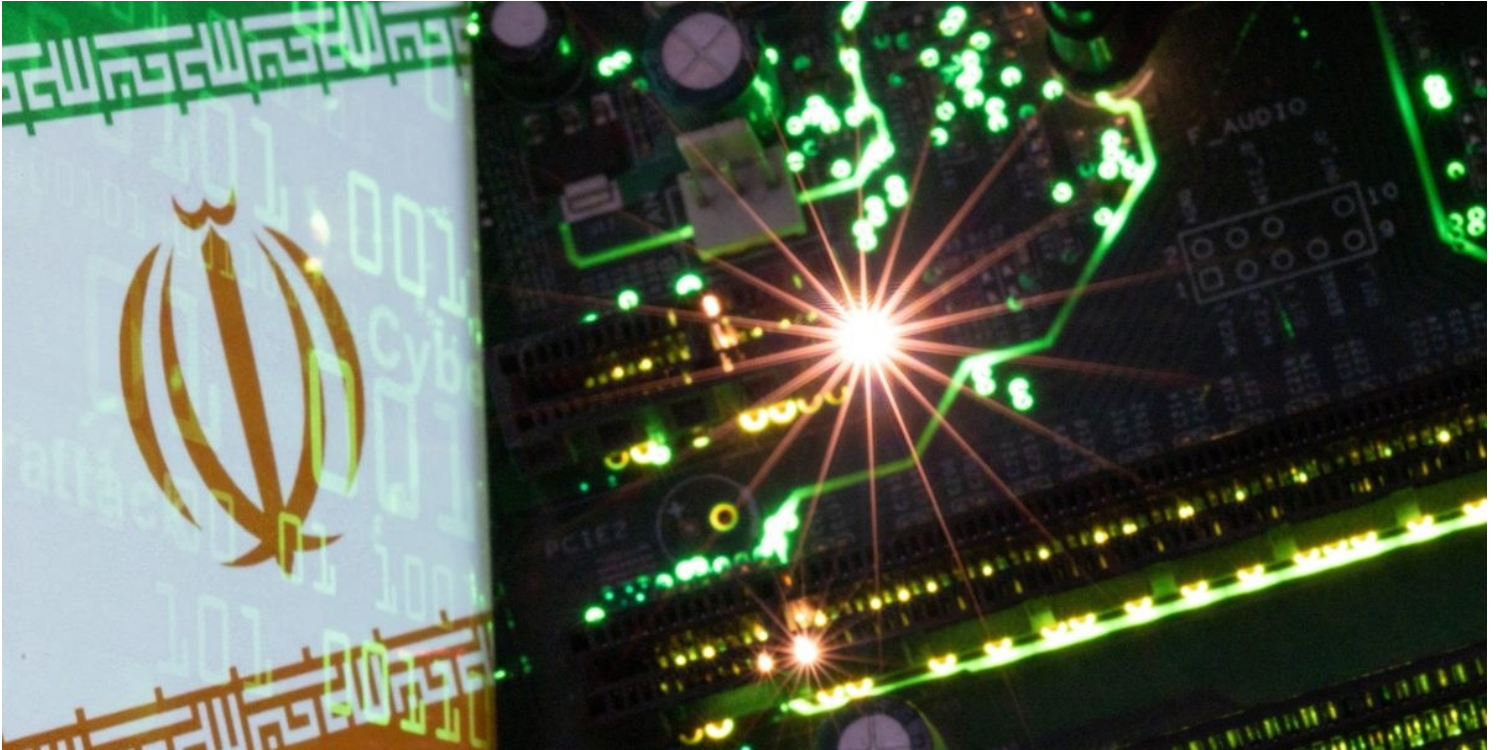


Weekly Intelligence Brief

A Chanticleer Intelligence Brief Project



Iranian Hackers Target the United States and Allies

Camarion Dickerson

**Analyst
Cyber Desk**

On 17 MAR, due to the ongoing conflict with Iran, a pro-Iranian hacking group, known as Handala, has begun targeting the United States and its Middle Eastern allies with cyberattacks.

Threat intelligence experts assess Handala as a destructive operation managed by Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). The operation is believed to be linked to Void Manticore, an advanced persistent threat (APT) group that is loyal to the Iranian regime.

Handala is targeting military security camera systems located in Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, to improve Iranian missile attack efficacy. Handala has also claimed responsibility for a series of targeted cyberattacks on Israeli industrial facilities and a Saudi Arabian school.

Handala's cyber operations appear to be making up for Iran's lack of resources for a direct, large-scale conflict, as the group targets infrastructure with low security to disrupt the daily life and comfort of American citizens. Locations within the United States, such as water

treatment, healthcare, and military facilities and networks, have been attacked, as the Handala group appears to be focused on degrading critical infrastructure to gradually reduce American resources.

We assess with high confidence that it is likely that American government officials and individuals working with Israel are major targets for the Handala group. We also assess with moderate confidence that it is likely that Handala has the capability and expertise to exploit United States vulnerabilities and damage critical infrastructure.

Mexico Seeks North American Trade Deal for Critical Minerals

Ramon Morales

Senior Analyst
Americas Desk

On 17 MAR, Camimex, the Mexican Mining Chamber, which is the primary trade organization representing the formal mining industry in Mexico, stated it is seeking to include mining and critical minerals in the review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Discussions began early this week as North American nations look at how to strengthen supply chains.

The 2026 USMCA critical minerals review process has accelerated stakeholder engagement across multiple sectors, with mining industry representatives

positioning themselves as essential contributors to supply chain security. Early consultation phases have revealed significant interest from both government and private sector entities in establishing formal mining chapters within the existing trade framework. Camimex President, Pedro Rivero, stated that the sector is in discussions with the Mexican authorities and explained that the United States (U.S.) and Canada share a great interest in critical mineral deals. Rivero further noted that the current agreement does not have a mining section. The chamber believes mining should be included because it supports many industries; as such, discussions are ongoing for an agreement.

The integration of critical minerals into North American trade policy represents a fundamental shift in how regional partnerships approach resource security. This transformation extends beyond simple bilateral agreements to encompass comprehensive supply chain resilience strategies that have the potential to redefine continental economic relationships.

We can assess with high confidence that it is likely that an agreement will eventually be reached to integrate critical minerals into North American trade policy, and that Mexico will continue to strengthen its economic relationship with the U.S. and Canada.

United Kingdom and Ukraine Agree to Joint Defense Strategy

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On 17 MAR, the United Kingdom (UK) and Ukraine agreed to develop a joint defense technological and industrial strategy. This partnership will address critical gaps in each nation's air defense capabilities. British and Ukrainian leaders believe this agreement has the potential to facilitate the collaborative development and production of Ukraine's most effective defense technologies.

The agreement is expected to combine Ukraine's expertise in developing drone and missile defense systems gained during the Russo-Ukraine War with the UK's ability to mass-produce weapon systems using its

industrial base. The partnership will provide €580,000 (\$667,954.10) for an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Centre of Excellence, a specialized hub for developing, testing, and implementing advanced AI technologies, to be incorporated into the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense. According to Ukraine's Security Council, offshoring its drone production to the UK will be a way to reduce costs in mass-producing the 7 million drones needed to supplement the overall supply in 2026.

The agreement is projected to create jobs and generate revenue for the UK through increased exports. Both nations are estimated to see an increase in the development of AI-driven, high-performance defense

systems, as well as a stronger overall technological cooperation. This will ultimately strengthen defense innovation and economic resilience in both nations.

We can assess with high confidence that it is likely this deal will be mutually beneficial, as Ukraine will obtain valuable weapon systems and the UK will see an economic boost as it exports those systems. We can also assess with high confidence that it is likely this deal will accelerate the development of high-performance defense systems in both nations.

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