

Weekly Report

20/01/2025

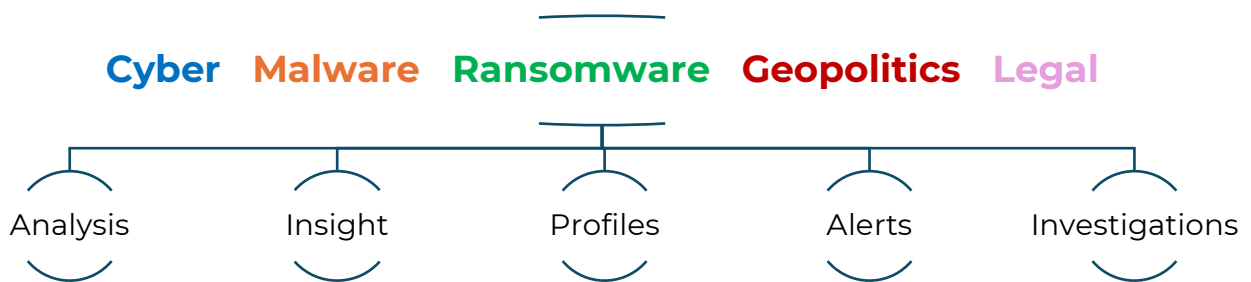
TLP: WHITE

Summary

Starmer’s plan to make the UK a world leader in artificial intelligence	4
Pro-Russia disinformation reaches Bluesky.....	6
U.S. rules on chip exports: restrictions to counter Chinese GPUs	8
Intesa Sanpaolo paves the way for cryptocurrencies: 11 Bitcoin acquired	10
Smishing Alert: fraudulent campaign uses INPS logos.....	12
Truce in Gaza: a turning point in the conflict	13
The European Commission and investigations against big tech: no impact from Trump’s return	15
Biden signs executive order to support the growth of ai data centers in the United States	16
2025: cybersecurity under pressure amid regulations and threats	17
Political crisis in South Korea: president Yoon Suk Yeol arrested	18

Methodologies and Resources

The Cyber Intelligence (CI) team uses the following methods and resources for news analysis and for acquiring information useful in containing cyber-attacks.



The CI Team, through this weekly report, aims to provide timely and accurate analysis regarding the aforementioned areas, enabling readers to stay informed about the latest news concerning new vulnerabilities, potential threats, and changes in the geopolitical landscape.

The daily news analysis on the Kitsune platform is essential for CI analysts to monitor and understand emerging risks in the various categories mentioned above, thus allowing them to prevent or mitigate potential threats to customer security.

CYBER

LEGAL



Starmer's plan to make the UK a world leader in artificial intelligence

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER KEIR STARMER HAS UNVEILED A PLAN TO MAKE THE UK A GLOBAL LEADER IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, INCLUDING THE CREATION OF DATA CENTERS, ADVANCED UNIVERSITY TRAINING, AND AN INDEPENDENT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK. THE GOAL IS TO BOOST THE ECONOMY, ENHANCE SECTORAL EFFICIENCY, AND ATTRACT GLOBAL INVESTMENTS.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced an ambitious plan to position the UK as a world leader in artificial intelligence (AI). The strategy includes groundbreaking measures such as the establishment of special zones for data centers, funding and promoting university courses focused on technology, and adopting all 50 recommendations from the "AI Opportunities Action Plan" report developed by venture capitalist Matt Clifford. According to government estimates, the full adoption of AI could boost productivity by 1.5% annually, generating around £47 billion per year for the UK economy over a decade.



One of the key initiatives involves the construction of an initial data center in Culham, Oxfordshire, which will serve as a tech hub for development and research efforts. Starmer emphasized the need to act swiftly to secure the UK's global competitiveness, highlighting AI's potential to transform industries, improve job opportunities, attract investment, and increase administrative efficiency.

A fundamental aspect of the plan is the development of an independent regulatory framework for artificial intelligence. Starmer stressed that the UK will not blindly follow directives from other nations or economic blocs but will instead craft its own regulatory approach, balancing innovation with safety. The prime minister specified that the government will adopt a process based on rigorous testing and consultations with experts to ensure that regulations are proportionate and evidence-based.

This approach aims to mitigate the risks associated with AI, including concerns about privacy, algorithmic discrimination, and data security, without stifling technological innovation. The new regulations will be designed to be flexible, capable of adapting quickly to the pace of technological innovation and the sector's evolving dynamics.

The government also announced the creation of a dedicated AI oversight body tasked with monitoring the impact of emerging technologies and providing recommendations for their responsible use. This organization will collaborate with the private sector and academic institutions to promote ethical and transparent standards in AI usage.

Starmer highlighted that the UK aims to position itself as a global model for AI regulation, balancing economic and social benefits with the need to prevent potential misuse. The prime minister believes this balanced approach can attract international investors, strengthen business confidence, and give the UK a sustainable competitive edge in the tech sector.

Despite criticism surrounding the high-tax budget of the Labour government, which has impacted business confidence, Starmer remains optimistic that the AI plan can represent a turning point for the UK economy, laying the groundwork for a new era of growth and innovation.

CYBER

GEOPOLITICS



Pro-Russia disinformation reaches Bluesky

AFTER THE “MATRYOSHKA” CAMPAIGN THAT FLOODED X, PRO-RUSSIA PROPAGANDA LANDS ON BLUESKY WITH ACADEMIC DEEPFAKES AND ADVANCED MANIPULATION STRATEGIES, CHALLENGING THE PLATFORM’S ABILITY TO COUNTER SUCH PHENOMENA.

The first signs of a disinformation campaign have surfaced on the social network Bluesky, reminiscent of the pro-Russia “Matryoshka” operation that had infiltrated Elon Musk’s platform X. However, this new phase exhibits distinct and unique characteristics.

Bluesky, which has become a haven for many users disillusioned with X's management, has drawn the attention of researchers and analysts due to a proliferation of suspicious posts. According to the collective @antibot4navalny—specialized in monitoring influence operations and known for documenting the significant impact of the "Matryoshka" campaign last year—similar patterns have been observed on Bluesky. The campaign's goal remains unchanged: to promote a narrative favorable to Russia, criticize Western support for Ukraine, and frequently target prominent figures such as French President Emmanuel Macron.



A notable innovation compared to past efforts is the use of artificial intelligence to impersonate academic institutions and generate content mimicking journalistic outlets, thereby lending greater credibility to the messages. In one striking example, a professor from Aix-Marseille University appears in a video seemingly criticizing the organization of the

Olympic Games and attributing France's economic challenges to sanctions against Russia. However, in the original video, posted on the university's Instagram profile, the professor makes no mention of the French economy, instead presenting an overview of his department's activities.

Numerous other videos follow a similar pattern, featuring experts speaking on camera alongside university logos and stock footage. In another case, a video filmed at the University of Sunderland in the UK shows students and faculty expressing favorable opinions about Russia. This video, too, was manipulated; the original version makes no reference to Russia.

Analyses have revealed that many of the accounts involved exhibit typical characteristics of pro-Russia "bots"—fake profiles created to artificially amplify post visibility. Moreover, these operations aim to test the platform's ability to reach an audience and measure how quickly content is removed.

In 2023, Bluesky moderators processed over 358,000 reports, and most problematic posts were promptly removed, indicating that the platform encourages the reporting of harmful content and remains committed to combating disinformation.

CYBER

GEOPOLITICS



U.S. rules on chip exports: restrictions to counter Chinese GPUs

THE PROPOSAL DIVIDES COUNTRIES INTO THREE CATEGORIES: ALLIES, LIMITED, OR RESTRICTED. NVIDIA AND ORACLE STRONGLY OPPOSE THE MEASURE.

The Biden administration has proposed new rules—outlined in the *Interim Final Rule on Artificial Intelligence Diffusion*, developed by the Bureau of Industry and Security within the Department of Commerce—to prevent U.S. chips from reaching China through countries that are not closely allied or politically aligned with the United States. On January 13, the federal government unveiled a comprehensive policy aimed at restricting the distribution of advanced GPUs produced in the U.S., reinforcing American leadership in the artificial intelligence (AI) chip industry.

A statement from the White House reads:

"U.S. national security and economic strength depend on keeping this critical technology within the country, ensuring that global AI is built on American foundations"

Despite opposition from some tech companies like NVIDIA and Oracle, the proposal could take effect within 120 days following a public comment period. Its final implementation will be determined by the next administration.

Ned Finkle, NVIDIA's Vice President, stated that restricting chips will not improve U.S. security, emphasizing that many technologies are already widely available. Ken Glueck, Oracle's Vice President, called the proposal "overly complex and counterproductive," warning that it risks advancing Chinese technology at the expense of American innovation. Conversely, Microsoft expressed confidence, noting that the company can meet the standards while addressing the needs of its global customers.

The rule is structured around six key points:

- Unlimited access for 18 U.S.-allied countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.
- Exemption for orders of chips with computing power below 1,700 advanced GPUs, allowing universities and research institutions to operate without restrictions.
- Trusted partners, known as "Universal Verified End Users," may distribute a small portion of their global AI capacity.

MERIDIAN S.R.L

Viale Erminio Spalla, 9-00142 Roma (RM) | +39 06 99 70 66 80 | P.IVA/CF 13693001003 | meridiangroup@legalmail.it | info@meridian-group.eu | www.meridian-group.eu

© 2024 – All Rights Reserved.

- Non-allied but non-hostile countries, designated as "National Verified End Users," may purchase up to 320,000 advanced GPUs over two years.
- Restricted countries or entities outside the above categories may purchase up to 50,000 advanced GPUs per country.
- Governments agreeing to specific accords with the U.S. on technology security and clean energy can double their GPU limits.

Additionally, China, Russia, and other regions classified as "Countries of Concern" remain excluded from accessing advanced U.S. technologies.

Benjamin Lee, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, stated that while these restrictions may slow AI development in certain nations in the short term, they could, in the long run, incentivize other countries to develop their own technologies, potentially undermining U.S. leadership.



Intesa Sanpaolo paves the way for cryptocurrencies: 11 Bitcoin acquired

FOR THE FIRST TIME, AN ITALIAN BANK DIRECTLY INVESTS IN CRYPTOCURRENCIES WITH A PURCHASE WORTH APPROXIMATELY ONE MILLION EUROS. THIS MOVE COULD MARK A TURNING POINT IN THE NATIONAL FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE.

Intesa Sanpaolo has entered the world of cryptocurrencies with an unprecedented operation for the Italian banking sector. On January 13, 2025, Italy's leading bank acquired 11 bitcoin, valued at approximately one million euros. This marks the first time an Italian credit institution has made a direct investment in cryptocurrencies. The operation came to light through a leaked screenshot of internal emails exchanged between bank employees, which surfaced on 4Chan. However, the bank has not disclosed further details about the motivations or specifics of the purchase.



According to the available information, the acquisition occurred in the morning when bitcoin prices fluctuated between €89,000 and €91,000. The email confirming the successful completion of the operation was reportedly sent by Niccolò Bardoscia, head of digital asset trading and investments at Intesa Sanpaolo.

This move represents a significant shift in the Italian banking sector, which has historically been cautious regarding cryptocurrencies. Until now, Italian financial institutions have adhered to a conservative approach, aligning with the stance of the Bank of Italy's governor, Fabio Panetta. He has frequently warned about the risks associated with crypto assets, emphasizing their lack of intrinsic value, absence of income generation, and operation on unregulated or opaque platforms.

Intesa Sanpaolo's bitcoin acquisition opens new scenarios, drawing interest and reactions from both the traditional financial sector and cryptocurrency enthusiasts. This event coincides with the implementation of the European MiCA regulation, aimed at ensuring greater transparency in the cryptocurrency market. It also unfolds against a global backdrop where bitcoin is under intense focus, fueled by the pro-cryptocurrency policies of U.S. President Donald Trump. The year 2025 is poised to be pivotal for the future of cryptocurrencies and their integration into traditional financial systems.



Smishing Alert: fraudulent campaign uses INPS logos

NEW PHISHING ATTEMPTS VIA SMS AIM TO STEAL SENSITIVE DATA AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTS BY IMPERSONATING THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SECURITY (INPS).

A new smishing campaign has been identified that improperly uses names and logos associated with the services provided by the National Institute of Social Security (INPS). The SMS message urges the user to update their personal data to avoid the suspension of INPS benefits. The message includes a link that prompts the potential victim to click on it to complete the operation.

By following the link, the user is redirected to a landing page that graphically and nominally replicates INPS services. This page is designed to steal personal and sensitive information.

I.N.P.S

Informa che per continuare a ricevere Pagamenti e servizi INPS dovrà confermare i dati in nostro possesso link:<https://inps-verification-utenti.it>

Subsequently, the user is asked to upload digital documents, including:

- a copy of their ID card (front and back);
- a selfie with the ID clearly visible.

These steps are fraudulently intended to confirm the user's identity.



Truce in Gaza: a turning point in the conflict

THE 126-DAY TRUCE AGREEMENT OPENS DOORS TO PEACE BUT MUST OVERCOME INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES.

Hamas and Israel have reached an agreement for a ceasefire in Gaza, set to take effect on Sunday, aiming to end 15 months of devastating conflict. The deal, mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, includes an initial six-week ceasefire, the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, and a prisoner exchange: 33 Israeli hostages, including women and children, will be freed in exchange for 1,000 Palestinian detainees.

مسودة اتفاق محتمل للهدنة في غزة: مراحل وآليات التنفيذ

تعمل قطر ومصر والولايات المتحدة على التوصل إلى اتفاق تهدنة جديد في غزة يهدف إلى تحقيق استقرار مرحلي وإنهاء التصعيد العسكري، ويتضمن 3 مراحل رئيسية على مدار 126 يومًا

الجهات الصانعة للاتفاق: قطر، مصر، الولايات المتحدة

المرحلة الأولى (42 يومًا)

- وقف العمليات العسكرية
- انسحاب القوات الإسرائيلية بعيدًا عن المناطق المكتظة بالسكان
- توقف النشاط الجوي العسكري لمدة 10 ساعات يوميًا
- إعادة النازحين
- عودة النازحين إلى مناطق سكنهم تدريجيًا
- إدخال مساعدات إنسانية يوميًا (600 شاحنة)
- تبادل الأسرى والمحتجزين
- إطلاق حماس سراح 33 إسرائيليًا، مقابل إفراج إسرائيل عن أسرى فلسطينيين وفق قوائم محددة

المرحلة الثانية (42 يومًا)

- إعادة تأهيل البنية التحتية
- تشغيل محطة الكهرباء وإصلاح المستشفيات والطرق
- إدخال مواد إغاثة وإيواء للنازحين
- وقف دائم للعمليات العسكرية
- إعلان الهدوء المستدام وانسحاب القوات الإسرائيلية بالكامل
- تبادل المحتجزين والأسرى المتبقين

المرحلة الثالثة (42 يومًا)

- إعادة الإعمار
- بدء خطة شاملة لإعادة إعمار غزة بإشراف دولي من مصر، قطر، والأمم المتحدة
- فتح المعابر وتسهيل حركة الأفراد والبضائع

الاتفاق يمثل فرصة لتحقيق تهدئة طويلة الأمد في غزة، مع التركيز على إعادة الإعمار ودعم النازحين، بمتابعة ورقابة دولية

المصدر: قناة النش الإخبارية 14.01.2025

Despite the announcement of the agreement, Israeli airstrikes on the night of Wednesday, January 15, into Thursday, January 16, caused at least 70 deaths in Gaza, worsening an already dire humanitarian situation for civilians. The agreement still requires approval from the Israeli government and security cabinet, with a vote expected on Thursday. However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of last-minute changes, raising uncertainty about its final

approval. While Hamas reiterated its commitment to the ceasefire, Israeli cabinet members, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Police Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, oppose the deal and have threatened to leave the government if it is implemented.

The agreement, the result of months of international negotiations, outlines three phases over a 126-day period. The second phase aims for a permanent ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces, while the third phase focuses on Gaza's reconstruction under the supervision of Egypt, Qatar, and the UN. However, the political future of the enclave and its governance remains unclear, with Israel opposing the involvement of both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

In Gaza, the announcement was met with celebrations, while in Tel Aviv, Israeli hostage families expressed relief. U.S. President Joe Biden emphasized the importance of this agreement in alleviating the humanitarian crisis, while the UN Secretary-General called for increased aid to Gaza. If implemented, the ceasefire could reduce tensions across the Middle East, but numerous political and operational challenges remain, potentially jeopardizing the stability of the agreement.

CYBER

GEOPOLITICS



The European Commission and investigations against big tech: no impact from Trump's return

EU CONTINUES TO EVALUATE CASES AGAINST APPLE, ALPHABET, X, AND META, REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO ENFORCING ANTITRUST REGULATIONS, WHILE US TECH GIANTS CRITICIZE NEW EUROPEAN LAWS

The European Commission has stated that it will continue evaluating its cases against some of the leading US tech companies, including Apple, Alphabet, X, and Meta, despite the impending return of Donald Trump to the White House. The EU, long at the forefront of investigating Big Tech for alleged antitrust violations, reiterated that the change in the US administration will not affect its commitment to enforcing its regulations.



While there have been rumors of a possible revision of the investigations, Brussels emphasized that no decisions have been made in this regard and that the investigations are proceeding normally. European regulations such as the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) have been criticized by American tech giants, including Meta and X, who argue that such regulations stifle innovation and impose heavy penalties. Even Elon Musk, a Trump ally, has had conflicts with European regulators, particularly regarding online content moderation. Despite the criticisms, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to enforcing the regulations, confirming that the enforcement of laws will not depend on the current US administration. Cases against Big Tech are still in the early stages, with recent fines, such as the one imposed on Meta, demonstrating the EU's determination to pursue its antitrust policies.

MERIDIAN S.R.L

Viale Erminio Spalla, 9-00142 Roma (RM) | +39 06 99 70 66 80 | P.IVA/CF 13693001003 | meridiangroup@legalmail.it | info@meridian-group.eu | www.meridian-group.eu

© 2024 – All Rights Reserved.

CYBER

GEOPOLITICS



Biden signs executive order to support the growth of ai data centers in the United States

THE INITIATIVE AIMS TO ADDRESS THE ENERGY NEEDS OF ADVANCED DATA CENTERS, STIMULATE US SEMICONDUCTOR PRODUCTION, AND STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SECURITY, AS THE COUNTRY PREPARES FOR RAPID EXPANSION OF AI-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE

On January 14, President Joe Biden signed an executive order aimed at supporting the growing energy demands of advanced artificial intelligence (AI)-based data centers, a rapidly expanding sector. The order involves leasing federal lands, including those owned by the Departments of Defense and Energy, to host large-scale AI data centers and build the necessary clean energy facilities to meet the massive energy requirements of these facilities. The goal is to accelerate the construction of AI infrastructure in the United States, enhancing economic competitiveness, national security, and promoting the adoption of renewable energy. Additionally, companies utilizing these federal lands will be required to purchase an "appropriate share" of semiconductors produced in the United States, as part of a broader initiative that includes over \$30 billion in investments for US chip manufacturing. Biden emphasized that the order will help develop the infrastructure necessary for the rapid development of advanced AI models, with forecasts indicating that by 2028, major AI developers will need data centers with five gigawatts of energy capacity to train the most powerful models.

In addition to supporting the expansion of data centers, the executive order also urges agencies to facilitate interconnection to the electrical grid and accelerate permits for the construction of energy infrastructure around federal sites. White House Technology Advisor Tarun Chhabra emphasized that these developments are crucial for keeping advanced AI models in the United States, not only for economic reasons but also for national security, as these systems have direct implications in military applications and in protecting against potential threats. In this context, the Department of Commerce also announced new restrictions on the export of chips and AI technologies, aiming to maintain control over advanced computing power and prevent China from accessing these strategic resources.

CYBER

LEGAL



2025: cybersecurity under pressure amid regulations and threats

THE GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY OUTLOOK 2025 REPORTS AN INCREASE IN CYBER THREATS AND OPERATIONAL COMPLEXITY. PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE GLOBAL DIGITAL SECURITY.

The World Economic Forum, through its Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025, has issued a warning about the growing complexity of the global cyber landscape. This scenario, increasingly complicated by the rapid adoption of emerging technologies, geopolitical uncertainty, and evolving threats, poses significant challenges for organizations and governments.

Supply chain interdependencies emerge as one of the main vulnerabilities: over 54% of large organizations report difficulties in achieving cyber resilience due to these weaknesses. Worsening the situation, geopolitical tensions are amplifying risks of cyber espionage and loss of sensitive information, identified as key concerns by one in three CEOs.

Additionally, artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly pivotal role. While 66% of companies anticipate that AI will have a significant impact on security by 2025, only a small fraction have implemented processes to ensure its safety before deployment. Simultaneously, the evolution of threats, fueled by advanced tools such as generative AI, concerns nearly 47% of organizations.

The regulatory landscape further complicates matters: 76% of security leaders cite regulatory fragmentation as a significant challenge. Adding to this is the growing cyber skills gap, which has increased by 8% compared to 2024, with 66% of organizations reporting shortages in critical resources and expertise.

The report highlights the urgent need to strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors to effectively tackle these challenges. Only through enhanced cooperation can the benefits of digitalization be accessible to all while safeguarding global security.



Political crisis in South Korea: president Yoon Suk Yeol arrested

CHARGES OF ABUSE OF POWER AND INSURRECTION DIVIDE THE COUNTRY AND IGNITE PUBLIC DEBATE

On January 15, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was arrested, becoming the first sitting head of state in the country's history to face such a measure. The arrest stems from allegations of insurrection linked to an attempt on December 3 to briefly impose martial law—a decision that was rejected by parliament. This episode has triggered a severe political crisis, described as the worst in decades, raising questions about the nation's leadership and stability. Yoon, currently held at a detention center in Seoul, refused to attend the second day of questioning, citing health concerns. His lawyers have contested the legitimacy of the arrest, calling it based on an invalid warrant and an investigation conducted without proper legal authorization. Meanwhile, the Constitutional Court is reviewing the impeachment process to decide whether to permanently remove Yoon from office or restore his powers. The opposition accuses Yoon of orchestrating the insurrection and seeks to prevent his return to military command, while his legal team defends his actions as necessary to address a national emergency. The case has deeply divided the country.



A December 4 poll showed 73.6% of the population supported impeachment, but support for Yoon's ruling party has recently rebounded, nearly matching that of the opposition. Pro- and anti-Yoon demonstrations continue to unfold, with his supporters denouncing the arrest as politically motivated. Economically, the political turmoil has exacerbated

challenges, impacting Asia's fourth-largest economy and putting pressure on the national currency, the won. The Central Bank Governor has emphasized that political stabilization is crucial for economic recovery, noting that the current uncertainty is more damaging than delays in monetary policies. The Bank of Korea has thus decided to hold interest rates steady at 3.00%, defying expectations of a rate cut. Despite his detention and mounting pressures, Yoon remains defiant, refusing to cooperate with investigators and labeling the inquiry as politically driven and baseless. As the situation continues to evolve, it has the potential to become a pivotal moment in South Korea's political and social history.