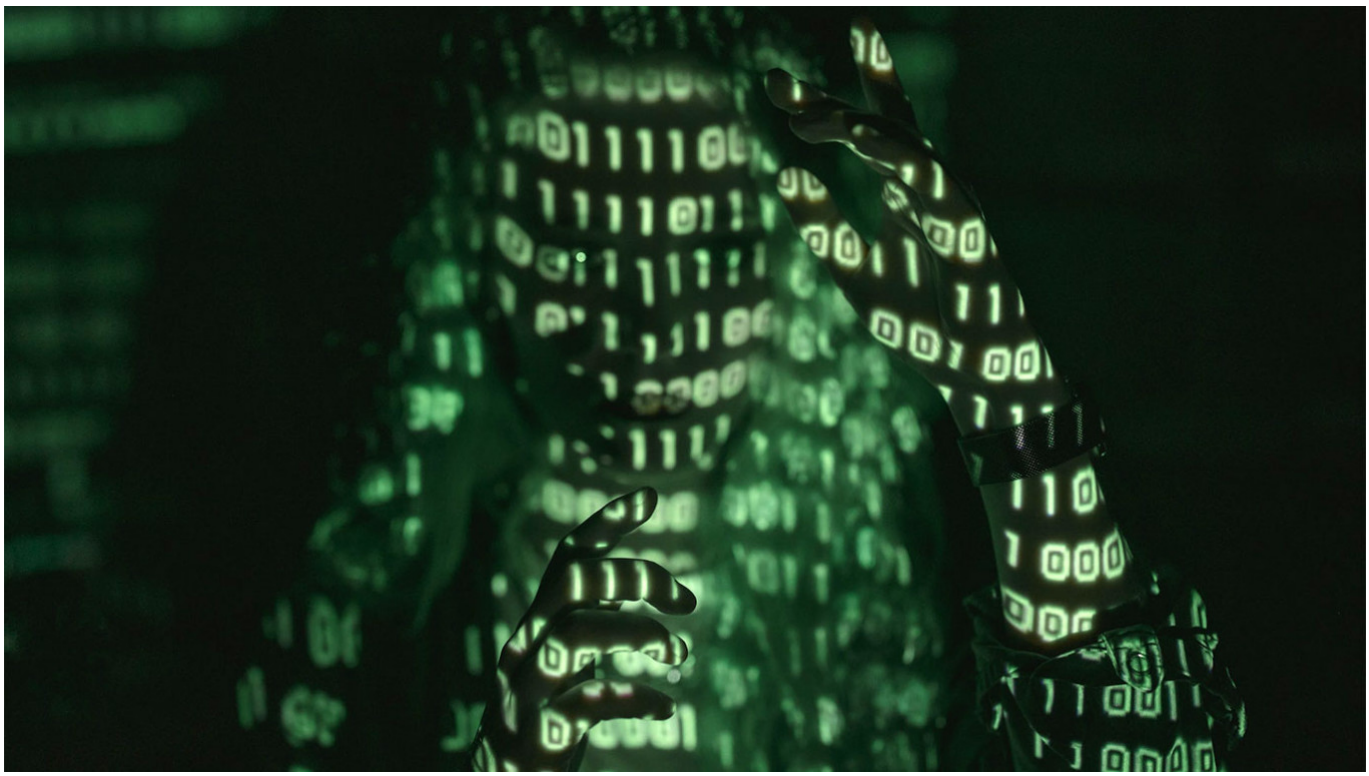
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U.S., Britain Slap Joint Sanctions on Russian Cybercrime Gang Trickbot

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The United States and Britain have sanctioned seven Russian citizens over their alleged membership in the notorious cybercrime gang Trickbot, the U.S. Treasury Department announced Thursday.

The seven individuals, who the Treasury Department said were known to have close links to Russia's intelligence services, have had their assets frozen and have been issued with a travel ban by both countries.

Trickbot, which first became known to security experts in 2016, originated as a trojan virus aimed at non-Russian businesses that stole financial data and infected millions of computers worldwide.

The virus was subsequently developed as a highly adaptable malware that was used to target U.S. healthcare providers during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Once computer systems were infected, the gang would demand the payment of a ransom to remove the virus, even bragging about the speed with which most U.S. medical facilities paid up.

The joint sanctions levied by Washington and London are the first of their kind, the Treasury Department said.

"The United States and the U.K. are leaders in the global fight against cybercrime and are committed to using all available tools to defend against cyber threats," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken tweeted on Thursday, adding that the sanctions had been "intended to combat Russian cybercrime."

The U.S. Treasury statement noted that since 2020 Trickbot had been aligned "to Russian state objectives" which included "targeting the U.S. government and U.S. companies."

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said that "cynical cyberattacks cause real damage to people's lives and livelihoods. We will always put our national security first by protecting the U.K. and our allies from serious organized crime."

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