ASIAFRUIT

For fresh fruit and vegetable marketing and distribution in Asia

By Mike Knowles

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Cyber attack hits trade routes

A major cyber attack initially aimed at Ukrainian institutions has spread globally, affecting the container shipping and terminal operations of AP M?ller-Maersk Group

Several of the world's major fresh produce trade routes have reportedly been affected by a widespread cyber attack which has severely hampered container shipping and terminal operations belonging to AP Møller-Maersk Group.

Container shipping subsidiary Maersk Line and its sister company APM Terminals are among a number of companies that have been affected by the attack, which was apparently aimed initially at national institutions in Ukraine.

A leading reefer logistics expert working closely with a number of different fresh fruit exporters in Latin America told Fruitnet: "Right now [we] have confirmation that bookings cannot be made in Colombia, Venezuela, Chile and Peru. I am sure the list is much longer."

As many as 17 branches of around 50 APM Terminals worldwide, including Rotterdam's Maasvlakte II hub – a major entry point for fresh produce into Europe – have apparently been hit, resulting in a temporary shutdown of operations.

"I was at the headquarters when the attack took place. Within an hour everything was flat," one Dutch employee was reported as telling the Algemeen Dagblad newspaper. "Apart from Europe, they are in Asia and North and South America."

The attack, news of which began to surface on Tuesday 27 June, appears to be another ransomware outbreak similar to the recent WannaCry episode.

The Ukrainian government, its national power provider and the National Bank, as well as several other state-run companies and unnamed banks, have reportedly been affected.

On its main company Twitter feed, Maersk commented: "We can confirm that Maersk IT systems are down across multiple sites and business units due to a cyber attack. We continue to assess the situation."

It added: "The safety of our employees, our operations and customers' business is our top priority. We will update when we have more information."

Maersk Line stated on its own Twitter account: "We confirm some Maersk IT systems are down. The safety of our customers' business and our people is our top priority. Updates to follow."

An online update from APM Terminals Rotterdam read: "Please be advised that we are currently facing IT issues disrupting our operations. Until further notice all operations are stopped. We will inform you when the situation will change."

Images posted on social media showed computer screens displaying a ransomware note in English demanding US$300 in Bitcoin, similar to last month's WannaCry ransom, which hit the UK's National Health Service, among other institutions and companies worldwide.

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