Boom in demand for friendly hackers as 5G approaches

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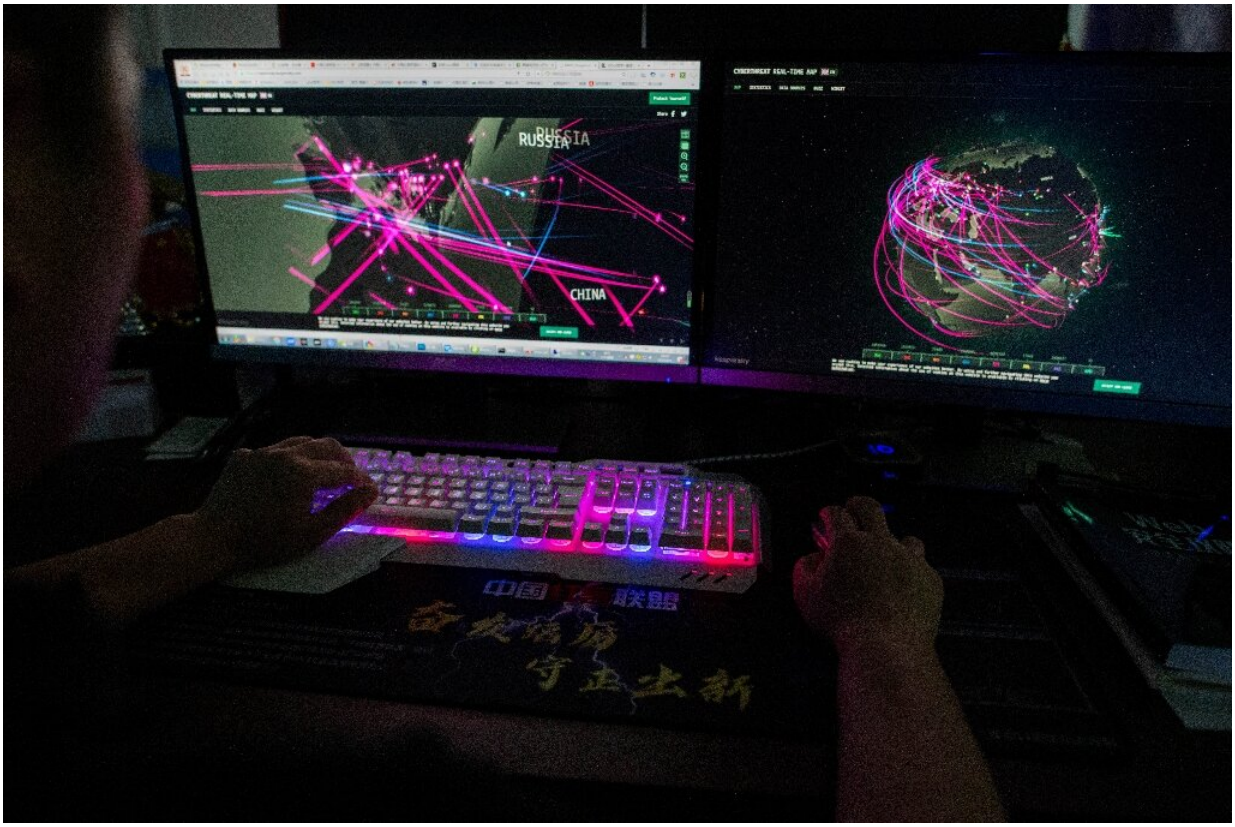

The "internet of things" will provide cyber criminals with new ways to exploit faults in personal security systems

As the number of online devices surges and superfast 5G connections roll out, record numbers of companies are offering handsome rewards to

ethical hackers who successfully attack their cybersecurity systems.

The fast-expanding field of internet-connected devices, known as the "internet of things" (IoT) which includes smart televisions and home appliances, are set to become more widespread once 5G becomes more available—posing one of the most serious threats to digital security in future.

At a conference hosted by Nokia last week, "friendly hacker" Keren Elazari said that co-opting hackers—many of whom are amateurs—to hunt for vulnerabilities "was looked at as a trendy Silicon Valley thing six to eight years ago".

But "bug bounty programmes" are now offered by organisations ranging from the Pentagon and banks such as Goldman Sachs to airlines, tech giants and thousands of smaller businesses.

The largest bug-bounty platform, HackerOne, has 800,000 hackers on its books and said its organisations paid out a record $44 million (38.2 million euros) in cash rewards this year, up 87 percent on the previous 12 months.

"Employing just one full-time security engineer in London might cost a company 80,000 pounds (89,000 euros, $106,000) a year, whereas we open companies up to this global community of hundreds of thousands of hackers with a huge diversity in skills," Prash Somaiya, security solutions architect at HackerOne, told AFP.