CLASSROOM WORKSHEET

Cyberattacks Breach European Grocery Refrigeration Systems

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NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____ / 10



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1 Read

The number beside each paragraph helps you talk about it.

1 Coordinated cyberattacks targeting refrigeration systems disrupted grocery operations across several European countries, prompting Belgium's prosecution service to launch a criminal probe into the incident. In Ireland, thirteen supermarkets were affected, with Carrefour, Intermarche, and Spar among the chains hit directly. Swedish operators ICA and Coop confirmed that a limited number of stores experienced disruptions, six of roughly 800 Coop locations impacted. Dutch grocer Ahold Delhaize and Belgian retailer Colruyt reported that overnight system failures caused temperature rises in cooling equipment at numerous sites across Belgium and Luxembourg. European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen characterized the attacks as deliberate attempts to erode public confidence in the EU food supply, while emphasizing that food security itself was not currently threatened. Separately, John Billow, head of Sweden's National Cybersecurity Center, stated that recent assessments had uncovered a large number of exposed operational technology devices nationwide requiring urgent patching or updates.

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2 Key words

coordinated /kəʊˈɔːdɪneɪtɪd/ *adjective*

Carried out by different parties acting together in a planned and synchronized manner, often implying sophistication and intent.

The regulatory agency warned that coordinated market manipulation by several funds had distorted pricing for months.

prosecution /ˌprɒsɪˈkjuːʃn/ *noun*

The act of bringing legal proceedings against someone; also the body of officials responsible for conducting criminal trials on behalf of the state.

The prosecution declined to comment on whether additional charges would be filed against the defendants.

erode /ɪˈrəʊd/ *verb*

To gradually weaken or destroy something, especially a belief, value, or trust, through repeated actions over time.

Persistent misinformation on social media risks eroding public trust in established scientific institutions.

characterize /ˈkærɪktəraɪz/ *verb*

To describe or classify something in a particular way, especially to highlight its essential nature or intent; often used in formal or official discourse to assign meaning to events.

The committee chair characterized the findings as a watershed moment for national health policy.

disruption /dɪsˈrʌpʃn/ *noun*

A disturbance or problem that interrupts the normal course or functioning of something, often implying a temporary but significant effect.

The prolonged rail strike caused widespread disruption to daily commutes for hundreds of thousands of workers.

exposed /ɪkˈspəʊzd/ *adjective*

In a vulnerable state because security measures are absent or outdated, making it accessible to unauthorized access or attack; commonly used in technology and risk contexts.

Auditors identified dozens of exposed cloud storage buckets that had been publicly readable without any authentication.

3 Reading comprehension

EXERCISE 1 Stance and Register in Official Discourse

3 points

Read the passage carefully and select the best answer. Each question tests your understanding of how meaning is constructed through word choice and official register.

1 By stating that food security 'was not currently threatened,' Commissioner Hansen's primary rhetorical function in the passage is to:

(a) dismiss the incident as trivial and unworthy of attention
(b) balance a characterization of intent with reassurance about present consequences
(c) contradict his own earlier claim that the attacks were deliberate
(d) shift responsibility for the incident to the retail sector rather than the state

2 The phrase 'a limited number of stores experienced disruptions, six of roughly 800 Coop locations impacted' functions primarily to:

(a) undermine the credibility of the report by being vague
(b) provide a precise count that contradicts earlier statements
(c) quantify the scale of impact relative to the total chain size to convey proportionality
(d) suggest that Coop is more vulnerable than other chains

3 The use of 'exposed operational technology devices' in Billow's statement is significant because it:

(a) implies that all devices have already been breached by the same attackers
(b) identifies a specific vulnerability class that connects broader security posture to the immediate incident without stating direct causation
(c) proves that patching was completed before the attacks occurred
(d) contradicts Hansen's claim that food security was not threatened

EXERCISE 2 Precise Information Retrieval

Answer each question in a complete sentence using information from the passage only.

1 Which Belgian body took action in response to the incident, and what kind of action did it take?

2 What specific physical effect did overnight system failures have according to Ahold Delhaize and Colruyt?

3 What did John Billow's assessments reveal about the state of Swedish technology infrastructure?

4 Vocabulary and grammar practice

EXERCISE 3 Formal Register and Tense in Reported Speech

4 points

Complete each gap using the correct form of the verb given, paying attention to tense, voice, and register appropriate to formal reporting.

1 Belgium's prosecution service _____ (launch) a criminal probe into the incident.

2 European Commissioner Hansen _____ (characterize) the attacks as deliberate attempts to erode public confidence.

3 Recent assessments _____ (uncover) a large number of exposed operational technology devices nationwide.

4 Swedish operators ICA and Coop _____ (confirm) that a limited number of stores experienced disruptions.

EXERCISE 4 Put the sentences in order

3 points

These sentences are from the story. Put them in the order they appear.

A Coordinated cyberattacks targeting refrigeration systems disrupted grocery operations across several European countries, prompting Belgium's prosecution service to launch a criminal probe into the incident.

B In Ireland, thirteen supermarkets were affected, with Carrefour, Intermarche, and Spar among the chains hit directly.

C Swedish operators ICA and Coop confirmed that a limited number of stores experienced disruptions, six of roughly 800 Coop locations impacted.

Correct order: _____ _____ _____

5 Guided writing

EXERCISE 5 **Critical Commentary on Official Response and Evidential Stance**

Write a critical commentary of 150–220 words summarizing what happened and analyzing how official sources framed the incident. Address: (1) the scale and geographic spread of disruption as stated in the text; (2) how Commissioner Hansen balanced characterization of intent with reassurance; (3) how Billow's separate statement about exposed devices relates to the broader cybersecurity picture without the text asserting direct causation. Use a formal academic register and your own phrasing — do not copy sentences from the text verbatim. Write 150 to 220 words. Use these words: erode, prosecution, characterized, exposed.

6 Discussion

Talk with a partner, then share one idea.

EXERCISE 6 **Speaking**

1. Commissioner Hansen 'characterized' the attacks as deliberate attempts to erode public confidence, yet stated food security was not threatened. Is it ever appropriate for an official to simultaneously assign a strong interpretation of intent to an event while minimizing its practical consequences, or does this undermine public trust in institutions? Defend your position.
2. The text reports that Billow's assessment of exposed devices came 'Separately' from the attacks themselves. Discuss whether separating the two signals epistemic caution, a failure to investigate, or a deliberate rhetorical choice. What would a reader reasonably infer from the word 'Separately'?
3. At C2, we expect precision in evidence. Given that the passage describes exposed devices requiring 'urgent patching or updates,' but never states those devices were the vector of the attacks, evaluate whether the juxtaposition of these facts within one news item creates an implied causal link that the text does not actually warrant.

Answer key

For the teacher

Keep this page for yourself and copy only the pages before it. Short-answer and writing tasks list one possible answer.

Exercise 1 Stance and Register in Official Discourse

1. B. balance a characterization of intent with reassurance about present consequences Hansen 'characterized the attacks as deliberate attempts to erode public confidence' while simultaneously 'emphasizing that food security itself was not currently threatened.' This pairing balances acknowledgment of malicious intent with a reassurance about the immediate situation, a common official discourse strategy.
2. C. quantify the scale of impact relative to the total chain size to convey proportionality The writer uses 'roughly 800' as the total and 'six' as the affected number, giving the reader a proportional sense of scale. The word 'limited' reinforces that the impact is small relative to the whole, which is a key function of quantification in official reporting.
3. B. identifies a specific vulnerability class that connects broader security posture to the immediate incident without stating direct causation The word 'Separately' signals that this is a distinct but contextually related point. 'Exposed' describes a vulnerability state, not a completed breach. Billow connects the broader cybersecurity landscape (exposed devices needing urgent patching) to the incident without asserting direct causation, which is a careful evidential move.

Exercise 2 Precise Information Retrieval

1. Belgium's prosecution service launched a criminal probe into the incident. The text states that the coordinated attacks prompted 'Belgium's prosecution service to launch a criminal probe into the incident.'
2. The overnight system failures caused temperature rises in cooling equipment at numerous sites across Belgium and Luxembourg. The text specifies that both companies reported that 'overnight system failures caused temperature rises in cooling equipment at numerous sites across Belgium and Luxembourg.'
3. Recent assessments had uncovered a large number of exposed operational technology devices nationwide that required urgent patching or updates. Billow stated that 'recent assessments had uncovered a large number of exposed operational technology devices nationwide requiring urgent patching or updates.'

Exercise 3 Formal Register and Tense in Reported Speech

1. launched The original text uses past simple 'launched' because the probe has been initiated as a completed event within the narrative. In formal reporting, past simple is standard for stating that an authority took an action.
2. characterized 'Characterized' is the past simple form used in journalistic attribution. At C2, students should recognize 'characterize...as' as a fixed formal collocation for assigning a label or interpretation to an event in official discourse.
3. had uncovered The text uses past perfect 'had uncovered' because the assessments were completed before Billow made his statement. Past perfect signals a prior event in a sequence being reported retrospectively.
4. confirmed 'Confirmed' in past simple is the standard verb for attributing an official company statement in news reporting. At C2, students should note the register: 'confirmed' is more formal than 'said' and implies the statement validates an earlier report or expectation.

Exercise 4 Put the sentences in order

A, B, C Coordinated cyberattacks targeting refrigeration systems disrupted grocery operations across several European countries, prompting Belgium's prosecution service to launch a criminal probe into the incident. In Ireland, thirteen supermarkets were affected, with Carrefour, Intermarche, and Spar among the chains hit directly. Swedish operators ICA and Coop confirmed that a limited number of stores experienced disruptions, six of roughly 800 Coop locations impacted.

Exercise 5 Critical Commentary on Official Response and Evidential Stance

The coordinated attacks on refrigeration systems spread across several European countries, affecting thirteen supermarkets in Ireland and prompting Belgium's prosecution service to open a criminal investigation. Swedish chains reported a proportionally small number of impacted stores, while operations in Belgium and Luxembourg saw overnight temperature rises in cooling equipment. The incident's framing in official discourse reveals a careful balancing act. Commissioner Hansen characterized the attacks as deliberate attempts to erode public confidence in the EU food supply, yet he simultaneously stressed that food security itself was not currently threatened. This dual move acknowledges malicious intent while preventing public alarm. Separately, John Billow's disclosure of numerous exposed operational technology devices requiring urgent patching adds a structural dimension to the incident without explicitly linking those vulnerabilities to the attacks. The text's use of 'Separately' signals that this information extends the reader's understanding of the national cybersecurity posture rather than establishing causation. Together, these responses illustrate how authorities at C2-level public discourse manage competing demands: demonstrating competence and control while remaining transparent about systemic weaknesses that the attacks may have merely highlighted rather than created. One possible answer. Yours will be different and can still be good: check it against the list.