

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Shields Up: Broadband Providers on High Alert for Russian Cyberattack

While those of us in America are many miles away from the fighting in Ukraine, critical infrastructure providers here are bracing for the possibility of cyberattacks from Russia. Broadband providers are working closely with the **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)**, which is on high alert.

"I do think we need to be prepared for high level—[Vladimir Putin's] A-team—attacks against the West. Whether they start with nations in NATO that have weaker cyber controls or whether they go straight against the United States, Britain, France, Germany—time will tell," Senate Intelligence Committee Chair **Mark Warner** (D-VA) said during an interview with the *Washington Post Live* Monday. And he warned that when a top-tier nation like Russia uses top talent to attack, chances are the U.S. will not be 100% effective at stopping it. "It's a question of how quickly we can get back up—resiliency," he said.

On Saturday, CISA and the **FBI** issued a joint Cybersecurity Advisory providing an overview of destructive malware that has been used to target organizations in the Ukraine—known as **WhisperGate** and **HermeticWiper**—as well as guidance on how organizations can detect and protect their networks. Immediate actions that organizations can take include enabling multifactor authentication, filtering network traffic and enabling strong spam filters.

FCC Chair **Jessica Rosenworcel** has asked her colleagues to support an inquiry into the vulnerabilities threatening the

security and integrity of the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP), which is central to the Internet's global routing system. Her proposed NOI, which she circulated on Friday, would also look at vulnerabilities on the transmission of data through email, e-commerce, bank transactions, interconnected VoIP and 911 calls.

Warner warned that Russia has been using its "B-team" in the early days of its invasion of Ukraine, a decision he described as a miscalculation by Russian President Putin. He made a push for bipartisan legislation he helped introduce that would require government agencies, contractor and critical infrastructure providers (including broadband operators) to report cyber intrusions within 24 hours of their discovery so that real-time information can be shared. It needs to be passed this week, he said.

On Friday, Warner sent letters to **Alphabet, Twitter, TikTok, Meta, Reddit** and **Telegram** wanting assurances that they're working to prevent misuse of their platforms by Russia, saying information warfare is an integral part of Russian military doctrine. **YouTube** parent Alphabet said Saturday it would cut off ad revenue for multiple Russian outlets, including state-funded channel **RT**. It's not alone. "Virtually every one of these platforms have taken down some of the Russian activity or demonetized it so they're not making money off of RT or Russian ads on real time during the platforms." The senator commended the move, but said he shouldn't have to rely on goodwill. "We need some rules of the road on social media."

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I've been advocating this for some time, taking on Section 230 immunity that they have in this country... Whether it's in peace or war, these companies have unparalleled power."

In other Ukraine-Russia news, **FIFA** announced Monday that it would suspend Russia indefinitely, kicking it out of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Over the weekend, the EU banned state-owned RT, **Sputnik** and their subsidiaries. Meanwhile, reminders of the conflict are everywhere. **CTAM** President/CEO Vicki Lins attended a CTAM Europe board meeting online Monday with fellow board members representing eight countries. "It was touching to hear the heartfelt expressions of support for Ukraine + concern for all innocent people being impacted," she wrote on Twitter. "A few are close enough to hear explosions. All feel a human connection to what's happening."

NIelsen GEARING UP FOR 'DIGITAL FIRST' UPFRONT

Nielsen has been in hot water since the start of the pandemic, but CEO *David Kenny* is sure that it will be involved in every transaction that comes out of this spring's upfront presentations. "I think the thing that we're going to see different in the upfront this year is the digital players showing up. **Google** is out there, which is the biggest streaming platform... they're out there with a blog post, very clearly citing Nielsen ratings and they intend to go forward with those," he said on the company's 4Q21 earnings call Monday. "I think it's important when people are looking at the industry, they realize the industry as digital first, and so is Nielsen... This upfront is going to be for the first time an upfront with a lot of commitments to the streaming side also, and those are all going forward with Nielsen." That doesn't mean media companies won't seek out secondary

guarantees, but it does mean that Nielsen should be a part of every conversation occurring during the spring showcases. If that is how things shake out, it will be proof to Kenny that all of the criticisms the company has faced from programmers like **Discovery** don't tell the full story. Nielsen renewed all of its top 10 contracts over the last three years, and measurement revenues in 4Q21 rose 3.7% on a reported basis to \$647 million. Impact/Content revenues of \$247 million were down 0.4% thanks to some recovery in the company's sports business.

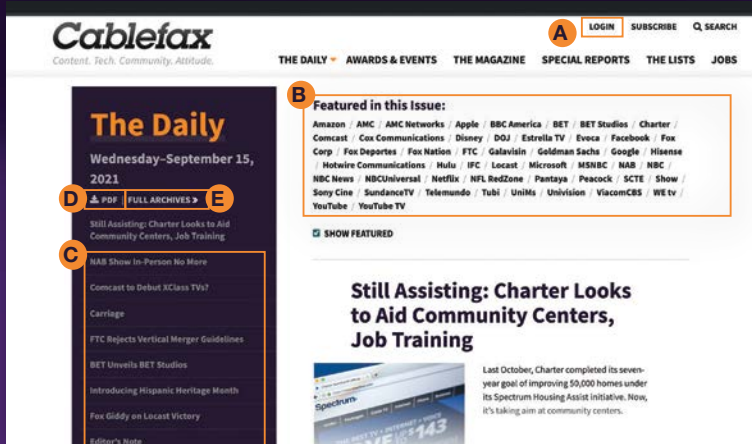
LICHT TAPPED TO LEAD CNN

Chris Licht is officially taking the driver's seat at **CNN**. He'll fill a hole left behind by *Jeff Zucker*, who resigned earlier this month after failing to disclose a consensual relationship with CNN EVP/Chief Marketing Officer *Allison Gollust*. Licht currently serves as EVP, Special Programming at **CBS** and Executive Producer/Showrunner for "The Late Show with Stephan Colbert." He's also credited with helping launch "CBS This Morning" in 2012. He's expected to start at CNN in early May following the completion of the **WarnerMedia-Discovery** merger. "I have known and admired Chris for more than 15 years and strongly believe he is the best person to lead CNN Global as part of **Warner Bros. Discovery**," incoming Warner Bros. Discovery CEO *David Zaslav* said in a statement. "Chris is a dynamic and creative producer, an engaging and thoughtful journalist and a true news person."

VERIZON ISSUES MORE RSN CREDITS

Those refunds for games not played due to COVID-19 continue to roll in. **Verizon Fios** notified customers that it's passing on another round of bill credits in March after receiving refunds from RSNs. The first round of credits for Verizon customers was

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issued in December 2020. It offered another round of credits in April 2021. The amount of the March credit varies by region.

NIelsen PURSUING FULL MRC ACCREDITATION

Nielsen is on the road back to full measurement accreditation, working with the **Media Ratings Council** to identify success criteria for re-accreditation. The MRC officially suspended accreditation for Nielsen's National Ratings Service and Local TV Ratings service in September after the **VAB** and the MRC's own audit found Nielsen undercounted viewership during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The company believes it is on the right track once again and hopes to have all accreditation efforts with the MRC completed by the middle of this year. "It's a complete audit of all components of the digital product... We rebuilt it from scratch," COO Karthik Rao said during the company's 4Q21 earnings call. "In regards to television measurement, as we've laid out very transparently, we started publishing tracking against all of the accreditation items required. This isn't just about accreditation. It's about raising the bar on quality more broadly."

TEGNA INCOME DROPS

TEGNA reported 4Q21 Adjusted EBITDA of \$245 million, a 43% YOY decrease due to the absence of record high-margin political revenue. Net income fell 47% to \$128.8 million from \$244.7 million a year ago. The company agreed last week to be acquired by **Standard General** in a \$5.4 billion all-cash transaction. The broadcaster nixed a previously scheduled earnings conference call because of the pending transaction. Speaking of the deal, **New Street Research** analysts don't think it's a slam dunk. It's a complicated transaction that involves **Apollo Global**, which owns **Cox Media Group** and its 33 stations. "Cox and TEGNA together would violate the national ownership rule prohibiting any entity from owning commercial television stations reaching more than 39% of U.S. television households nationwide," analysts noted. Cox nor Apollo will not own any equity interest in TEGNA. "[FCC] staff may want assurances that the non-voting interests are, in practice, non-voting interests and will remain so under every contingency. Further, we think the Democrats, particularly Commissioner designate [Gigi] Sohn, will not want to provide easy approval to a structure that allows an enterprise to control in any manner broadcast properties beyond the limit explicitly chosen by Congress," New Street wrote in a research note.

APLOVIN BUYS WURL

CTV streaming video distribution and advertising service provider **Wurl** signed a definitive agreement to be acquired by marketing software company **AppLovin**. Together, they'll bring new advertising and marketing services to CTV and mobile. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

EUPHORIC RATINGS

Sunday's Season 2 finale of **HBO's** "Euphoria" attracted a season-high 6.6 million viewers across all platforms, up 30% over last week's episode. The show's second season continues to dazzle with episodes now averaging 16.3 million viewers, marking it as the best performing season of any HBO series

other than "Game of Thrones" since 2004.

ESPN, WALT DISNEY REBRAND THE UNDEFEATED

ESPN and **Walt Disney Company** gave **The Undeclared** a new look, now calling it **Andscape**. The multimedia platform highlights Black culture in current events, music, fashion and more, and includes a website, book publishing firm, film and TV division and music publishing group. The newly expanded Andscape platform will create original content, starting with its first short film "Starkeisha," premiering March 7 on Andscape and **Hulu**. On Andscape's **YouTube** channel, a weekly show "Logged In" hosted by former NFL player *Domonique Foxworth* will dissect Black creativity across social media platforms starting March 4. Additionally, *Kelley Carter* will host "Another Act," a show focused on Black Hollywood.

TIVO LAUNCHES TIVO XTEND

In an effort to bridge the gap between streaming and linear consumers, **TiVo** launched **TiVo Xtend**, a suite of end-to-end advertising solutions using TiVo's deterministic TV viewership data. Features include data to identify who has or hasn't tuned into programming, custom or pre-made programmatic audience segments, premium CTV inventory and dynamic advertisements.

COMCAST NBCU TO HELP BLACK FILMMAKERS

In light of the one-year anniversary of **Black Experience on Xfinity**, **Comcast NBC Universal** will offer 10 \$100k grants to rising Black filmmakers. Black Experience on Xfinity has funded over 25 Black organizations and creators, with more than three million viewers watching a total of over 11 million hours of content.

BUTTER UP YOUR BROADBAND

We [heard](#) from 100-year-old farmer cooperative **Land O' Lakes** at **NCTC** and **ACA Connects' Independent Show** last fall, where the CEO detailed its American Connection Project that focuses on bridging the digital divide. On Monday, the co-op's podcast "Something Greater" dropped an entire episode on the digital inclusion program. A central issue discussed was a lack of broadband infrastructure and slower internet speeds in rural areas. "We see time and time again...where internet service providers...would do just enough to get the funding to expand into an area, and then that's it. They had no more incentive to build out," said *Ken Edwards*, a fellow of Land O' Lakes-formed fellowship program American Connection Corps. The program currently has 50 fellows serving in 12 states in a two-year pilot initiative to find ways to create digital inclusion. *Frontier Cooperative* CEO and farmer *Jeremy Wilhelm* detailed during the episode how grain facilities in his town were converted to WiFi towers that give the community a 5-10 mile radius of low-cost, high-speed internet. Given all those Rural Digital Opportunity Fund projects underway, you may want to give the [podcast](#) a listen.

PROGRAMMING

NBCUniversal will start the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games in Beijing with a 30-minute preview show Friday at 6:30am on **USA Network** and **Peacock**, followed by the Opening Ceremony at 7am. NBCU will offer over 120 hours of TV coverage of the Games, seven of which on **NBC**. All events will be available on Peacock.