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WannaCry Cyberattack Aftershock Feared as U.S. Warns of Its Complexity

The components of the global cyberattack that seized hundreds of thousands of computer systems last week may be more complex than originally believed, a Trump administration official said Sunday, and experts warned that the effects of the malicious software could linger for some time.

The attack is more complicated because “the experts tell us that this code was cobbled together from many places and sources,” according to an administration official who insisted on anonymity to discuss the government’s cybersecurity plans. The more potential sources of the malicious code, the harder it is for investigators to run down the trail of possible perpetrators.

Copycat variants of the malicious software behind the attacks have begun to proliferate, according to experts who were on guard for new attacks. “We are in the second wave,” said Matthieu Suiche of Comae Technologies, a cybersecurity company based in the United Arab Emirates. “As expected, the attackers have released new variants of the malware. We can surely expect more.”

The spread of the malicious software, or malware, has focused attention on several questions, including why a software patch, issued by Microsoft in March, was not installed by more users. But for many systems, especially older systems, such patches are not installed automatically — a fact the

hackers took advantage of. Microsoft has not said how it became aware of the vulnerability, but it seems likely it was tipped off by the National Security Agency.