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## NCA Arrests Four Suspects in UK Retail Cyberattacks

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The National Crime Agency (NCA) has detained four individuals linked to a series of high-profile ransomware attacks targeting major UK retailers, including Marks & Spencer, Co-op, and Harrods. The arrests, conducted in the early hours of 10 July, mark a significant step in tackling the growing threat of cybercrime to British businesses.

The suspects, apprehended at their residences, include two young men from the West Midlands, a 17-year-old Briton and a 19-year-old Latvian national; a 19-year-old British man from London, and a 20-year-old British woman from Staffordshire. The NCA has withheld their identities and specific arrest locations, citing the need to protect their right to a fair trial and to address safeguarding concerns.:

“There has been speculation about the identities of those suspected to be behind these attacks. We are unable to name those arrested today, as they are yet to be charged or convicted. This investigation is at an early stage, and protecting their right to a fair trial is paramount. We are also managing significant safeguarding concerns, which limit further details on locations.”

The four face charges under the Computer Misuse Act, alongside allegations of blackmail, money laundering, and involvement in an organised crime group. NCA officers seized electronic devices from the suspects’ homes, which are now undergoing forensic analysis to uncover further evidence. The individuals remain in custody for questioning, though the NCA has not disclosed how long they will be held.

Paul Foster, deputy director of the NCA’s National Cyber Crime Unit, commented in a recent interview:

Since these attacks occurred, our specialist cybercrime investigators have worked tirelessly. Today’s arrests are a crucial development, but our efforts continue with UK and international partners to ensure all those responsible face justice. I’d like to thank Marks & Spencer, Co-op, and Harrods for their cooperation, which underscores the importance of businesses engaging with law enforcement.”

The attacks disrupted operations at some of the UK's most prominent retailers, highlighting the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to cyber threats. The NCA praised the cooperation of the affected companies and local police forces, whose support was instrumental in the operation.

The investigation remains ongoing, with the NCA emphasising its commitment to rooting out those behind such disruptive attacks. As cybercrime continues to pose a significant risk to the UK economy, today's arrests serve as a reminder of the importance of robust cybersecurity measures and swift law enforcement action.