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Structural Condition Report: Research Update

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CHQ maintains ratings on a standing set of structural security conditions. A rating describes the confirmation state of a condition at a point in time; it is not a forecast. Supporting records and full governance ledgers are maintained in the CHQ registry at record.cybersecurityhq.com.

Executive Brief

What changed. Two pre-disclosure exploitation instances, at Ivanti and BeyondTrust, were admitted provisionally under SC-2026-006 (bringing the counted set to seven: five accepted, two pending independent reproduction). Ahsay withdrew a remediation assurance one day after issuing it. All eight structural ratings and Outlooks are unchanged: seven affirmed under applicable criteria, one (SC-2026-008) carried forward under a declared grandfathering rule. First published Structural Outlook resolution: SO-2026-001 (Atlassian unauthenticated file-read flaw added to the CISA catalog) resolved MET on 15 October.

Why it matters. The BeyondTrust case separates four dates that incident accounts often collapse: first exploitation, vendor detection, patch availability, and public disclosure, here spanning 29 August to 15 October. The Ahsay case demonstrates that a vendor's statement of remediation does not by itself establish that a vulnerability has been addressed.

What to investigate. Can your organization reconstruct an appliance's exposure from first documented exploitation to its own verified remediation; identify and rotate the credentials reachable through a compromised management appliance; and detect a security-relevant vendor release before the public advisory names the flaw? Section E sets these out.

A. Rating Actions and Outlooks

Seven structural conditions are affirmed under applicable criteria; SC-2026-008 is carried forward as CONFIRMED (grandfathered) under the non-retroactivity rule, not reaffirmed on evidence. No rating or Outlook changed under the 28-day window (22 September to 19

October). SC-2026-006 carries its updated name from this issue (formerly *Exploitation Precedes Defender Awareness*).

ID	Condition	Rating	Outlook	Action or Material Development
SC-2026-002	Edge and Management-Plane Compromise	**CONFIRMED**	Accumulating	Affirmed. Five reinforcing entries: Ivanti, Ahsay, Palo Alto Networks, BeyondTrust, Fortinet. Ahsay insufficient fix recorded.
SC-2026-006	Pre-Disclosure Exploitation	**CONFIRMED**	Accumulating	Affirmed (at ceiling). Two instances admitted provisionally (Ivanti, BeyondTrust); counted set at seven (five accepted, two provisional). One candidate held (Bricksforge); indeterminate pool at ten.
SC-2026-007	Enterprise Application Plane Exploitation	**CONFIRMED**	Accumulating	Affirmed. One reinforcing entry (Atlassian flaw affecting eight Data Center products; exploitation attempts against the vulnerability, not separate compromises of each product); new-platform trigger not met.
SC-2026-008	Autonomous AI Attack Operations	**CONFIRMED** *(grandfathered)*	Stable	Carried forward under non-retroactivity, not demonstrated against current standard; audit disposition January 2027. Grade B candidate pending adjudication.
SC-2026-009	Security Tooling as Exploited Surface	**CONFIRMED**	Accumulating	Affirmed. Two reinforcing entries (Cisco Secure Email Gateway; BeyondTrust, dual-tagged). Campaign-linkage trigger not met.
SC-2026-010	Vendor Risk-Signal Reliability	**EMERGING**	Receding	Affirmed. Ahsay withdrawn assurance meets the reversal definition; adjudicated after cutoff, it enters the count in Issue 44 (first of three required for re-escalation).
SC-2026-004	AI Agent Runtime Compromise	**EMERGING**	Stable	Affirmed. No production incident; Watch up carried.
SC-2026-011	Agent Authorization Boundary Failure	**STRENGTHENING**	Accumulating	Affirmed. Counted set provisional; second-operator candidate held on criterion scope; Watch up carried.

B. Principal Analytical Finding: Pre-Disclosure Exploitation at Two More Vendors

SC-2026-006 counts a confirmed-exploitation entry when exploitation is documented on a date preceding the first public statement identifying the vulnerable product and versions, with each date carrying its own source. Two entries met that test this week and are admitted provisionally, bringing the counted set to seven (five accepted, two pending independent reproduction).

Ivanti Connect Secure. Volexity's forensic account documents exploitation from 3 October via an unauthenticated chain to root. Ivanti's advisory, fix, and catalog listing are dated 13 October, a ten-day gap resting on independent responder and vendor sources. The 13 October patch addressed the authentication-bypass and remote-code-execution flaws; a separately identified privilege-escalation weakness remains scheduled for a later release. No bypass of the released patch has been established, and CHQ does not classify this as an insufficient fix.

BeyondTrust Remote Support. The vendor's chronology, published with its advisory, separates four distinct operational boundaries:

- **29 August:** First documented exploitation against one hosted instance and one self-hosted appliance.
- **28 September:** Vendor detection via threat hunt. The vendor notes that sensors fired during the intrusion, but a third-party platform's automated triage closed the alerts as false positives.
- **8 October:** Patch released to hosted and self-hosted customers; hosted instances patched automatically.
- **15 October:** Public advisory published alongside Mandiant's analysis (catalog listing 16 October).

The vendor established all four dates, the two victims, and the entry vector. Mandiant's own account (15 October) independently establishes exploitation at the self-hosted appliance and a start "in late August 2026" from its incident response; the day-precision of 29 August rests on the vendor. Attribution (ARMORY CASTLE, formerly UNC5221, per Mandiant and Google) is recorded as stated by the sources.

The measured public-disclosure gap is 47 days. An unresolved classification question remains regarding whether the 8 October release carried a public statement identifying the product and versions; the vendor publicly disclosed the flaw on 15 October while withholding technical mechanism details, and published no customer-notification date for the 8 October release. If

the 8 October release sufficed under clarification C1, the gap is 40 days. Patch availability, public disclosure, and customer remediation remain distinct boundaries; the instance qualifies on either reading.

Effect on the assessment. SC-2026-006 has been at its CONFIRMED ceiling since 24 September. The documented set now stands at seven qualifying instances across seven vendors in seven and a half months, with public-disclosure gaps spanning one day to seven weeks. This represents an observed minimum under CHQ's collection rather than a prevalence estimate; the condition has no population denominator, and public wording describing "a material fraction of confirmed cases" is withdrawn by correction this issue (Section F). A further entry at Fortinet (a flaw patched in April, used at an undated point in a September 2024 intrusion) enters the indeterminate pool as its tenth observation.

C. Other Material Developments

Ahsay (SC-2026-002; SC-2026-010). AhsayCBS, a backup console used by managed service providers, was actively exploited from 7 October (three days after disclosure) through chained authentication bypass and command injection; Huntress reported five organizations targeted as of 8 October. The sequence matters: on 8 October Huntress published that version 10.3.4 remained vulnerable; on 9 October the vendor stated both flaws were addressed in 10.3.4.0 (released in August) and upgraded partners were no longer affected; on 10 October it withdrew that assurance, acknowledged 10.3.4.0 did not fully address either flaw, and issued hotfix 10.3.4.45, with 9.15.2.70 on 12 October for older branches. The independent contradicting evidence predated the assurance; only the vendor's withdrawal came the next day. While the vendor states both hotfixes resolve the flaws, independent validation is narrower: Huntress verified that 10.3.4.45 mitigates the observed initial entry point, while 9.15.2.70 lacks independent validation. Recorded as a vendor-confirmed insufficient fix under SC-2026-002. Under SC-2026-010, the 9 October assurance contradicted Huntress evidence already public on 8 October and was withdrawn by Ahsay on 10 October. The insufficient-fix entry was admitted on 15 October; the reversal was separately adjudicated on 19 October after the 11:45 UTC cutoff and enters the published count in Issue 44, as the first since the 27 August reset, under the declared settling rule that defers any declaration made at or after a cutoff, favorable or adverse alike.

Edge and Management-Plane Phases (SC-2026-002). Five reinforcing entries span three stages of compromise:

- *Unauthenticated initial access:* Ivanti (VPN gateway), Ahsay (backup console), and BeyondTrust (remote support appliance).
- *Authenticated administrator abuse:* PAN-OS CVE-2026-0322 (management interface code injection under "very limited exploitation" per the vendor, undated; distinct from unexploited CVE-2026-0320).
- *Post-compromise control:* Fortinet CVE-2025-61624 (file write requiring administrator credentials, undated). Both PAN-OS and Fortinet sit in the SC-2026-006 indeterminate pool.

Security Tooling and Application Planes (SC-2026-009; SC-2026-007). Under SC-2026-009, Cisco Secure Email Gateway recorded its second exploited flaw from the 14 September fix, the fourth Cisco tooling entry since 9 September (exploitation awareness dated to October, start date unpublished). BeyondTrust is dual-tagged as a privileged-access tool. Under SC-2026-007, Atlassian disclosed an unauthenticated file-read flaw on 5 October; public technique followed on 6 October with exploitation attempts within hours (catalogued 15 October).

D. Outlook and Reclassification Triggers

Outlooks reflect a 28-day rolling window ending at the issue cutoff (22 September to 19 October). An *Accumulating* Outlook denotes recent admission of qualifying public evidence (governed by catalog listing date for catalog-backed entries and by declared condition-specific countability rules for other conditions), not necessarily recent exploitation. This is illustrated this week by the October catalog listing of a Fortinet vulnerability implicated in an intrusion dating to 2024. The control table is the full calculation for all eight conditions from the registry as frozen at the cutoff; it stays in the report until the registry carries a frozen per-issue snapshot.

Condition	Rule input checked	Finding in window	Ledger	Outlook
SC-2026-002	Last counted or reinforcing entry in the sub-classes	BeyondTrust and Fortinet, both catalog-listed 16 October	Signal ledger	Accumulating
SC-2026-006	Last counted instance	BeyondTrust, catalog 16 October (advisory 15 October)	Signal ledger; rating-action records	Accumulating
SC-2026-007	Last reinforcing entry in the class	Atlassian, catalog 15 October	Signal ledger	Accumulating

Condition	Rule input checked	Finding in window	Ledger	Outlook
SC-2026-009	Last reinforcing entry in the class	BeyondTrust (dual-tagged), catalog 16 October; Cisco SEG, catalog 14 October	Signal ledger	Accumulating
SC-2026-011	Last counted instance	Services Australia, countable 24 September; last cutoff that includes it 21 October	Signal ledger; condition entry record	Accumulating
SC-2026-008	Any counted instance in window	None: one supporting entry (25 September), one non-corroboration entry, one unadjudicated Grade B candidate	Signal ledger	Stable
SC-2026-004	Any counted production instance in window	None: one Grade B candidate; up-trigger unmet	Signal ledger	Stable
SC-2026-010	Reversals in the published count since the 27 August de-escalation	Zero; the Ahsay reversal, adjudicated after the cutoff, enters in Issue 44	Vendor conduct ledger	Receding (by rule)

What would change the assessments:

- **SC-2026-002, SC-2026-006, SC-2026-007, SC-2026-009:** At ceiling. De-escalation requires two consecutive quarterly cycles without a qualifying confirmed-exploitation entry. Campaign linkage across the Cisco cluster forces a review for SC-2026-009; a new confirmed-exploited platform forces a review for SC-2026-007.
- **SC-2026-010:** Re-escalation from *Receding* requires three documented reversals post-27 August (Ahsay enters as the first in Issue 44).
- **SC-2026-004:** A first confirmed production incident at the required grade escalates the rating to STRENGTHENING.
- **SC-2026-011:** Grade A instances at two or more independent operators move the rating to CONFIRMED (gated on clarification v1.1 ratification at the Q4 audit). Currently *Accumulating* based on Services Australia (countable 24 September); shifts to *Stable* in Issue 44 absent a new entry.
- **SC-2026-008:** The Q4 audit (January 2027) will set an agency evidence standard, test the founding evidence against it, and either demonstrate or lower the grandfathered rating.

E. Institutional Implications

Five questions follow from this week's evidence for security leadership to assign internally:

1. **Exposure reconstruction.** Can the organization establish from its own records whether a given appliance was internet-reachable on a vulnerable version between first documented exploitation and verified remediation, and has each such appliance been assessed as potentially compromised rather than merely marked patched?
2. **Credential reach.** For each appliance that stores or brokers authentication material for downstream systems, can the organization enumerate what it held, and does the rotation plan treat the appliance itself as the breach?
3. **Vendor release detection.** Would a security-relevant vendor release on 8 October have registered in your intake process before a public advisory named the vulnerability on 15 October?
4. **Alert disposition authority.** BeyondTrust's sensors fired during the intrusion, but a third-party platform's automated triage closed the alerts as false positives; detection came a month later via hunting. Can automated triage in your environment close high-severity alerts without human review, and can you reconstruct which detections were suppressed, by which system, under what authority?
5. **Withdrawn assurance.** Where a vendor's remediation assurance was the basis for closing an internal vulnerability finding, is the finding automatically reopened when the assurance is withdrawn?

These questions identify areas for internal investigation; CHQ does not assess their applicability to any specific environment.

F. Reliance Qualifications and Registry Record

Material qualifications affecting reliance on this issue's ratings are disclosed below. Complete methodology records, integrity gate logs, and forecast scoring snapshots are published at `record.cybersecurityhq.com`.

- **Provisional Admissions (SC-2026-006).** CHQ rules require blind reproduction of principal adjudications; no independent adjudicator is currently appointed. The Ivanti and BeyondTrust instances are counted under exception CHQ-STAB-2026-001-EXC-1 ("provisionally accepted, reproduction overdue"), authorized by the DM at the cutoff and recorded as a transitional governance deviation, not as compliance: the declared standard had no exception mechanism, and the same ratification that added one authorized its first

use. The exception is reviewed on 26 October and closes on 2 November. If reproduction has not run by then, both instances revert to held status and the counted set reverts to five by published correction in Issue 45. Disclosure of an unperformed control is not the assurance the control would have provided.

- **Grandfathered Rating (SC-2026-008).** Retained as CONFIRMED under non-retroactivity (originally confirmed 7 July under a single-event clause removed 6 October). Not demonstrated against the current standard; scheduled for disposition at the January 2027 audit.
- **Integrity Gate and Collection Limits.** Fourteen of fifteen automated integrity checks passed; the trigger-state check ran and failed because the advisory engine calculation had not been rebuilt since 14 October, compensated by manual verification of the 28-day Outlook window in the registry. The Fortinet advisory and ENISA feed were unreadable by CHQ tooling this week. Evidence collection and adjudication are performed by one analyst preceded by an internal integrity gate and AI-assisted adversarial review.
- **Forecast Record.** SO-2026-001 (issued 13 October at 0.65) resolved MET on 15 October (Brier score 0.1225, n = 1). A second resolution occurring on the 19 October cutoff date enters at Issue 44 under the pre-cutoff inclusion rule. Eleven Structural Outlooks and five Forecast Register claims remain open.
- **Registry Corrections and Governance.** At publication sync, SC-2026-006 withdraws unmeasured prevalence phrasing ("a material fraction of confirmed cases") and SC-2026-010 aligns public reversal wording with the ratified unit rule; neither alters criteria, ratings, or counts. Governed under Ratings Methodology v1.3, SC-2026-006 criterion v2.0 (with C1), Criteria Governance Standard v1.0, and Publication Stability Standard v1.1, ratified at this cutoff. This issue contains two governance changes (the SC-2026-006 name change and the standard's entry into force, both decided 14 October), exceeding the one-change limit that applies from Issue 44.

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