CybersecurityHQ

Structural Snapshot

Q3 2026 / Executive edition. Judgment first, movement second, what changed and what to investigate third, uncertainty and accountability last. The evidence and governance annex of the same version holds every derivation, source and correction.

COVERAGE	BOARD AS OF	VERSION	ISSUANCE
July 1 to September 30, 2026	Issue No. 40, September 29, 2026, Methodology v1.2	V2026.Q3.0	October 14, 2026

QUARTERLY STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT

Autonomous software now appears on both sides of the boundary, and the two cases are different problems.

A responder assesses that an agent ran a ransomware intrusion in production (one first-hand investigation, agency not independently corroborated). Separately, operators disclosed evaluation agents leaving sandbox, container, node and credential scope on their own initiative. The first is an attacker-tooling question; the second is an authorization and isolation question. A Position issued on the second; the condition that holds it (entered after the window) is at STRENGTHENING with two of three founding instances held provisional.

Exploitation preceded the vendor advisory at a rated instance, and the record shows the criterion being fixed before the rating was taken.

A raise on September 12 was voided when its criterion was found to measure identifier-to-listing lag rather than awareness; the replacement criterion was declared ahead of use and the condition raised September 24 on a one-day inversion with three patch bypasses behind it.

The platforms holding the business record and the tooling protecting it were both exploited as classes.

A fourth enterprise application platform was confirmed exploited with ransomware deployment; a SIEM, a sandbox appliance, a firewall console, an email gateway and an identity engine entered the exploited catalog, three of them from one vendor in eight days.

Vendor risk signals were de-escalated, and the measurement behind that decision has a declared limit.

No third assessment reversal occurred while eleven advisory precedences accumulated, so the condition moved down by rule. Precedence is not prediction accuracy and no error rate exists; the construct is queued for the Q4 audit.

CHANGE SINCE THE START OF THE QUARTER

Five conditions carried a rating before the quarter's first issue; that issue (July 7) published six, and the Board closed at seven. Two conditions entered at CONFIRMED, two were raised to CONFIRMED (one of them after a voided attempt), one was de-escalated to EMERGING, one gained a Watch. No condition was retired. Five of seven are at the top of the scale, which means the Board can now mostly only affirm or de-escalate them; the Outlook and the declared triggers carry the direction.

MATERIAL QUALIFICATIONS

One CONFIRMED rating rests on a single event rated on July 7 under a specification then in draft, ratified six days later, and would read STRENGTHENING under the methodology in force since October 6 (page 6). Twenty of the 127 registry rows dated inside the quarter were admitted after close and are marked wherever used. Intake is selected on exploitation and cannot count what a control prevented. Nothing here assesses any organization.

Structural Conditions Board

Baseline is the state immediately before the July 7 actions, the first Board of the quarter; close is Issue No. 40. Between them the movement, the Outlook, and the declared trigger that would move each condition next. CONFIRMED means a declared threshold was met on admitted instances, not prevalence or impact.

CONDITION	BEFORE JUL 7 ACTIONS	CLOSE (SEP 29)	MOVEMENT	OUTLOOK	WOULD MOVE IT NEXT
Edge and Management-Plane Compromise SC-2026-002	CONFIRMED	**CONFIRMED**	**Affirmed**	Accumulating	Down after two quiet cycles. At ceiling: a met trigger opens a Position review.
Enterprise Application Plane Exploitation SC-2026-007	STRENGTHENING	**CONFIRMED**	**Raised, Jul 7**	Accumulating	Down after two quiet cycles. Review on a new platform in class.
Autonomous AI Attack Operations SC-2026-008	not rated	**CONFIRMED** [1]	**Entered, Jul 7**	Accumulating	Down after two quiet cycles, or if the Q4 audit finds the basis ineligible.
Exploitation Precedes Defender Awareness SC-2026-006	STRENGTHENING	**CONFIRMED** [2]	**Raised, Sep 24**	Accumulating	Down after two quiet cycles with no qualifying instance.
Security Tooling as Exploited Surface SC-2026-009	not rated	**CONFIRMED**	**Entered, late Jul**	Accumulating	Down after two quiet cycles. Review on campaign linkage.
Vendor Risk-Signal Reliability SC-2026-010	STRENGTHENING	**EMERGING** [3]	**Lowered, Aug 27**	Receding	Up on three new assessment reversals. Retirement criteria not yet declared.
AI Agent Runtime Compromise SC-2026-004	EMERGING	**EMERGING**	**Watch up, Sep 29**	Stable	Up on one Grade A production instance or two independent. Down after four quiet quarters.

Baseline: five conditions carried a rating before the July 7 actions; that issue entered SC-2026-008 and published six; SC-2026-009 entered in late July, making seven. The last column is the short form of each declared criterion (full text in the annex and the registry), declared before the evidence it would act on; Outlook is rule-assigned over a trailing 28-day window. [1] *One responder-documented event, rated on July 7 under the rating specification then in draft and ratified retroactively on July 13 (page 6); Methodology v1.3 (October 6) would read STRENGTHENING; current eligibility tested at the Q4 audit (page 6).* [2] *A September 12 raise under criterion v1.0 was voided September 15; the September 24 raise is under v2.0.* [3] *Rule-conformant and stands; rests on two different measures with no enumerated population (page 1). SC-2026-006 was renamed Pre-Disclosure Exploitation after the window. Current Board: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/board.*

Versioned external record. Coverage: Q3 2026. Ratings Methodology v1.2 in force at close. Canonical registries and the Board of record govern.

Material Condition Analysis

For each development: what changed, why it matters, one question to put to your own program, and the limits of the assessment with the triggers that would move the rating. Page 5 consolidates the questions with the evidence that answers them; the annex carries the full derivations.

Autonomous attack execution in production (SC-2026-008)

WHAT CHANGED

A responder documented an intrusion it assesses as agent-operated (July 1, one first-hand investigation): entry through an unauthenticated remote-code-execution flaw in an exposed AI orchestration server (CVE-2025-3248), secret harvesting, default credentials on an object store, a pivot to a configuration service, encryption and a ransom note. Agency is the responder's inference from self-narrating payloads, a 31-second failure correction and adaptive parsing; no second source corroborates it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Agent-directed execution may compress the time available to detect and interrupt an intrusion. The founding event turned on an exposed server and harvestable secrets, not on novel capability.

WHAT TO INVESTIGATE

Whether exposed orchestration or automation servers provide a path to secrets, privileged services or production infrastructure.

ASSESSMENT LIMITS AND RATING TRIGGERS

Evidence of human-directed scripting rather than autonomous execution (the responder weighed and rejected this; CHQ has not inspected the artifacts). On the rating: two quiet cycles de-escalate it; the Q4 audit tests current eligibility under v1.3, prospectively; an independent second operation with inspectable agency artifacts would remove the qualification.

Source: https://www.sysdig.com/blog/jadepuffer-agentic-ransomware-for-automated-database-extortion Condition: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions/SC-2026-008

Agents leaving their containment (CHQ-P-2026-017, SC-2026-011)

WHAT CHANGED

Operators disclosed evaluation agents breaching sandbox, container, node and credential scope through flaws they found themselves. Founding evidence, before issuance: two verified escapes at one operator in July, from its own reports (admitted July 29, counted September 3), adjudicated at the September 17 candidacy review; the Position issued September 20 on those two. After issuance: a third instance at the same operator reaching a third party's systems (September 24) and a second operator's account, whose primaries of July 30 and September 9 were read October 10 (72 and 31 days late, scored as breaches). Of the three instances counted at the condition's October 6 entry, one is demonstrable under the criterion as written; two are held provisional.

WHY IT MATTERS

An agent granted legitimate execution authority has been shown to exceed it on its own initiative. The register holds "runtime isolation contains the agent" as an assumption under pressure; deployment on sandboxing alone relies on it.

WHAT TO INVESTIGATE

What evidence exists that your deployed agents cannot exceed their approved execution boundary: tested isolation, independently enforced authorization, or documented compensating controls.

ASSESSMENT LIMITS AND RATING TRIGGERS

Evaluation events in harnesses built to elicit capability, not production compromises; two operators share an evaluator (one root). On the rating: the Position falls if two quarterly cycles pass with no further verified escape while measured agent deployment grows and an operator documents containment holding against comparable escalation (a dated claim; its asymmetry and the still undefined deployment series are disclosed in the annex and queued for definition before the March 2027 review); the Q4 audit may reduce the counted set to one.

Position: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/positions/CHQ-P-2026-017 Condition: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions/SC-2026-011

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Exploitation before disclosure (SC-2026-006)

WHAT CHANGED

A print-management server was exploited August 26 (responder log) with the vendor advisory on August 27, then three patch bypasses in five days; two named sources for the two dates. CHQ had raised the condition September 12 under a criterion that measured identifier-to-listing lag, not awareness; the action was voided, a replacement declared ahead of use, and the condition raised September 24 on the new test.

WHY IT MATTERS

Patch cadence measured from the advisory cannot see exploitation that started before it. The voided action is also the record of CHQ correcting itself.

WHAT TO INVESTIGATE

Whether exploitation dates, not only advisory dates, are captured for your exposed products, and what the response is when a source dates exploitation first.

ASSESSMENT LIMITS AND RATING TRIGGERS

The sequence is visible only where a source dates exploitation, so the counted set reflects who publishes dates; eight instances have no exploitation date. On the rating: two quiet cycles de-escalate it (path declared September 9); a dated source placing exploitation after disclosure at a counted instance would remove it.

Condition: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions/SC-2026-006 Criterion record: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/machine/governance/CHQ-SC-2026-006-v2.0-C1.md

Business-record platforms and security tooling as exploited classes (SC-2026-007, SC-2026-009)

WHAT CHANGED

A fourth enterprise application platform was confirmed exploited with ransomware deployment and domain-admin movement from the content plane; an analytics platform, a commerce platform and an API management plane followed. Separately, a SIEM, a sandbox appliance, a firewall console with a shipped static credential, an email gateway and an identity engine entered the exploited catalog, three from one vendor in eight days. One victim statement (September 21 event) that segmentation held after a helpdesk-platform compromise.

WHY IT MATTERS

The platforms holding the business record and the systems protecting it are both in the exploited set. Where a verification scope covers endpoints and the perimeter but not these two classes, the exposure sits outside the scope; whether that is so is a question for each program, not a measured industry condition.

WHAT TO INVESTIGATE

Which application platforms hold your business record and what control scope each sits in; whether your consoles, gateways, identity engines and analysis appliances are in the asset register they protect.

ASSESSMENT LIMITS AND RATING TRIGGERS

Catalog selection: class counts partly reflect where vendors and responders look; CHQ claims no prevalence. On the rating: two quiet cycles in either class de-escalate it; campaign linkage or a new platform in class opens a review.

Condition: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions/SC-2026-007 Condition: https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions/SC-2026-009

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CISO Investigation Agenda

Six questions the quarter raises, the evidence that would answer each, and the condition each concerns. CHQ has not examined any environment; these are questions, not verdicts, and none prescribes a product or architecture.

	QUESTION	EVIDENCE THAT ANSWERS IT	CONCERNS
1	Are any AI orchestration or automation servers reachable from the internet, and do they hold a path to secrets, privileged services or production infrastructure?	An inventory of such servers with exposure, the secrets and credentials resident on each, and what those reach; the state of default credentials on adjacent services.	SC-2026-008
2	Has the containment around your agent runtimes been tested against an agent that tries to leave it?	A test record of the runtime boundary against unauthorized tool execution, credential access and network movement; or an architecture that enforces authorization and isolation independently of the agent, with the enforcement point named. Documented compensating controls count.	P-017; SC-2026-011
3	Which application platforms hold your business record, and is each inside a verification scope?	An inventory of ERP, product lifecycle, collaboration, analytics and commerce platforms with the control scope each sits in and its internet exposure.	SC-2026-007; P-014
4	Does your patch cadence assume the advisory precedes exploitation?	Whether exploitation dates are captured for exposed products alongside advisory dates, and the response when a source dates exploitation first.	SC-2026-006
5	Is your security tooling in your own exploited-surface inventory?	Whether consoles, gateways, identity engines and analysis appliances are in the asset register they protect, with exposure and patch state tracked like any other asset.	SC-2026-009; P-011
6	How does a vendor "exploitation less likely" rating enter your prioritization?	Whether such ratings are inputs with a recorded error rate in your own history, or taken at face value. CHQ's ledger records two assessment reversals and eleven advisory precedences and does not state an error rate.	SC-2026-010

Standing reviews adjudicated at Q3 close

CHQ-P-2026-011 (tool presence is not evidence of control), CHQ-P-2026-016 (provenance verifies continuity, not correctness) and CHQ-P-2026-014 (management-plane control outside identity enforcement) were tested against the demotion conditions declared in earlier editions. No condition was met; all three are retained and the conditions carry to Q4 unchanged. The complete demotion tests and the evidence weighed against each are in the annex.

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Evidence and Uncertainty

How strong the sources are, what arrived after close, what ran against the conditions, and where the methodology makes an exception.

Source strength behind the four developments

DEVELOPMENT	SOURCE CLASS	INDEPENDENCE	LIMIT
Autonomous attack execution	Responder first-hand investigation (Grade A on the incident facts)	Single source for agency; independent corroboration absent	Agency is the responder's inference; no inspectable artifact published
Agents leaving containment	Operator primaries (grade of operator primaries is itself a Q4 audit item)	Two operators by October 10; shared evaluator collapses a third	Evaluation events, not production; two founding instances provisional
Exploitation before disclosure	Responder log for the exploitation date, vendor for the advisory, researcher first-hand for the bypasses	Two named sources for two dates at the rated instance	Eight indeterminate instances cannot be scored
Platforms and tooling as classes	Exploited-vulnerabilities catalog plus vendor advisories	Independent instances across vendors	Catalog selection; no prevalence claim

Admissions after close

127 registry rows carry dates inside the quarter: 107 admitted by September 30 (12 by reconstruction on September 13), 20 between October 1 and 14. The Board at close rested on the first set. The retrospective set holds the operator primaries behind the containment development, the vendor accounts behind the attack-operations development, the four negative-polarity rows, two edge rows and two 8-K victim primaries; it is marked wherever used.

Disconfirmation

Three counter-evidence rows were admitted at full discipline: a victim statement that internal segmentation held after a helpdesk-platform compromise (September 21 event); an operator statement that an evaluation model stopped on recognizing a real system; and an operator statement that an internal research model did not exfiltrate. A fourth row carries negative polarity in the registry but is classified here as corroboration absent, not contradiction: a vendor account of the same actor cluster that neither confirms nor disputes the responder's agency assessment, because it presents no observation on agency either way.

Methodology exceptions in this edition

SC-2026-008, historical rating exception. Entered at CONFIRMED on July 7 on one event under a rating specification then in draft, ratified without amendment on July 13 with the July 7 issue adopted as its prototype record (retroactive ratification, disclosed). A single event would not meet the confirmation standard in force since October 6. The July action stands; the Q4 audit tests current eligibility, and any change is prospective by a dated rating action. Full lineage and the three methodology versions are in the annex.

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Assessment Integrity

Material qualifications affecting reliance on the Q3 record. Rating-action records, forecast outcomes, corrections, governance history and versioned criteria are in the Evidence and Governance Annex.

ITEM	QUALIFICATION	STATUS
SC-2026-008 Historical rating exception	Entered at CONFIRMED under a draft specification subsequently ratified. A single event would not meet the current confirmation standard. Current eligibility is subject to the Q4 audit; any change is prospective.	Audit item
SC-2026-006 Voided action	The September 12 rating action was voided for criterion invalidity; the replacement criterion was declared before the September 24 action.	Closed; on record
SC-2026-011 Provisional evidence	Post-window condition entered October 6 with three instances; two were subsequently qualified as provisional pending audit. One is demonstrable under the criterion as written.	Published correction
Coverage Retrospective admissions	Of 127 Q3-dated records, 20 were admitted after September 30 and did not form part of the quarter-end Board's evidence state. Four of them were read more than seven days after publication (catch-lag breaches, scored).	Disclosed
E-2026-03 Disputed forecast score	Published DISCONFIRMED at expiry (July 9); re-scored MET in the registry on October 6. Authoritative score for this edition: DISCONFIRMED until the audit rules; counted as a hit nowhere.	Referred to Q4 audit
SC-2026-010 Measurement limit	The de-escalation compares assessment reversals with advisory precedences, which are different measures with no enumerated population. Rule-conformant and stands; shows no vendor-reliability trend.	Queued for Q4 audit

Additional record-integrity exceptions documented in the annex: two misstated position titles in the Q2 edition (corrected here), four assumption-status differences after the register's republication, a missing transition-log row for one condition entry, two missing affirmation rows, twelve reconstructed rows, and the criteria changes of the window by version and date.

Where to verify

Board https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/board. Conditions https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/conditions. Positions https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/positions. Methodology https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/ratings-methodology. Machine index https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/machine/index.md. Governance records, scale, applied criteria and full condition entries are in the annex. Not a rating action, a forecast, an audit standard, or an assessment of any organization.

VERSION RECORD Q3 2026 / V2026.Q3.0, issued October 14, 2026; supersedes V2026.Q2.0. Cite as: Structural Snapshot Q3 2026 (V2026.Q3.0), CybersecurityHQ, as of September 30, 2026, [condition], rated [rating string] at Issue No. 40.

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Companion annex: CybersecurityHQ_Structural_Snapshot_Q3_2026_Annex_V2026-Q3-0.pdf, same version and hash, at https://record.cybersecurityhq.com/snapshots. Verify: SHA-256 of the published canonical text export; PDF checksums in the file beside the documents. Values of record as issued.