Securing the Modern SOC with NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks

Transform Today's Threats into Resilience for Tomorrow

Africa's digital transformation is gaining momentum, but so are the threats. As more public and private sector services shift online, the continent is becoming a growing target for cybercriminals. In 2024, cybercrime accounted for more than 30% of all reported crime in Western and Eastern Africa.[1] Critical infrastructure, from energy grids to healthcare networks, is now in the crosshairs of increasingly organized and persistent threat actors. With 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25 and internet penetration accelerating, the gap between digital adoption and cyber readiness continues to grow.[2]

While the attack surface expands, the cybersecurity workforce remains under-resourced. The continent suffers from a vast skills shortage. For example, Nigeria—Africa's most populous country—had only 8,352 certified cybersecurity professionals in 2023.[3] The problem is both local and global. Globally, there's a gap of 4.8 million cybersecurity professionals—the number of people needed to protect businesses properly, but who aren't currently available.[4]

This lack of cybersecurity personnel resources makes it essential for organizations to turn to security partners and technologies that can ease the pressure and help them stay protected. The future of security operations will be defined by intelligence, not headcount. AI-powered security operations centers (SOCs) help organizations detect, investigate, and respond to threats at machine speed, improving analyst productivity and reducing the time a threat actor remains undetected. As the threat landscape grows, more complex and skilled defenders remain scarce. AI will be the defining force that reshapes how African enterprises secure their digital futures.

Transform Your SOC with NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks

Evolving to a modern SOC demands a shift in how security is delivered and embedded across organizations. Together, NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks offer a platform-led approach that transforms how organizations detect, respond to, and contain threats. NEC XON brings a deep cybersecurity heritage, with a track record of supporting high-risk, regulated industries across Africa. Their local credibility and regulatory expertise make them a trusted partner for building resilient, compliant SOC operations.

Instead of deploying the Palo Alto Networks Cortex® platform as a technology, NEC XON deeply embeds it into end-to-end cybersecurity strategies—from proactive threat hunting and rapid incident response to full SOC optimization.

Cortex, the AI-driven security operations platform, brings together automation, analytics, and threat intelligence to accelerate detection and response across an organization's environment. NEC XON seamlessly integrates the Cortex platform with existing tools and legacy systems. This integration gives organizations comprehensive telemetry, visibility, and intelligent automation, without needing a costly re-architecture. The result is faster time to value, streamlined operations, and richer threat context across every signal and event.

This solution is delivered through an Africa-first model, backed by the global scale of NEC XON. Modular Cortex service packages—from managed detection and response (MDR) to extended detection and response (XDR) engineering as a service—enable organizations to mature at their own pace. Whether the goal is to strengthen defenses, improve operational efficiency, or address the cyber skills gap, together NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks build smarter, more responsive SOC environments that adapt to each organization's needs.

1. "New INTERPOL report warns of sharp rise in cybercrime in Africa," Interpol, June 23, 2025.
2. "How Africa's youth will drive global growth," World Economic Forum, August 16, 2023.
3. "Employers Must Act as Cybersecurity Workforce Growth Stalls and Skills Gaps Widen," ISC2, September 11, 2024.
4. *Global Cybersecurity Workforce Prepares for an AI-Driven World*, ISC2, October 31, 2024.

Build a Customized SOC Strategy for Evolving Threats

Organizations across Africa need a cybersecurity approach that aligns with how their business operates and how their technology stack is configured. NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks deliver a tailored SOC strategy that goes beyond product integration. Our joint approach helps organizations both respond to threats and fundamentally reshape how they prepare for and contain them.

This approach is architectural and advisory-led, starting with a deep understanding of each organization's business architecture—including the revenue flows; the organizational mission; and how people, processes, and technologies interact. This high-level view enables our teams to identify misaligned tools, redundant capabilities, and unexploited investments. Based on these insights, NEC XON delivers a cost rationalization exercise and reimagines the architecture offering better protection while simplifying business operations overall. This blueprint informs a tailored SOC strategy, offering a realistic roadmap from an organization's current state to a secure, sustainable, and optimized future state.

For NEC XON, the SOC strategy is the bridge between business aspirations and technical execution. It's here where our partnership delivers the most value. While Palo Alto Networks provides industry-leading platforms and capabilities—from XDR to automation and threat intelligence—NEC XON ensures they are integrated into our joint customers' architectural DNA, driving maximum value and ongoing optimization.

> "When you—as a business—control the architecture, you control the movement and adaptability of an adversary."
>
> – NEC XON

Driving Real Business Outcomes Through a Joint Approach

Our integrated approach delivers critical business outcomes for organizations:

- **Greater control over threats** by designing environments that adversaries can't easily navigate.
- **Faster recovery and response** through a visibility-driven architecture that supports real incident management, not a reactive crisis mode.
- **Cost optimization** that reduces tool sprawl and frees up budgets to reinvest in transformation.
- **Sustained value** from the Palo Alto Networks stack, embedded within a framework that's designed to evolve with the business.

Through this partnership, Palo Alto Networks and NEC XON combine their strengths. While Palo Alto Networks offers cutting-edge security technology, NEC XON provides strategic advisory and consulting services. NEC XON goes beyond systems integration to focus on customer value, using a curiosity-driven, consultative approach that builds trust, reduces complexity, and helps our joint customers realize measurable returns on their cybersecurity investments.

Real-World Impact of the NEC XON Architecture-First Methodology

Telecommunications Provider
A looming ransomware attack was neutralized in minutes with Cortex XDR®, avoiding millions of pounds in downtime and remediation costs.[5]

Financial Services Firm
By consolidating firewalls, secure access service edge (SASE), and XDR on a single platform, this customer reduced annual software spend by 28% and cut incident triage times by 54%.[6]

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5. "NEC XON, Palo Alto Networks unite to unlock cyber security ROI through platformisation," ITWeb, May 29, 2025.

6. Ibid.

Unlock Cyber Expertise for SOC Excellence

The NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks partnership goes beyond delivering cutting-edge security solutions. In a region where the cybersecurity skills shortage is acute and growing, it brings the expert talent needed to operate and optimize them. For our joint customers across Africa, this is now a critical capability.

Cybersecurity is complex, and certified professionals are just the starting point. When these individuals also embody what NEC XON calls the "actor mindset"—thinking like adversaries—organizations can stay one step ahead. With its deep red teaming roots, NEC XON contributes practical, real-world insights that enhance the value of the partnership, equipping security teams to anticipate, act, and evolve, as well as to respond fast.

What makes this partnership unique is the structured and ambitious skills enablement model NEC XON has built around the Palo Alto Networks portfolio. Engineers get hands-on exposure to fully equipped demo labs simulating real-world ransomware scenarios. They're encouraged to explore, break things, test hypotheses, and learn through doing. This curiosity-driven culture both fills the skills gap and sparks a movement.

The partnership has already led to NEC XON managing over 18 engineers who are certified across the Palo Alto Networks portfolio, including Cortex XDR, SASE, Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFWs), and Cloud.

> "Technology alone doesn't solve problems. It's the expertise behind it that drives outcomes."
> – NEC XON

Business Benefits

- **Faster detection and response:** The NEC XON actor mindset enables quicker, more decisive action.
- **Improved platform utilization:** The skills translate directly into value and risk mitigation.
- **Operational resilience:** Real-world experience means better incident readiness.
- **Long-term capability building:** Upskilling local talent sustains security investments.
- **Platform synergy:** Integrated architecture and holistic defense strategies are underpinned by deep expertise and certification across the full Palo Alto Networks platform.

AI-Powered Threat Detection for a Next-Generation SOC

Modern cybersecurity is fraught with alert fatigue and dashboard overload. Across the region, organizations face rising threats, a shortage of skilled professionals, and legacy SOCs that struggle to keep up. One study reported that nearly 70% of organizations are overwhelmed by the volume of alerts generated by security analytics tools, offering little in terms of real-time response or forward-looking threat anticipation.[7]

NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks address this challenge by delivering a unified, AI-powered security operations platform solution that transforms this outdated model. The cloud-native and fully automated Palo Alto Networks Cortex XSIAM® platform at the solution core unifies detection, prevention, response, and anticipation into a single, seamless architecture.

Unlike legacy tools, which operate in silos and are compliance-driven, XSIAM integrates natively across all security pillars, from endpoint to cloud, reducing tool sprawl and architectural gaps. Instead of organizations being overwhelmed by reactive alerts, they now gain the visibility and context needed to anticipate threats before they happen and respond faster when they do.

> "Legacy SIEM is just a fancy log collection. It keeps teams reactive, not resilient. What's needed is a shift to proactive security."
> – NEC XON

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7. "Security analysts struggle with alert fatigue," ITWeb, July 8, 2022.

Delivering Value Through a Unique Approach

- **Cultural transformation:** It's not enough to simply deploy a tool. NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks help shift the mindset from a reactive crisis-driven response to proactive threat hunting.
- **Unified platform with managed services expertise:** NEC XON integrates its MDR services with the Palo Alto Networks Cortex XSIAM platform to ensure quick delivery of maximum customer value.
- **Outcomes over alerts:** Business and cybersecurity executives can access cloud-based dashboards that highlight business value, such as the number of autoremediated threats, rather than raw technical data.
- **Continuous architectural improvement:** As a valued Palo Alto Networks managed security services provider (MSSP), NEC XON doesn't stop at deployment. Instead, they work closely with organizations to evolve their architecture toward continuous cyber resilience.

This new way of thinking is already helping organizations across the region take control of their security posture and move from simply surviving to confidently anticipating what's next.

Business Benefits

- **Improved SOC efficiency:** Automate security operations and free up skilled staff for proactive threat anticipation.
- **Faster response, lower risk:** Reduce mean time to detect and respond—or eliminate the need entirely through better anticipation and prevention.
- **Cost optimization:** Consolidate legacy tools, reduce redundancy, and simplify security architecture.
- **Executive-level visibility:** Cloud-native dashboards deliver business-aligned insights without PDFs or manual reporting.

Future-Ready SOC in Action

NEC XON Secures Leading South African Enterprise

A major South African enterprise faced a critical cyber risk from an exposed RDP service—an entry point often exploited by ransomware attackers. Here's how NEC XON circumvented this attack:

- **Predictive threat intelligence:** NEC XON used Palo Alto Networks Cortex Xpanse® global attack surface monitoring to detect exposed assets before adversaries could act—demonstrating a shift from reactive to predictive cybersecurity.
- **Hyper-automated response:** The SOC executed a rapid, automated response—including asset verification, service shutdown, firewall rule updates, and policy reinforcement—all without disrupting operations.
- **AI-driven visibility:** With an "attacker's-eye view" of the digital footprint, the NEC XON SOC continuously uncovers vulnerabilities, enabling real-time risk reduction and continuous posture improvement.
- **Resilience by design:** By eliminating the threat within the critical 45-minute exposure window, NEC XON ensured zero breach, zero downtime, and maximum business continuity—qualities of a resilient, future-ready SOC.

Why NEC XON and Palo Alto Networks

- **Accelerated time to value:** NEC XON brings deep operational expertise powered by the Palo Alto Networks Cortex platform, helping organizations realize security and efficiency outcomes quickly.

- **Maximized value from an AI-driven platform:** By combining the Cortex AI-driven, unified platform with the tailored use case development and content creation from NEC XON, organizations gain optimized detection, automation, and response aligned to their environments.

- **Bridging the cybersecurity resource gap:** Through this partnership, organizations benefit from skilled NEC XON security resources and 24/7 coverage, helping to scale operations without the burden of hiring and retention.

- **A security force multiplier:** Through continuous platform tuning, proactive threat hunting, and hands-on engineering, our partnership helps organizations stay ahead of evolving threats and align with their operational priorities.

- **Business-aligned security outcomes:** This partnership connects Cortex AI-driven platform performance with the NEC XON business-focused approach, helping clients link security operations to business risk and security KPIs—delivering visibility, measurability, and control over their threat landscape.

Together, Palo Alto Networks and NEC XON deliver a powerful, AI-powered solution that accelerates value, strengthens security, and aligns outcomes with business goals—helping organizations across Africa build resilient, future-ready SOCs.

About NEC XON

NEC XON is a leading African integrator of ICT solutions and part of NEC, a Japanese global company. The holding company has operated in Africa since 1963 and delivers communications, energy, safety, security, and digital solutions. It cocreates social value through innovation to help overcome serious societal challenges. The organization operates in 54 African countries and has a footprint in 16 of them. Regional headquarters are located in South, East, and West Africa. NEC XON is a level 1-certified broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE) business. Discover more at www.nec.africa.

About Palo Alto Networks

As the global cybersecurity leader, Palo Alto Networks (NASDAQ: PANW) is dedicated to protecting our digital way of life via continuous innovation. Trusted by more than 70,000 organizations worldwide, we provide comprehensive AI-powered security solutions across network, cloud, security operations and AI, enhanced by the expertise and threat intelligence of Unit 42®. Our focus on platformization allows enterprises to streamline security at scale, ensuring protection fuels innovation. Explore more at www.paloaltonetworks.com.