

Snooping Dragon?

By Paul Gibson



While it may seem hard to believe, two independent security teams have reported that as recent as yesterday, 1300 computers from 100 different countries have suffered cyber espionage. But in an era of high-tech network security, how can that happen?

CNN reports that two independent analyst groups, one from SecDev Group, based in Ottawa and the University of Cambridge Computer Library have released a startling report on network security. Both reports condemn the use of malware by the Chinese government to illegally track diplomatic, corporate and political correspondence across the globe.

While the continuous fight for freedom of information in China is not new, what is new is the breadth and control of the system. The spy network that they have used not only can copy and delete documents on a computer, but actually see and hear the people using it! The system has been dubbed GhostNet, making reference to the ghost nets that fishermen use when fishing.

The implementation of the spyware is quite effective: users can delete attachments and replace them with new ones, for example. Emails and messages can be intercepted and modified, and documents and other sensitive information can be downloaded or disappear without a trace.

But China is by no means the only guilty party. The report mentions China as an example and in particular, their manipulation of Tibetan correspondence - but the report also cites the United States, UK and other powers to have astounding cyber espionage capabilities.

Among the victims included in the report are some very popular companies and organisations, such as Deloitte and Touche (consulting firm), The Associated Press in Britain, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Indonesia, Iran and the Philippines.

The entire situation reminds us, that there is nothing said or done behind closed doors that will not come to light. Sooner or later, the dirt will hit the fan... If you consider your time on the internet to be personal and private - think again. The titans of information have more power than anyone *could have ever* imagined. So the real questions on everyone's mind are:

- How can we ever feel safe on the Internet?
- Does this piece of news change your mind about network security in 2009?
- How much information, news has been manipulated?
- Does the truth really exist? If so, where?
- I know we can manage network security, but who is going to manage the managers?